

## **Gender Differences in Scripts for Different Types of Dates<sup>1</sup>**

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*The primary objective of this study was to determine whether males and females have different views about the partner behaviors that constitute positive, negative, and typical dating experiences. Undergraduate students (50 males, 70 females; primarily Caucasian) were asked to rate the likelihood of sexually suggestive and nonsexual events in "good," "bad," and "typical" date contexts. For good and typical dates, men and women identified many of the same events as likely to occur. However, sexually charged events were more salient for men in these contexts, as shown by the higher mean likelihood ratings men gave to items describing sexually suggestive partner behaviors. For bad dates, there was a striking gender difference in the behaviors judged likely to occur. Women gave higher mean likelihood ratings to sexually charged events in bad dates. Furthermore, women incorporated sexually charged events in their scripts whereas men did not. These findings have implications for our understanding of how males and females view the development of sexual intimacy in dating.*

The recent interest in the study of dating experiences can likely be attributed to the paradoxical nature of dating relationships. Dating can either

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promote healthy adult relationships (Knox & Wilson, 1981) or lead to violent and coercive exchanges (DeKeseredy & Kelley, 1993; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Past research has considered why people date (McCabe, 1984; Rice, 1984), what qualities are sought after in a dating partner (Hansen, 1977; Roscoe, Diana, & Brooks, 1987), as well as the influence of peer pressure (Brown, 1982) and gender roles on dating behavior (McCabe & Collins, 1979). Yet, the question of how individuals *evaluate* their own dating experiences has not been addressed empirically. It seems reasonable to presume that, if asked to reflect on their own dating experiences, most people would agree that all dates are not equally enjoyable. However, little is known about the factors that are considered in judgments of whether a date is progressing well or poorly. The general aim of this study was to determine whether men and women agree about the kinds of behaviors that dating partners exhibit on good, bad, and typical dates.

### *Dating Scripts*

It is well established people develop cognitive scripts for stereotyped sequences of events that are routinely performed (e.g., going shopping, eating at a restaurant; see Abelson, 1981; Schank and Abelson, 1977). People also develop scripts for social interactions, such as flirting, dating, and initiating/advancing sexual intimacy (McCormick, 1987; Pryor & Merluzzi, 1985; Rose & Frieze, 1989, 1993). Research has already shown that people can readily generate male and female scripts for a hypothetical "first date" (Rose & Frieze, 1989). However, events described by participants tend to be fairly neutral in tone (Pryor & Merluzzi, 1985) and confined to occurrences that one might expect on a typical date. This corresponds to what script theorists refer to as "cultural scenarios" (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Cultural scenarios are collectively developed instructional guides that outline the likely sequence of events for a given social interaction and the expected behavior required by specific roles. They are not entirely predictive of actual behavior because they are too general to be applied in all circumstances; individuals must modify the cultural scenario and generate appropriate action sequences in order to meet the demands of a given situation. The action of shaping a generic script to fit the current context is referred to as "interpersonal scripting."

In a study aimed at illustrating the process of interpersonal scripting, Rose and Frieze (1993) asked respondents to describe their actual behavior on their most recent dates. The investigators found that actual (interpersonal) scripts required a wider range of actions to describe them than did hypothetical (cultural) scenarios, reflecting the notion that cultural scripts

form a core action sequence which is elaborated upon during actual dates. Interestingly, the scripts that participants generated for both hypothetical and actual dates tended to be limited to structural aspects of a date (i.e., preparation, planning and payment for date activities) rather than interpersonal exchanges. The current study attempts to go beyond previous research by asking respondents to consider the "person-centered" rather than the "activity-centered" events that comprise different types of dates. This emphasis on interpersonal events is based on the assumption that positive or negative evaluations of a date will depend more heavily on a dating partner's behavior and its perceived appropriateness (or inappropriateness) than on the details surrounding specific date activities.

