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IMPACT OF RELATIONSHIP CONTEXT ON EVALUATIONS OF THE SEXUAL
BEHAVIOR OF MEN AND WOMEN

Master of Art, Clinical Psychology

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May 14th 2011

ABSTRACT

A number of gender differences have been found in early studies of human sexuality with males following more permissive norms for engagement in sexual behavior. More recently, male and female sexual behavior has become more similar, although literature examining attitudes towards sexual behavior has found mixed support for the idea that similar standards were used to evaluate men and women. This study examined the potential moderating roles of relationship context and traditional gender role adherence on evaluations of sexual behavior among 307 undergraduates at a public Southeastern university. Both men and women having sex within committed relationships were viewed as more likeable, but men having sex in committed and women having sex in uncommitted relationships were viewed as higher on diplomacy, potentially being viewed as having greater integrity for not following gender norms. Traditional gender role adherence was not related to evaluations of sexual behavior. Implications are discussed.

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I. BACKGROUND

The scientific study of human sexuality has been said to begin with the Kinsey reports, the first comprehensive surveys of a variety of sexual experiences conducted in a large sample over 60 years ago. Based on a number of interviews, Kinsey found differences in the sexual experiences of men and women. For example, Kinsey and colleagues found that by age 15, 40% of males had engaged in premarital sex, but only 3% of females reported similar experiences (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). As men and women matured, a greater proportion of each group experienced premarital intercourse, but the discrepancy between genders remained, for example in the 21-25 age group 35% of women and 68% of men had experienced premarital intercourse. The results of the Kinsey survey appeared to indicate that sexual gender norms at that time appeared to allow for greater permissiveness within male sexuality (Kinsey et.al., 1948, 1953).

Many social changes have taken place since the 1940's and 1950's: the sexual revolution, the availability of the birth control pill, greater emphasis on and acceptance of contraceptives, and the feminist movement have all been suggested to have had a significant impact on American sexuality, particularly on the sexual norms for women. Female sexuality has been suggested to be generally more responsive to sociocultural influence and to show greater variability over time as a result (Baumeister, 2000).

This paper will review a number of studies of male and female sexual behavior as well as its evaluations within varied contexts. Sexual evaluation literature sometimes discusses a different more permissive set of norms being applied to evaluations of the sexual behavior of

men; this discrepancy has been discussed as the sexual double standard. Examinations of the sexual double standard will be discussed, and as the sexual double standard is essentially a gender norm, literature regarding traditional gender role adherence and its implications will also be considered.

Gender Differences in Sexuality

A meta-analysis of 177 sexuality studies ranging through the 1960's to the 1980's by Oliver and Hyde (1993) indicated that men appeared to experience intercourse at a younger age, have a greater number of sexual partners, and to experience greater incidence and frequency of intercourse than women. Male sexual norms evidenced greater permissiveness: males were more accepting of premarital intercourse and extramarital intercourse, with a particular gender difference for casual or uncommitted premarital intercourse. Men tended to hold more permissive attitudes towards sexuality, being more accepting of having extensive sexual experience and many sexual partners. However, gender differences in sexuality were decreasing as a function of time. These findings suggest that, while significant gender differences continued to exist between the 1960's and 1980's, sexual behaviors were becoming more similar (Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

A more recent study by Fischtein, Herold, and Desmarais (2007) examined gender differences in sexuality within data from a national survey of 1,479 Canadian adults. Researchers found that men were more likely to report performing and receiving oral sex, to consider engaging in casual sex, to report a higher number of lifetime sexual partners (11.25 compared to women's 4.01), and a significantly lower mean age of first intercourse. The authors concluded that men exhibited more permissive sexual norms and behaviors than women.

Evidence of Greater Similarity in Sexual Behavior

A cross-temporal meta-analytic examination of more than 530 studies (1943-1999) found that young people's sexuality was changing over time. Wells and Twenge (2005) observed a general increase in the percentage of sexually active young people, with a greater change seen for women (31% reporting activity in 1953 compared to 61% in 1999). The age of first intercourse also decreased over time, dropping to 15 for both sexes by the late 1990's, with a greater change seen for women (Wells & Twenge, 2005). The analysis indicated that behavioral norms for sexual behavior have become more permissive and similar for men and women; suggesting that gender differences may be disappearing.

Engagement in and attitudes towards uncommitted sexual behavior can be viewed as a reflection of social norms towards aspects of sexuality. Penke and Asendorpf (2008) investigated sociosexual orientation, or willingness to engage in sex outside of a relationship context, among men and women. Researchers revised the *Sociosexual Orientation Inventory*, a measure of sociosexual behavior, attitudes, and desire, and administered the revised measure (*SOI-R*) to 2,708 German speaking internet users. No gender differences were found in reported engagement in uncommitted sexual behavior, suggesting that the behavioral gender gap may be closing. Attitudinal gender differences were demonstrated: men expressed significantly more desire for and acceptance towards uncommitted sexual behavior. Authors believed that greater male desire and acceptance of uncommitted sexual behavior reflected an evolutionary difference in sexuality e.g. that it is more advantageous for men to engage in casual sex because they can invest fewer resources into propagating their genes. They postulated that uncommitted sexual behaviors did not evidence gender differences because they reflected a compromise between male and female

desire for uncommitted sexual behavior. While many theoretical perspectives have been used to explain gender differences in sexuality, Penke and Asendorpf's (2008) study suggests that behavioral norms for engagement in uncommitted sexual behavior have become similar for men and women.

