“Yes-men” and “yes-women”: how gender informs men’s and women’s strategies in college heterosexual relationships

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Order of Presentation

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Introduction
Introduction

– This study was done with the support of the Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
– Current study was an extension of a project I did in a Research Methods course
– What is known about gender and relationships?
Background
Background

What is generally known about adolescent dating?

- “Publicly expressed practice taken on by romantically interested partners for the purpose of getting to know each other better” (Eaton & Rose, 2011)
- Dating is viewed as a process for narrowing the field for suitable marriage partners (Whyte 1990)

What is generally known about dating culture on a college campus?

- In the past 20-25 years there has been a significant amount of research identifying a shift to a “hook-up” culture on college campuses (Bogle 2008, Garcia et al. 2012, & Currier 2013)
- However, other research has shown that expectations about dating are similar to how they were 35 years ago, showing that the dating scene follows very traditional patterns (Eaton & Rose, 2011)
Background

- **Key Terms**
  - **Gender Ideologies**: beliefs about gender that people hold, and how it is expected to be presented in society
  - **Gender Strategies**: using ideologies about gender to inform how people should act in different settings (Hoschchild 2012)
  - **“Hook-up” culture**: refers to a norm of one-time sexual encounters in place of traditional dating
  - Why is this research important?
Objectives
Objectives

Main Research Questions:

1. How does the way men and women think about gender (ideologies) influence how they think about and act (strategies) in heterosexual relationships?
2. What type of relationships are expected in a college setting?
3. How is the dating/hook up culture in college connected to ideas about gender expectations?

Expectations:

Men and Women will use egalitarian ideologies, but traditional strategies.
Methods
Methods

- Participants
  - 21 participants in total (11 women, 10 men)
  - Ranged in age from 18-21, (average age=19)
  - Heterosexual, Attending the University of Cincinnati
  - 28% of the sample were People of Color

- Materials
  - Survey
  - Interview

- Procedure
  - Participants were given the survey to complete by themselves
  - They then completed an interview
Findings
Interview Findings

- How did the participants think about gender in today’s society? (Ideologies)
- Participants gave similar responses, regardless of gender
  - Expectations for men
    - Financial Support
    - Lack of emotion
    - Leadership/dominance
    - Strength/power
  - Expectations for women
    - “Yes-men” – people who go along with what men say
    - Emotional
    - Physically fit/attractive
    - Submissive and passive
Interview Findings

- **Strategies**
  - "If you were interested in someone, what steps would you take to make a relationship with them happen?"
    - **Men**
      - Initiating
      - Majority of them (70%) said they would initiate a relationship by directly asking women to do things together, and asking the women if they liked them
    - **Women**
      - Waiting
      - Many women said man should initiate a relationship, others said that they would wait for the man to do this by being friends with them, flirting, and hinting at a relationship
      - Only two women mentioned initiating a relationship
Interview Findings

- Types of Relationships
  - **Hook-up**: One time event including sexual activity
  - **Dating**: Casually seeing someone and hooking up with them, no expectation of exclusivity
  - **Committed**: Labels for partner, exclusivity, and hooking up

- “What type of Relationship do most people prefer?”
  - **Men**
    - Dating/Uncommitted and Hook up
  - **Women**
    - Combination > Dating/Uncommitted > Hook-up

- Hook up culture as unsustainable
  - Comes to an end with age, and graduation from college
  - “It’d be weird if you were doing that [just hooking up] in your thirties”
Survey Findings

- Almost everyone in the study had been in a committed relationship over the past year (18 out of 21, or 85%)
  - Majority of the relationships had been lasting 7 months or more so they were relatively long term
  - When asked whether they have dated someone without hooking up with them first the majority of people said yes (18 out of 21, or 85%)
- Hooking up was seen as more egalitarian
  - 60% of participants said that both men and would should initiate a hook up
  - When asked about dating during the interview this was more traditional
Survey Findings

- **The majority** of the participants had not participated in the hook-up culture in the last year
  - 17 out of 21 people indicated they had 0 one-time hook ups
- However when asked if they had hooked-up with one person multiple times in the last year **8 people (38%)** indicated that they had
  - Increased amount of people had partners. Showing that one-time hookups aren’t really consistent with experience
- **About half** of the people who said that they had wanted their hook-up to turn into a relationship were women
  - Men and women seemed to want more than just physical connection from their relationships
Discussion
Discussion

- **Question:** How does the way men and women think about gender (ideologies) influence how they think about and act (strategies) in heterosexual relationships
  - People might have wanted egalitarian relationships for themselves but still identified traditional roles where men is the doer in the relationship and women are the reactor
  - Participants description of how they would act in a relationship and the beliefs they had about gender support traditional ideas
Discussion

- *Question:* What type of relationships are expected in a college setting?
  - Although clearly hook-ups take place on college campuses, the prevalence of this may be overestimated by the students since most of them did not. They expected this out of others.
  - *Question:* How is the dating/hook up culture in college connected to ideas about gender
  - It is sort of surprising that we see these traditional beliefs and actions on a college campus because of it typically being considered progressive, with an overabundance of hook-ups
  - College is such a short period of time that it makes sense that these norms about gender persist more than the idea of hook-up culture since this will eventually end according to the participants
Discussion

– Significance
  – This study and related work have important implications since college age is a critical time of development in people’s interpersonal relationships
  – When trying to understand where expectations about relationships come from it is important to look at how we think about gender
  – This could potentially inform us as to some of the reasons why relationships go wrong

– Future
  – Look at queer relationships, does gender persist?
  – Where are some of the messages about gender coming from?
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References


Questions