Indirect support for the idea that a partner's behavior is key to understanding how people evaluate their dating experiences is provided in a recent discussion paper on sexual scripts (McCormick, 1987). Although the example given by the author pertains to interpersonal scripting strategies and the initiation of sexual contact, the same rationale can be applied to dating situations: "knowing the generic script for seduction would not help a client develop social competence with prospective partners . . . Instead, she or he would have to learn how to tailor the generic script to a particular partner and situation." (McCormick, 1987; p. 7). Similarly, familiarity with a generic dating script does not ensure that an individual will execute the script-relevant actions in such a manner that both partners would describe the interaction as a "good" date. In fact, it is possible that failure to adapt the generic script to a specific dating situation is what constitutes a "bad" date. The present study examines whether there are particular interpersonal scripts adopted by dating partners that individuals associate with "good" and "bad" as well as "typical" dates.

### *Gender Differences*

If indeed distinct scripts are related to different types of dates, there are good reasons to suspect that males and females will differ with respect to the partner behaviors they include in these scripts. People advance various reasons for engaging in social dating and the reasons deemed most important are likely to differ for men and women. Gender differences in dating goals may, in turn, lead men and women to have disparate notions regarding normative partner behavior for different types of dates. In one study, respondents cited goals such as sexual activity, recreation, socialization, mate selection/courtship, companionship, emotional intimacy, and status grading as possible motivations for dating (Roscoe et al., 1987). Gender-linked differences emerged for two of these items: women more fre-

quently mentioned emotional intimacy, whereas men more frequently cited sexual activity as a motivation for dating. In a study that focused specifically on sexuality, college dating couples were asked to rate the importance of "desire for sexual activity" as a dating goal (Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1977). Male respondents rated this goal as significantly more important than did females. Thus it seems reasonable to hypothesize that women's date scripts may contain more partner behaviors involving development of emotional intimacy whereas men's scripts may be more sexually oriented.

These proposed differences in men's and women's dating scripts parallel those described by script theorists in the context of sexual activity. Women are said to be more likely to incorporate emotional intimacy and commitment in their sexual scripts (Reiss, 1986; Simon & Gagnon, 1986) while male sexuality is said to be dominated by the "casual sex" script (Marsiglio, 1988; Reed & Weinberg, 1984). Research conducted with college students support this interpretation; emotional involvement was viewed as a prerequisite for engaging in sexual intercourse by more women than men (Carroll, Volk, & Hyde, 1985). Eighty-five percent of females said that such involvement was required "always" or "most of the time," while 61% of males said "never" or "sometimes." The notion that males are more likely to adhere to a casual sex script is further supported by the findings of a meta-analysis on gender differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors. Effect sizes computed across numerous studies showed that men held much more positive attitudes towards intercourse within a casual dating relationship ( $d = .81$ ; Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

Some theorists have attributed this attitudinal difference to sex-role socialization which emphasizes the importance of engaging in sexual behavior for males (Gross, 1978; Herek, 1986) and refraining from/restricting sexual activity for females (Fine, 1988; McCormick, 1987). Regardless of its origin, the gender difference in attitudes towards casual sex may help to explain why the same display of sexually suggestive behavior during a social interaction may be interpreted as harassment by a woman and reasonable or even complimentary by a man. Applied to a dating context, this difference in perception leads to the hypothesis that men will be more likely than women to construe sexual overtures by a partner as components of a "good date" situation. Conversely, it is predicted that women will be more likely than men to emphasize emotional intimacy in their descriptions of partner behaviors on a "good date."

In addition to the gender difference in outlook with respect to consensual casual sex, research has indicated that women are better at distinguishing between coercive or violent sexual themes and ambiguous events in mainstream videos (Humphreys & Desmarais, 1992). These findings suggest that males and females should differ in their understanding of cues

that identify inappropriate sexual behaviors in real-life dating situations. Consequently, it is hypothesized that women will be more likely than men to report that a "bad date" includes sexual overtures by a partner.

It is unclear whether to expect gender differences in what is construed as a "typical date." In prior research, men and women exhibited high agreement regarding the elements of the script for a first date (Rose & Frieze, 1989, 1993). In a similar vein, it may be that men and women do not differ in their views of what is "standard" partner behavior on a "typical" date.