Overall, a number of studies (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wells & Twenge, 2005; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) suggest a closing of the gender gap in sexual behavior. Attitudes towards male and female sexuality have also been examined in the literature. The application of more permissive rules to evaluations of male sexual behavior has been discussed as a sexual double standard. Milhausen and Herold (1999) discussed the sexual double standard as having evolved from viewing all premarital intercourse as unacceptable for women and acceptable for men to a conditional sexual double standard, where it is acceptable for women to engage in premarital intercourse within the context of a committed relationship. Milhausen and Herold (1999) found that 95% of their undergraduate female sample believed a sexual double standard existed in society, thus it appears that the social norm was accepted, although not personally endorsed by the participants (i.e. both promiscuous men and women were assigned mainly negative adjectives by participants).

Sexual Double Standard

Robinson, Ziss, Ganza, Katz, and Robinson (1991) evaluated attitudes towards male and female sexuality using a cross-temporal analysis of data collected between 1965 and 1985. Responses of a large (1,792) sample of college students suggested that male and female sexual behavior continued to be evaluated differently during this time period. Engagement in premarital sexual behavior increased for both genders over time, especially for women; however the rate of

change decreased. Attitudes towards premarital intercourse also became more permissive, with a greater change seen in women's attitudes. Despite these changes, women who were described as having sex with many men continued to be evaluated more negatively than men engaging in the same behavior. Authors suggested that, while engagement in and approval of premarital sexual behavior had increased, particularly among women, approval of promiscuity had not undergone a similar change and a sexual double standard continued to exist (Robinson et al, 1991). More recently, Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, and Abrams (1996) investigated attitudes towards male and female sexuality among 690 Scottish teenagers. Participants expected women to have fewer sexual partners by age 20 and viewed women who frequently changed sex partners as more irresponsible and less self respecting than men. Sheeran and colleagues (1996) concluded that a sexual double standard was applied by their sample.

Marks and Farley (2005) examined evaluations of male and female targets with varied numbers of sexual partners by 144 undergraduates and 8,080 internet participants. As the number of sexual partners increased men were evaluated more positively and women more negatively in the domains of power and success by the internet sample. This effect was domain specific as both genders were evaluated more negatively on intelligence as the number of partners they had increased by the internet sample, although this effect was stronger for women. The student sample evaluated both men and women with higher numbers of sexual partners more negatively. Marks and Farley (2005) concluded that their findings provide some evidence of a sexual double standard operating in evaluations in specific domains, but noted that the effect was small as it accounted for less than 1% of the variance in evaluations.

In a subsequent study, Marks and Farley (2006) examined the sexual double standard within a cognitive framework by measuring memory for positive and negative reactions to a

fictional target's sexual history. From a cognitive standpoint, a memory bias towards recalling double standard consistent and ignoring inconsistent information would provide evidence that a sexual double standard was operating. Some bias towards recalling information consistent with the double standard was found: 223 undergraduate participants recalled a greater number of positive reactions received by a male target and there was a trend towards recalling more negative reactions received by a female target. Marks and Farley (2006) further investigated memory bias in a follow up study by asking 99 undergraduates to write down the comments and reactions received by male and female targets. While participants were marginally ($p = .07$) more likely to recall information about female targets in general, they were also more likely to recall negative comments about female targets, and more likely to recall negative than positive comments about females. Marks and Farley (2006) concluded that, as participants tended to recall more information consistent with the sexual double standard, a similar cognitive strategy would likely operate in real life.

Data from 11,474 seventh through twelfth graders, collected in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, was analyzed to examine the relationship between peer acceptance and sexual behavior (Kreager & Staff, 2009). Peer acceptance was measured through student nominations of 5 best male and 5 best female friends and number of sexual partners provided data on sexual behavior. A number of covariates were included in the analysis. Sexually permissive females (those with 8 or more partners) were less accepted by their peers, as evidenced by fewer nominations. Peer acceptance for boys was found to be positively related to their number of sexual partners. Researchers concluded that having a larger number of sexual partners was positively related to peer acceptance for boys and negatively related to peer acceptance for girls, suggesting a sexual double standard (Kreager & Staff, 2009).

Prejudicial attitudes have become less openly acceptable in our society. With a number of legal and social sanctions in place, social desirability may be affecting participant reports of differential reactions to men and women. Marks (2008) utilized divided cognitive attention task to examine automatic reactions towards sexual behavior and bypass the effects of social desirability. He compared evaluations of male and female targets with varied numbers of sexual partners (1, 7, and 19) by 72 undergraduates under either full or divided (rehearsing an 8 digit number) cognitive attention. While no differences were found in the full attention condition, males with 19 sexual partners were evaluated more positively than females under divided attention. Marks (2008) argued that the discrepancy in evaluating highly sexually active targets was found because more positive sexual stereotypes of highly active men and more negative sexual stereotypes of highly active women are activated when attention is limited, as is the norm in most real life situations.

The Influence of Context on Applications of the Sexual Double Standard

DeLamater and MacCorquodale (1979) examined contextual variables within sexuality using peer interviews and survey methodology in a sample of 863 undergraduates and 513 non-student young adults. Both men and women reported some emotional involvement with their first intercourse partner, but women tended to report a more committed relationship context. DeLamater and MacCorquodale (1979) did not believe their study provided evidence for a sexual double standard; however the contextual differences may reflect a less permissive social norm for women.