Finally, no gender differences or date type by gender interaction effects are hypothesized for nonsexual events. Nevertheless, it is expected that there may be differences across date types with respect to the rated likelihood of each nonsexual event.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

One hundred and twenty university students (50 men and 70 women; primarily Caucasian) were recruited to participate in a study of dating and sexual behavior. The majority of participants ( $n = 114$ ) were enrolled in introductory psychology courses and given course credit for their participation. Nonpsychology students from the same university ( $n = 6$ ) were offered a token monetary compensation (\$5.00). There were no significant differences between the two groups of students with respect to responses on the dependent measures ( $t$ 's  $< 1$ ). Students ranged in age from 18 to 26 years ( $M = 20.12$  years,  $SD = 1.60$  years).

Background information, including information about respondents' dating and sexual history, was collected. Students were asked to indicate their sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual), number of casual and steady dating partners, and age at which they started dating. All respondents reported being heterosexual and having had dating experience with one or more casual or steady dating partners. No gender differences emerged with respect to the number of casual ( $M_{\text{Males}} = 9.70$ ,  $M_{\text{Females}} = 7.46$ ;  $t < 1$ ) or steady dating partners ( $M_{\text{Males}} = 2.85$ ,  $M_{\text{Females}} = 2.35$ ;  $t < 1$ ) reported. The average age that respondents started dating was around 15 years old ( $M_{\text{Males}} = 15.64$ ,  $M_{\text{Females}} = 15.24$ ;  $t < 1$ ).

Respondents were also asked about the extent of their heterosexual erotic experience and the number of sexual partners they had. Bentler's (1968a, 1968b) scales of heterosexual erotic experience revealed differences in the types of sexual experiences that men and women had. The 22 items in this scale are arranged in a hierarchy (from kissing to anal intercourse)

and respondents indicate whether they have ever engaged in the specified sexual acts within a dating context. On average, men reported having engaged in a greater number of activities ( $M = 16.74$ ,  $SD = 5.26$ ) than women ( $M = 14.43$ ,  $SD = 6.21$ ;  $t_{(2,112)} = 2.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Men and women did not differ in the number of sexual partners that they reported ( $M_{\text{Males}} = 3.60$ ,  $M_{\text{Females}} = 2.99$ ;  $t < 1$ ).<sup>3</sup>

### *Likelihood Ratings*

In the effort to discover the normative behaviors associated with different types of date scripts, participants were presented with a list of 19 partner behaviors and asked to indicate how likely it was that each would occur given that the respondent was on (i) a good date, (ii) a bad date, and (iii) a typical date. These behaviors were adapted from investigations of the cues that convey interest in dating (Fichten, Tagalakis, Judd, Wright, & Amsel, 1992; Muehlenhard, Koralewski, Andrews, & Burdick, 1986), as well as from anecdotal accounts provided by colleagues. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale with values ranging from 1 "not at all likely" to 7 "very likely."

Of the 19 items rated, 8 dealt with sexual activity and sexual suggestiveness (i.e., they comprised "sexually charged" events). Four of the items were "sexually direct" in nature: your date makes sexual advances too early, your date rejects your sexual advances, your date repeatedly tells you how sexy you look, and your date kisses you. The other four items were non-verbal flirtation behaviors that connote sexual interest: your date makes an effort to sit close to you, your date leans in close to you whenever you are sitting together, your date repeatedly touches you, and your date stares at you. These last 4 items, although not overtly sexual in nature, were included because they represent behaviors that are used to escalate social encounters into the sexual realm (McCormick & Jones, 1989).

The remaining 11 items dealt with nonsexual events. Two of these items dealt with payment rather than interpersonal exchanges: your date and you each pay for yourself and your date pays for everything. Another item tapped partner compatibility rather than an actual event: your date and you have similar interests. All other items dealt with verbal and non-verbal events: your date smiles at you a lot, your date holds your hand, your date hugs you, your date makes you laugh, your date compliments

<sup>3</sup>Individuals who reported 25 or more sexual partners were not included in this analysis. Two people reported having had 25 partners and one person reported 50. These outlier values skewed the distribution significantly and were subsequently dropped.

you, your date talks about his/her previous girl/boyfriend, your date does not talk very much, and your date listens when you talk about yourself.

### *Procedure*

The test materials were administered to respondents individually by a same-sex experimenter. Participants were given both a written and an oral description of the study and then were left alone in a private room to fill out the survey. No time constraints were imposed. After they completed the measures, participants were given feedback regarding the hypotheses and expected results.

## RESULTS

### *Gender Differences in Perception of Sexually Suggestive Partner Behavior*

The relationship between gender and the perception of sexually suggestive dating cues was assessed by submitting the 8 relevant dependent measures to a 2 (gender)  $\times$  3 (date type) repeated measures MANOVA. Interaction effects were expected for this group of items such that males would rate them as more likely in good dates, females would rate them as more likely in bad dates and no gender differences would occur in typical dates. As expected, the gender by date type interaction was significant when all 8 dependent variables were considered together ( $F_{(16,452)} = 6.51, p < .001$ ). The MANOVA was followed up with a series of univariate repeated measures ANOVAs conducted on each of the 8 items. Significant gender by date type interactions emerged for 5 of the 8 items (means and approximate F's appear in Table I).<sup>4</sup>

The hypothesis that men would be more likely than women to construe sexually suggestive partner behaviors as components of a "good date" was supported when the "indirect" sexual items were considered. Planned comparisons<sup>5</sup> indicated that men gave significantly higher likelihood ratings to 3 of the 4 flirtation items in a good date situation: your date stares at you,

<sup>4</sup>In order to compensate for the fact that multiple tests were conducted, a more stringent criterion of  $p < .0026$  was adopted to protect against inflated alpha levels (the new criterion was derived by dividing conventional alpha level .05 by the number of univariate ANOVA comparisons made, i.e., 19).

<sup>5</sup>The assumption of homogeneity of variances across gender was not met in all cases. Dunn-Bonferroni t-tests were conducted when the variances for the male and female subsamples were equal whereas the Games-Howell technique (Studentized q statistic) was used when there was heterogeneity of variance.

**Table I.** Mean Likelihood Ratings of Partner Behaviors in Good, Bad, and Typical Dates by Respondent Gender<sup>a</sup>

Item	Sexually Suggestive Partner Behaviors					
	Date Type			Significant Effects		
	Good	Bad	Typical	Interaction Effects	Gender Effects	Date Type Effects
Your date makes sexual advances too early.						
Males	3.24	3.06	3.08	$F_{(2,115)} = 36.2$	$F_{(1,116)} = 13.7$	$F_{(2,115)} = 31.2$
Females	2.32	5.82	2.99	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p < .001$
Your date repeatedly tells you how sexy you look.						
Males	4.76	2.12	3.60	$F_{(2,115)} = 7.9$		$F_{(2,115)} = 26.8$
Females	4.24	3.60	3.40	$p < .001$		$p < .001$
Your date kisses you.						
Males	6.02	2.10	5.10			$F_{(2,115)} = 136.8$
Females	5.85	3.11	5.44			$p < .001$
Your date rejects your sexual advances.						
Males	2.90	5.10	3.18			$F_{(2,115)} = 28.8$
Females	2.81	3.85	2.69			$p < .001$
Your date stares at you.						
Males	5.20	3.14	4.20			$F_{(2,115)} = 19.8$
Females	4.50	4.09	3.83			$p < .001$
Your date makes an effort to sit close to you.						
Males	6.10	2.02	5.12	$F_{(2,115)} = 7.6$		$F_{(2,115)} = 194.9$
Females	6.10	3.29	4.88	$p < .001$		$p < .001$
Your date leans in close to you whenever you are sitting together.						
Males	5.82	2.12	4.68	$F_{(2,115)} = 13.7$		$F_{(2,115)} = 80.1$
Females	5.06	3.49	4.18	$p < .001$		$p < .001$
Your date repeatedly touches you.						
Males	5.22	2.24	4.28	$F_{(2,115)} = 13.7$		$F_{(2,115)} = 18.1$
Females	4.12	4.07	3.75	$p < .001$		$p < .001$
Nonsexual Partner Behaviors						
Your date and you each pay for yourself.						
Males	3.74	3.88	3.82			
Females	4.29	4.00	4.47			
Your date pays for everything.						
Males	3.34	3.08	2.64	$F_{(2,115)} = 7.5$	$F_{(1,116)} = 28.6$	$F_{(2,115)} = 7.3$
Females	4.53	3.27	4.31	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p < .001$
Your date and you have similar interests.						
Males	6.06	2.24	5.26			$F_{(2,115)} = 343.3$
Females	6.37	2.07	5.24			$p < .001$