Sprecher (1989) examined 666 undergraduates' evaluations of the sexual behavior of targets of varied age, gender, and relationship to participant. Sprecher (1989) found that, while

younger participants or those with more personal relationships to the participant (e.g. brother or sister), were subjected to less permissive sexual norms, evaluations of men and women did not differ. In general, participants were more likely to approve of sexual behaviors as the relationship context within which it occurred became more committed, suggesting that context plays a role in evaluations of sexuality (Sprecher, 1989).

Attitudes towards premarital sex within varied relationship contexts were examined by Sprecher and Hatfield (1996) within a sample of 1,043 college students at several U.S. universities through survey methodology. Participants were less likely to disapprove of premarital sex as the relationship context within which it occurred became more committed. More permissive sexual attitudes were endorsed by men, particularly at early dating stages, although the gender difference disappeared when the engaged relationship context was considered. Participant gender interacted with target gender: men expressed greater permissiveness when evaluating male targets in early relationship stages, but this effect was not found among women. It was concluded that men exhibited greater sexual permissiveness than women, particularly at earlier relationship stages, endorsing a sexual double standard in this context.

Gentry (1998) explored the interaction between varied relationship contexts and degrees of sexual activity in undergraduates' evaluations of men and women. Fictional targets described as having above average sexual activity levels or engaging in multiple relationships were evaluated less positively regardless of gender. However, gender differences were found when analysis took gender of the target and participant into account: women found female targets with below average sexual activity in monogamous relationships and male targets with above average sexual activity in multiple relationships to be most socially and physically appealing. Men found

women with high levels of activity in multiple relationships or low levels in monogamous relationships to be unappealing, whereas they found male targets with high activity most appealing regardless of relationship context. Gentry (1998) concluded that a sexual double standard was evident when context and levels of sexual activity were taken into account.

Studies of attitudes towards sexual behavior suggest that relationship context influences evaluations of sexual behavior. Participants have been found to evaluate sexual behavior in more committed relationships more positively (Sprecher, 1989; Sprecher & Hatfield, 1996). Gender of the target appears to interact with the context within which sexual behavior occurs to affect evaluations (Gentry, 1998). Crawford and Popp (2003) review the sexual double standard literature and conclude that relationship context is important to consider in evaluations of sexual behavior: authors posit that the context in which sexual behavior is acceptable for men and women may differ.

Traditional Gender Roles

Gender role identity can be thought of as the cognitive and affective evaluation of the self and others along conformity to masculinity and femininity (Constantinople, 1973). Individuals who internalize social norms related to gender have been discussed as traditional gender role adherents (Bem, 1981). Bem (1974) proposes that traditional gender role adherents are less able to engage in behaviors that are typical of the opposite gender. Traditional masculinity is associated with a concrete problem solving orientation, whereas traditional femininity is associated with an expressive emotion focused orientation. Bem (1974) hypothesizes that, in addition to being masculine or feminine, individuals can be high in both traits and able to engage in a broader range of behaviors: these individuals are considered to be androgynous.

A number of studies support the construct validity of traditional gender roles. Traditional gender roles have been found to be related to a number of variables, including interpersonal function, approval seeking, drug involvement, and psychological adjustment (Zeldow, Daugherty, & Clark 1987; Dear & Roberts, 2002; Lefkowitz & Zeldow, 2006). Lefkowitz and Zeldow (2006) found that psychological androgyny was related to better mental health, suggesting that the construct is relevant to real world outcomes.

Bem (1981) examined the relationship between traditional gender role adherence, measured by the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (BSRI), and word meaning grouping among 96 undergraduates. Traditional gender role adherents tended to cluster words along gender more than androgynous or non-traditional gender role adherents. Bem (1981) also asked participants to rate how descriptive gender congruent or incongruent information was of them while measuring response latency to gender typical or atypical words. Traditional gender role adherents were faster at making gender congruent and slower at making gender incongruent judgments about themselves, suggesting that there were stronger associations between traditional gender roles and their self concepts (Bem, 1981).

Bem and Lewis (1975) examined engagement in gender typical behaviors among 93 individuals classified as traditional gender role adherents using the BSRI. Expressing a discordant opinion in a group and playing with a kitten represented stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors, respectively. Androgynous individuals expressed the greatest ability to engage in both stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors, while traditional feminine gender role adherents expressed the largest deficit when engaging in non-gender typical behaviors. Bem and Lewis (1975) concluded that androgynous participants exhibited more behavioral flexibility for gender atypical behaviors.

Bem and Lenney (1976) studied engagement in gender typical and atypical behavior among 72 undergraduates who were given the BSRI. Participants were asked to pose for pictures performing stereotypically masculine or feminine activities, which would supposedly be used in a study at another university. Compensation of two to six cents per activity was offered, with gender typical activities paying less than atypical, allegedly because fewer of these pictures were needed. A choice of 30 of 60 activities was offered, however participants were asked to perform nine activities after making their selections (three masculine, three feminine, and three neutral). Researchers pretended to photograph participants and participants were asked to rate enjoyment, likeability, masculinity or femininity, and attractiveness of activity, how nervous or peculiar they felt while performing it. Women were more likely to select higher paying gender atypical activities than men and traditional gender role adherents were more likely to select gender stereotypical activities and to feel worse after performing atypical activities. Bem and Lenney (1976) concluded that traditional gender role adherents found engaging in gender atypical behavior to be problematic and that they would tend to avoid it.

Traditional gender role adherence has been examined in interpersonal interactions. Ickes and Barnes (1978) examined interpersonal attraction among 86 undergraduates in dyads composed of traditional gender role adherents and androgynous individuals on the basis of BSRI scores. Participants were asked to wait in pairs for five minutes, allegedly while the researcher obtained materials, and videotaped using hidden cameras. Videotapes were coded for a range of positive and negative verbal and nonverbal interactions and participants were asked to provide perceptions of the interaction. Interactions among gender typical men and women evidenced less behaviors indicative of interpersonal attraction (laughing, looking at, and gesturing towards each other) than other groups and this observation was confirmed by participant perceptions. Ickes

and Barnes (1978) hypothesized that these dyads may have experienced the greatest amount of interpersonal stress, because differing gender norms for social interactions made the experience mutually uncomfortable. Researchers postulated that the effect was not found for androgynous individuals because they were able to adapt to interact in either stereotypically male or female fashion (Ickes & Barnes, 1978).

This review of the literature suggests that traditional gender roles may play a role in applications of gender related rules for social conduct, such as the sexual double standard. The sexual double standard literature suggests that relationship context will act as a moderator in applications of differential evaluations to the sexual behavior of men and women. The current study examined the relationship between traditional gender role adherence, relationship context, and evaluations of the sexual behavior of men and women. It was expected that relationship context would act as a moderator of applications of differential standards to the sexual behavior of male and female targets, and that traditional gender role adherence would moderate the relationship between evaluation of the sexual behavior and target gender.

II. METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 307 undergraduate students attending a public University in the southeastern United States. Participants were primarily Caucasian (69.4%), with the next largest group being African Americans (21.2%), followed by Multiracial/Other (4.6%), Asian American (3.9%), and Native American (0.7%). The majority of participants were female (75.2%). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 58, with the majority (73.2%) being 18 or 19. 14.7% of participants reported being or having been involved in a fraternity or sorority.

Measures

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974)

The *Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)* is a 60 item self report measure of an individual's self conceptualization as stereotypically masculine or feminine. Masculine traits include: ambitious, aggressive, and self-reliant, and feminine traits include: flatterable, gullible, and tender. Response format is a seven point Likert-type scale ranging from one ("Never or almost never true") to seven ("Always or almost always true"). The Masculinity and Femininity scores are comprised of the mean of the responses to the masculinity and femininity items which respectively. Respondents can be classified as masculine, feminine, undifferentiated, and androgynous on the basis of a median split method. Psychometric analyses of the BSRI were performed on two samples of undergraduates (N = 723, 1974 and N = 816, 1978). Internal consistency for Masculinity and Femininity was found to be high in both samples with

coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.87. Test retest reliability for Masculinity and Femininity scale scores ranged from 0.76 to 0.94 (Bem, 1981).

A number of studies also suggest that the BSRI is a valid instrument for measuring traditional gender role adherence. Lippa (1991) found that the Masculinity and Femininity scales of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), an instrument measuring masculinity and femininity, and the BSRI among 264 undergraduates were significantly correlated (Masculinity = .78, Femininity = .71) and similar results were found by Spence (1993) in an examination of the two measures demonstrating convergent validity. Larsen and Seidman (1986) further found that BSRI factor loadings comparing traditional gender role adherents and androgynous individuals supported the differentiation of these two groups, supporting the construct validity of the BSRI. Tunnel (1981) found that women classified as feminine using the BSRI differed from androgynous women in perceptions of interpersonal interactions, supporting the construct and predictive validity of the BSRI. Together these studies support the construct, convergent, and predictive validity of the BSRI.

Interpersonal Evaluation Inventory (IEI; Kelly, Kern, Kirkley, Patterson and Keane, 1980)

The Interpersonal Evaluation Inventory (IEI) is a measure of overall attitude towards another person. It consists of 24 adjectives and two questions evaluated on a seven point Likert-type scale for the extent to which they apply to an individual. Scoring on items is counterbalanced with the socially desirable pole varying between 1 and 7 (1 = extremely unpleasant to 7 = extremely pleasant) to control for response bias. The 24 adjectives were chosen on the basis of previous validation by Anderson (1968), and two additional items evaluating desire to work with and get to know the target were added by Kelly and colleagues (Kelly, Kern,

Kirkley, Patterson, & Keane, 1980). The IEI has been used in several studies examining interpersonal evaluations of assertive behavior (Kelly et. al, 1980; Kern, 1982) and physician perceptions of AIDS patients (Kelly, Lawrence, Smith, Hood, & Cook, 1987). More recently Koch, Gross, and Kolts (1997) and Doss and Gross (1994) have also examined interpersonal evaluations of African American speech patterns using the IEI.

Demographics

Demographic information was gathered using single item questions assessing gender, age, race/ethnicity, and sorority/fraternity membership (“Are you or have you been involved with the fraternity or sorority system here on campus?”).

Stimulus Materials

A series of four vignettes describing a male or female target engaging in sexual behavior with “many” partners in either committed or uncommitted relationships was developed. Vignettes were developed following a survey of the literature. Vignettes were subjected to qualitative and quantitative review by a panel of University of Mississippi faculty. Vignettes were subjected to pilot tests and modifications among 107 University of Mississippi undergraduates. Vignette wording was modified following qualitative and quantitative feedback until the majority of the test sample provided ratings of 4 or above on a 5 point Likert-type scale evaluating their descriptiveness of what may happen in the real world, a 2 or below on the presence of anything distracting the reader from evaluating the target and their sexual history, and a 4 or above on the usefulness of vignettes for studying attitudes towards sexuality and gender.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through Psychology Study Participant Manager (PSPM) and class announcements. After signing up, participants were randomly assigned to one of four vignette conditions (uncommitted relationship context male target, uncommitted relationship context female target, committed relationship context male target, committed relationship context female target) using a list of random numbers. Participants received email notifications directing them to the link for the survey with the appropriate vignette condition. The survey was located on the Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) website. Participants first viewed the letter of informed consent, which described the study, its potential risks and benefits, potential costs and payment, confidentiality of responses, and right to withdraw without penalty at anytime by closing the browser window. The letter additionally explained that this study had been approved by the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board and provided contact information should the participants have any questions. A copy of the consent letter may be found in Appendix A, 1. After consenting to participate in the study, participants provided demographic information, viewed the vignette, completed the IEI, completed the BSRI, and were thanked for participation and provided with instructions to receive PSPM credit.