Table I (continued)

Item	Nonsexual Partner Behaviors					
	Date Type			Significant Effects		
	Good	Bad	Typical	Interaction Effects	Gender Effects	Date Type Effects
Your date smiles at you a lot.						
Males	6.40	2.08	5.48			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 381.5 p < .001
Females	6.56	2.50	5.72			
Your date holds your hand.						
Males	5.56	2.26	4.88			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 96.1 p < .001
Females	5.78	2.79	4.82			
Your date hugs you.						
Males	5.98	2.16	5.16			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 158.8 p < .001
Females	6.00	2.93	5.24			
Your date makes you laugh.						
Males	6.18	1.80	5.32	F <sub>(1,116)</sub> = 17.3 p < .001	F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 829.8 p < .001	
Females	6.82	1.87	5.84			
Your date compliments you.						
Males	5.54	2.42	4.74			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 153.1 p < .001
Females	5.69	2.68	5.02			
Your date talks about previous girl/boy-friend.						
Males	2.38	5.62	3.12			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 155.2 p < .001
Females	1.93	5.63	2.59			
Your date does not talk very much.						
Males						F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 97.1 p < .001
Females	2.28	5.08	3.02			
	1.85	5.29	2.40			
Your date listens when you talk about yourself.						
Males	5.96	2.45	5.37			F <sub>(2,115)</sub> = 219.1 p < .001
Females	6.27	2.47	5.23			

<sup>a</sup>Items were rated on a 7-point scale: 1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely.

your date leans in close to you whenever you are sitting together, and your date repeatedly touches you. There was also a significant gender difference favoring males on the sexually direct item “your date makes sexual advances too early,” however, neither men’s nor women’s mean scores were above the midpoint on the likelihood rating scale. No additional gender differences emerged in the context of a “good date.”

The hypothesis that women would be more likely than men to report that a "bad date" contained sexual events was also supported. Women gave significantly higher likelihood ratings to 7 of the 8 items in a bad date situation albeit scores fell above the scale midpoint in only 3 cases: your date makes sexual advances too early, your date stares at you, and your date repeatedly touches you. Interestingly, the item "your date rejects your sexual advances" was rated by men as significantly more likely to be part of a bad date.

As predicted, there were no significant gender differences in the likelihood ratings of either sexually direct or sexually connotative partner behaviors in the context of a "typical date."

### *Nonsexual Events*

Eleven of the 19 items rated dealt with nonsexual events. These items were initially analyzed using a 2 (gender)  $\times$  3 (date type) repeated measures MANOVA. Although no interaction or gender effects were expected, it was anticipated that mean likelihood ratings for this group of items would differ according to date type. The results of this analysis revealed that there was in fact an interaction effect ( $F_{(22,442)} = 1.97, p < .01$ ); however, follow-up univariate analyses revealed that this effect was solely attributable to a significant interaction effect for the item "your date pays for everything." Another MANOVA conducted on the nonsexual items after this payment item was omitted yielded significant main effects for date type ( $F_{(20,440)} = 19.09, p < .001$ ) and gender ( $F_{(10,106)} = 3.57, p < .001$ ) but no interaction. For succinctness, a summary of the univariate means and approximate F's appears in Table I.

Two of the eleven nonsexual items dealt with payment issues. As mentioned above, the item "your date pays for everything" showed a significant interaction effect; women rated the event as significantly more likely in both good and typical dates while men and women did not differ in their ratings of this item for a bad date. The item "your date and you each pay for yourself" showed no significant gender or date type effects.

The presence of humor during dates was tapped by the item "your date makes you laugh." A significant gender effect was found wherein women rated this item as more likely than men. A main effect also emerged for date type, with likelihood ratings highest in good date situations and lowest in the context of a bad date.