Researchers utilized the word “many” to describe the number of sexual partners acquired by participants within vignette stimulus materials. This decision was due to our interest in participants’ relational response of interpersonal evaluation to the stimulus cue “many” as applied within a context of evaluating sexual history. The choice of this word cue is consistent with the behavioral theory concerning the examination of verbal behavior. Relational responding has been demonstrated within both human and nonhuman participants and is a well established

phenomenon in behavioral research (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001). Nonetheless, researchers were interested in participant interpretations of the word many and collected data on the number of sexual partners the participant believed was meant by this cue.

III. RESULTS

Data Cleaning and Examination

Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, and range, were computed for all variables. Participants with missing data (N=23) were removed from the analysis. An Analysis of Variance performed comparing the demographic characteristics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, and sorority/fraternity membership) between subjects with and without missing data found no significant differences between groups. The dataset was examined for the presence of multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis distance, computed for each item. Multivariate outliers (N =13) meeting X^2 criteria for removal at $p < 0.001$ (Mahalanobis distance greater than 134.746) were removed from the dataset resulting in a sample of 271 participants for the analysis.

For the purpose of this study IEI factors determined by an exploratory factor analysis by Doss and Gross (1994) were used in the analyses. Doss and Gross (1994) found that IEI items loaded on two factors, termed Likeability (friendly, agreeable, pleasant, considerate, open minded, sympathetic, good natured, fair, kind, likeable, intelligent, attractive, socially skilled, warm) and Diplomacy (assertive, tactful, truthful, honest). Factor scores were computed through reverse coding reversed items and adding question scores to obtain a factor total.

Masculinity and Femininity scale scores were computed through the addition of relevant questions, obtaining a question average for each scale, which was then transformed into standard Masculinity and Femininity scores using Bem's norms (Bem, 1981). Participants were classified into Masculine, Feminine, Androgynous, and Undifferentiated groups using the weighted median

split method recommended by Bem (1981) for samples with unequal numbers of male and female participants. As the sample contained a greater proportion of females, the male median for Masculinity (48.5) and female median for Masculinity (49) were obtained and used to produce an average and used as a weighted median for Masculinity (48.75). Similarly, a standardized Femininity score median was computed for males (49) and females (56) and an average of the two values was used as a weighted mean for Femininity (52.5). Bem (1981) suggested that participants above median on Masculinity and below median on Femininity be classified as Masculine, participants above the median on Femininity and below the median on Masculinity be classified as Feminine, participants above the median on both Masculinity and Femininity be classified as Androgynous, and participants below the median on both Masculinity and Femininity be classified as Undifferentiated. Using this categorization system 21.4% of participants were classified as Masculine, 22.9% were categorized as Feminine, 32.5% were categorized as Androgynous, and 23.2% were categorized as Undifferentiated. 31.8% of men were classified as Masculine, 12.1% of men were classified as Feminine, 19.7% of men were classified as Androgynous, and 36.4% were classified as Undifferentiated. 18% of women were classified as Masculine, 26.3% were classified as Feminine, 36.6% were classified as Androgynous, and 19.4% were classified as Undifferentiated.

Participant responses on BSRI items evidenced some skew and kurtosis, however considering the nature of the questionnaire and the predominantly female sample, some skew is to be expected. For BSRI items skew values ranged from -1.689 to 0.278 and kurtosis values ranged from -1.010 to 4.336. For IEI items skew values ranged from -0.321 to 0.698 and kurtosis values ranged from -1.271 to 0.141. Values on interpersonal evaluation items ranged from -0.002 to 0.634 for skew and from -0.855 to -0.146 for kurtosis. Visual inspections of BSRI Femininity,

and Masculinity Scales and a total sum score of IEI items evidence that distributions are not greatly distinct from normal.

Influence of Relationship Context and Target Gender on Interpersonal Evaluation

In order to examine the impact of gender and relationship context on perception of an individual with many sexual partners a 2 (gender) X 2 (relationship context) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed using IEI Likeability and Diplomacy factor scores as the dependent variables. With the use of Wilks' criterion there was a significant main effect for relationship context ($F(2, 266) = 4.039, p \leq 0.019$) and a significant interaction between relationship context and target gender ($F(2, 266) = 6.866, p < 0.001$). The main effect for target gender was not significant.

Three follow-up 2 (gender) X 2 (relationship context) ANOVA's were performed using IEI factor scores as the dependent variables. Using the IEI factor score of Diplomacy as a dependent variable no significant main effects for target gender and relationship context were found, however the interaction term of target gender by relationship context was significant ($p = 0.041$, partial eta squared = 0.016). These data suggest that participants evaluated male targets in committed relationships higher than female targets and female targets in uncommitted relationships as higher than male on Diplomacy (Appendix B, Table 1).

Using the IEI factor of Likeability as a dependent variable a significant main effect for vignette relationship context was found ($p = 0.005$, partial eta squared = 0.029). The main effect of target gender and the target gender by relationship interaction were not significant. These data

suggest that participants evaluated both male and female targets within committed relationships higher on Likeability than those within uncommitted relationships. (Appendix B, Table 2).

Traditional Gender Role Adherence

Hierarchical regressions were performed to examine the hypothesis that traditional gender role adherence moderates the differential evaluation of male and female sexual behavior. A hierarchical multiple regression was performed entering demographic variables (race/ethnicity, age, sorority/fraternity membership) in the first step to control, vignette target gender and vignette relationship context were entered in the second step, and a BSRI category (Masculine, Feminine, Androgynous, or Undifferentiated) by participant sex interaction term in the third step to predict the IEI factor of Likeability. The full model accounted for 5.2% of the variance in Likeability. The demographic variables in the first model ($R = 0.139$, $R^2 = 0.019$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.008$, $F \Delta = 1.746$ (3,267), $p = 0.158$) did not account for a significant portion of the variance in Likeability (1.9%). The addition of vignette target gender and relationship context in the second model ($R = 0.225$, $R^2 = 0.051$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.033$, $F \Delta = 4.403$ (2,265), $p = 0.013$) accounted significant additional variance (3.2%). The entry of the BSRI category by participant sex interaction term in the third model failed to account for additional significant variance in the prediction of Likability ($R = 0.229$, $R^2 = 0.052$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.031$, $F \Delta = 0.399$ (1,264), $p = 0.528$). The hypothesis that traditional gender role adherence moderates evaluation of sexual behavior was not supported.

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed using demographic variables (race/ethnicity, age, sorority/fraternity membership) in the first step, vignette target gender and vignette relationship context in the second step, and a BSRI category by participant sex

interaction term in the third step to predict the IEI factor of Diplomacy. The demographic variables in the first model did not account for significant variance in Diplomacy (0.7%, $R = 0.083$, $R^2 = 0.007$, Adjusted $R^2 = -0.004$, $F \Delta = 0.617$ (3,267), $p = 0.604$). The addition of vignette target gender and relationship context in the second model did not account for significant variance (1.2%, $R = 0.138$, $R^2 = 0.019$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.000$, $F \Delta = 1.629$ (2,265), $p = 0.198$). The third model, which added the BSRI category by participant sex interaction term, failed to account for significant variance (0.1%, $R = 0.141$, $R^2 = 0.020$, Adjusted $R^2 = -0.002$, $F \Delta = 0.228$ (1,264), $p = 0.633$). The full model accounted for 2% of the variance in Diplomacy factor. The hypothesis that traditional gender role adherence moderates evaluations of sexual behavior was not supported by this analysis.

IV. DISCUSSION

Relationship Context and Target Gender

Participants viewed both men and women were as more likeable if they engaged in sexual interactions within committed relationships, consistent with the literature on attitudes towards sexuality. Other researchers have found that both male and female sexual activity is evaluated more positively within committed relationships (Sprecher, 1989; Sprecher & Hatfield, 1996). Furthermore a convergence of male and female sexual behavior has been found in a number of studies (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wells & Twenge, 2005; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Given these findings, the potential lack of a gender difference in evaluations may reflect that more egalitarian attitudes towards sexuality are operating in today's society.

Differences in evaluations of men and women were found on the IEI factor of Diplomacy. Males having sex in committed relationships received higher ratings than females and females in uncommitted relationships received higher ratings than males. This effect may have been found for the Diplomacy but not Likeability factor due to the differences reflected in their composition; Likeability presents a more general list of socially desirable adjectives (friendly, agreeable, pleasant, considerate, open minded, sympathetic, good natured, fair, kind, likeable, intelligent, attractive, socially skilled, warm), whereas Diplomacy appears to focus on characteristics that may be seen as associated with integrity (assertive, tactful, truthful, honest). Where differences in evaluations of sexual behavior have been found, engagement in sexual behavior without commitment has been evaluated positively for men and negatively for women (Gentry 1998; Kreager & Staff, 2009). Potentially men and women who break the norm

and engage in behavior that is less socially acceptable for their gender are showing greater integrity and willingness to follow their beliefs rather than succumbing to social pressure.

Traditional Gender Role Adherence

Traditional gender role adherence did not moderate evaluations of sexual behavior in the present study. This finding may reflect a lack of a relationship between traditional gender role adherence and evaluations of sexual behavior. Bem (1981) argues that traditional gender role adherents reflect a subset of the population that sees idealized conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity as norms by which to evaluate themselves and others. As a number of studies have found that male and female sexual behavior has become more similar over time (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Wells & Twenge, 2005; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) it is possible that gender differences in sexual behavior are no longer relevant to conceptualizations of idealized masculinity and femininity.

A possible confound, however is the use of the BSRI norms to assess traditional gender role adherence. The BSRI has acquired extensive research support and has been an invaluable tool in the study of gender. Unfortunately, this gold standard instrument presents norms from data gathered in 1978, more than thirty years ago (Bem, 1981). It is possible that cultural changes, driven by factors such as the advent of feminism and more egalitarian social norms, have had an effect on traditional gender roles. In the original 1978 normative sample mean t-scores for men were 52 on Masculinity and 46 on Femininity and mean t-scores for women were 48 on Masculinity and 54 on Femininity (Bem, 1981). In the current sample mean t-scores for men were 49.84 on Masculinity and 47.78 on Femininity and mean t-scores for women were 48.62 on Masculinity and 54.10 on Femininity. The current data set is inadequate to answer this

question, but a potential trend for lower Masculinity and higher Femininity scores among males could bear examination by future research.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research highlights a number of important issues to consider in future studies. The current data set is limited in its focus on college students in the Southeastern public university. College students may differ from the general population in a number of ways, such as socioeconomic status, age, and developmental stage. Furthermore there may be regional differences in attitudes towards gender and sexuality and the present study may not be representative of the larger U.S. The assessment of traditional gender role adherence was potentially compromised by the use of more than 30 year old norms on the BSRI. The preliminary data on the male and female standardized Masculinity and Femininity score distribution suggest that a potential re-norming of this gold standard instrument would contribute greatly to the field.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF CONSENT

INVESTIGATORS

Olga Berkout
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DESCRIPTION:

Ms. Berkout and Dr. Gross are studying the evaluation of sexual behavior. Participation will involve filling out an anonymous online survey that will be used to obtain attitudinal information on your evaluation of a vignette describing a hypothetical sexual encounter. You will be asked to provide demographic information, complete a questionnaire assessing your evaluation of the vignette actor, and complete a questionnaire assessing your gender related attitudes. The entire session will last approximately 1 hour.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

The benefits of participating in this study include the satisfaction of contributing to the advancement of psychological research.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS:

There are no costs or payments associated with participating in this study. If you are taking a Psychology class, you will receive 1 hour of research credit at the end of the session.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

No information that links you with your survey responses will be collected.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are free to withdraw from this study by closing your browser window at any time during this study. Your decision will not adversely affect your standing with the Psychology

Department or the University of Mississippi and will not cause any loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

IRB APPROVAL:

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I have read the above information and understand that I can print a copy of this form for my records. I understand that I can contact Olga Berkout or Dr. Alan Gross with additional questions I have about this study. I understand that by proceeding to the next page I consent to participate in this study.

Demographic Questions

The following questions will ask you to provide demographic characteristics. Please answer all questions before moving on to the next page.

1. What race or ethnicity do you identify with?
 - a. African American/Black
 - b. Asian American/Asian
 - c. Caucasian/White
 - d. Native American
 - e. Other
2. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your age?

4. Are you now or have you ever been involved in a sorority or fraternity?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Vignette Stimulus Materials

You will read a brief vignette or story describing a person's sexual behavior on this page. Please read this description carefully as you will be asked to consider it in later responses.

1. Male Uncommitted Relationship Context

Harry is a college student who enjoys dating and does not feel that he has to be in a committed relationship to have sex. Harry believes sex is a natural activity and should be enjoyed. He has held this attitude for many years. In a recent conversation with a friend, Harry mentioned that he has had many sexual partners.

2. Female Uncommitted Relationship Context

Jane is a college student who enjoys dating and does not feel that she has to be in a committed relationship to have sex. Jane believes sex is a natural activity and should be enjoyed. She has held this attitude for many years. In a recent conversation with a friend, Jane mentioned that she has had many sexual partners.

3. Male Committed Relationship Context

Harry is a college student who enjoys dating. He is not sexually active unless he is in a committed relationship. Harry has held this attitude for many years. Recently Harry was talking to a friend about his sex life and mentioned that, although he has limited his sexual interactions to committed relationships, he has had many sexual partners.

4. Female Committed Relationship Context

Jane is a college student who enjoys dating. She is not sexually active unless she is in a committed relationship. Jane has held this attitude for many years. Recently Jane was talking to a friend about her sex life and mentioned that, although she has limited her sexual interactions to committed relationships, she has had many sexual partners.

Interpersonal Evaluation Inventory (IEI) (Kelly et al, 1980)

You have just read a vignette about a person. Although your description of this person has been brief, you probably have some "first impressions" of what this person is like. Think carefully of the narration you just read and try to decide what this person is like. We realize it may be hard to evaluate the person since you've only read a very brief description. However, we are interested in your first impression and, based on what you read, your best "hunch" of what the person is like.

Listed below are a number of personality descriptions, followed by some questions about the person. Each description and question consists of two extremes and a number of points between them. For example:

Extremely happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely unhappy

If you thought this person was extremely unhappy, you would mark the "7". If you thought he was quite happy (but not extremely so), you might mark the "2". A "4" represents a midpoint between the two extremes. Mark a "4" only when the person falls between the two extremes.

Please read each set of descriptors and each question carefully. Be sure to note that in some cases the more positive response is on the left, and in other cases, it is on the right end of the range.

Then, for each item, mark the number (1 to 7) which most closely represents your impression of the person. Please do not skip any.

We realize that there may be times when you feel you don't have enough information to be able to answer the question, but please answer it anyway according to your best "hunch" about what this person is like.

Extremely assertive							Extremely unassertive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Extremely inappropriate 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely appropriate 7
Extremely untactful 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely tactful 7
Extremely inoffensive 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely offensive 7
Extremely truthful 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely untruthful 7
Extremely uneducated 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely educated 7
Extremely friendly 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unfriendly 7
Extremely disagreeable 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely agreeable 7
Extremely unpleasant 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely pleasant 7

Extremely considerate 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely inconsiderate 7
Extremely flexible 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely inflexible 7
Extremely open- minded 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely closed- minded 7
Extremely sympathetic 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unsympathetic 7
Extremely bad natured 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely good natured 7
Extremely fair 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unfair 7
Extremely kind 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unkind 7
Extremely dishonest						Extremely honest

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely unlikeable 1						Extremely likeable 7
Extremely intelligent 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unintelligent 7
Extremely thoughtless 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely thoughtful 7
Extremely attractive 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely unattractive 7
Extremely socially skilled 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely socially unskilled 7
Extremely warm 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely cold 7
Extremely superior 1	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely inferior 7

Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981)

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APPENDIX B

Table 1. Vignette Relationship Context by Target Gender ANOVA for IEI Diplomacy Factor

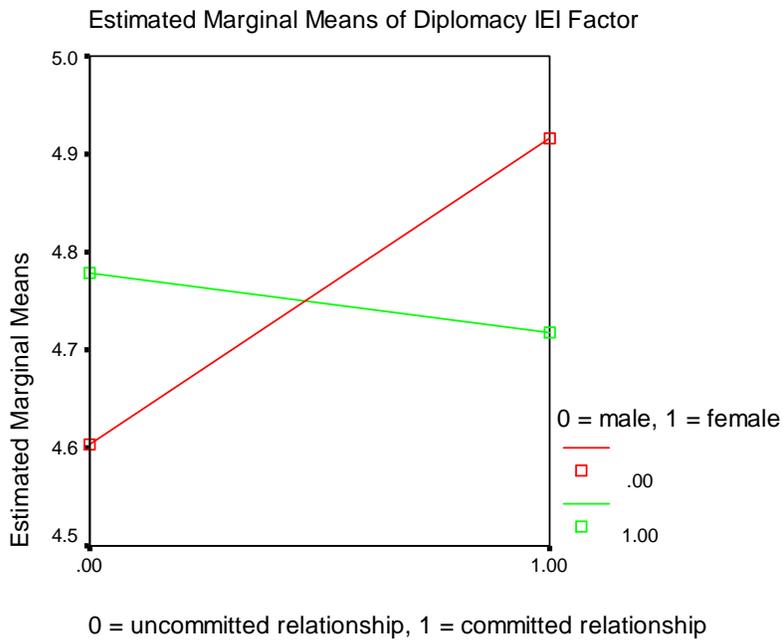
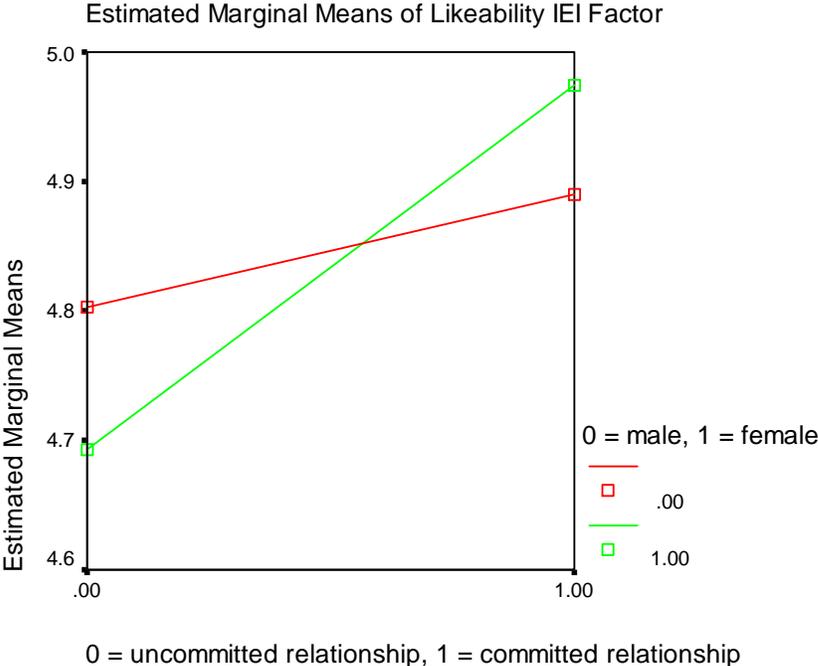


Table 2. Vignette Relationship Context by Target Gender ANOVA for IEI Likeability Factor



VITA

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EDUCATION

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Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program
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Thesis Title: *The Impact of Relationship Context on Evaluations of the Sexual Behavior of Men and Women*

Committee: Alan Gross, Ph.D. (Chair)
John Young, Ph.D.
Nick Prins, Ph.D.

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Degree Awarded: December 2007

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Adult Therapist for Region IV Community Mental Health Center (Practicum)

Supervisor: Scott Gustafson, Ph.D.

Providing individual therapy to adults with serious mental illness

Running a Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group for adults with Borderline Personality Disorder and Borderline traits.

Graduate Level Therapist

Supervisor: Alan Gross, Ph.D.
Psychological Services Center at University of Mississippi
June 2009 to May 2010

Supervisor: Scott Gustafson, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: Kelly Wilson, Ph.D.
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Behavioral Consultant for Desoto County School System (Practicum)

Supervisor: Sheila Williamson, Ph.D.
Developing and monitoring implementation of behavior plans for children in a public school system
July 2009 to May 2010

Research Assistant at the University of Mississippi

Assisted in data collection and examination
Supervisor: Elizabeth Kolivas, M.A.
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PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Berkout, O., Schnetzer, L., Heiden, L., Hight, T., Damon, J., & Young, J. (2010, November)
Relationship between loneliness and psychopathology in a large sample of children and adolescents. Poster presentation at the annual meeting of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, San Francisco, CA.

Berkout, O., Kim, E., Heiden, L., Hight, T., Damon, J., & Young, J. (2010, November)
Relationship between suicidality and aggressive behavior in a large adolescent sample. Poster presentation at the annual meeting of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, San Francisco, CA.