Another item tapped respondents' thoughts regarding compatibility: "your date and you have similar interests." There was a main effect of date

type, whereby the item was rated more likely on good dates ( $M = 6.24$ ), than it was on typical ( $M = 5.25$ ), or bad dates ( $M = 2.14$ ).

Behaviors that connote affection between the partners, "your date smiles at you a lot," "your date holds your hand," and "your date hugs you" showed significant main effects for date type. Each of these behaviors was rated most likely on good dates and least likely on bad dates, with typical dates falling somewhere in the middle. The mean likelihood ratings for each behavior were as follows: "your date smiles at you a lot"— $M_{\text{Good}} = 6.48$ ,  $M_{\text{Typical}} = 5.62$ ,  $M_{\text{Bad}} = 2.32$ ; "your date holds your hand"— $M_{\text{Good}} = 5.68$ ,  $M_{\text{Typical}} = 4.85$ ,  $M_{\text{Bad}} = 2.59$ ; and "your date hugs you"— $M_{\text{Good}} = 5.98$ ,  $M_{\text{Typical}} = 5.20$ ,  $M_{\text{Bad}} = 2.61$ .

Significant main effects were also found for verbal behaviors by the partner. The item "your date compliments you" was rated most likely on good dates ( $M = 5.63$ ), then typical dates ( $M = 4.0$ ) then bad dates ( $M = 2.66$ ). Items describing less positive verbal behaviors, "your date talks about his/her previous girl/boyfriend" and "your date does not talk very much," were rated most likely to occur on bad dates and much less likely on typical or good dates ( $M_{\text{Bad}} = 5.64$ ,  $M_{\text{Typical}} = 2.81$ ,  $M_{\text{Good}} = 2.12$  and  $M_{\text{Bad}} = 5.22$ ,  $M_{\text{Typical}} = 2.66$ ,  $M_{\text{Good}} = 2.02$ , respectively).

One item, "your date listens when you talk about yourself," tapped the partner's attentiveness during verbal exchanges. Ratings for this behavior showed a significant main effect for date type such that listening behavior was rated most likely in a good date ( $M = 6.11$ ), then in a typical date ( $M = 5.29$ ), and least likely in a bad date ( $M = 2.46$ ).

### *Characterization of Good, Bad, and Typical Dates*

In previous research, scripts have been defined as consisting of actions mentioned by more than 25% of participants (Bower, Black, & Turner, 1979; Rose & Frieze, 1989). This strategy was adopted in order to delineate a script for each type of date. The scale used to evaluate each partner behavior ranged from 1 "not at all likely" to 7 "very likely"; thus behaviors that were rated above the midpoint of "4" were at least somewhat likely to occur during the course of a particular type of date. If more than 25% of the respondents rated an item as greater than "4" that item was included in the script for that date, despite the fact that males and females sometimes differed significantly in the mean likelihood rating they assigned the item. Table II shows the partner behaviors which comprise good, bad, and typical date scripts.

Respondents agreed that 13 different partner behaviors were at least somewhat likely on a good date. For each of these events, 43% or more

**Table II.** Date Events Rated as Likely Components of Good, Bad, and Typical Dates by at Least 25% of Sample

Item	Good		Bad		Typical	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Your date makes sexual advances too early.				*		
Your date repeatedly tells you how sexy you look.	*	*		*	*	
Your date kisses you.	*	*			*	*
Your date rejects your sexual advances.			*	*		
Your date stares at you.	*	*		*	*	*
Your date makes an effort to sit close to you.	*	*			*	*
Your date leans in close to you whenever you are sitting together.	*	*		*	*	*
Your date repeatedly touches you.	*	*		*	*	*
Your date and you each pay for yourself.		*	*	*	*	*
Your date pays for everything.		*				*
Your date and you have similar interests.	*	*			*	*
Your date smiles at you a lot.	*	*			*	*
Your date holds your hand.	*	*			*	*
Your date hugs you.	*	*			*	*
Your date makes you laugh.	*	*			*	*
Your date compliments you.	*	*			*	*
Your date talks about his/her previous girl/boyfriend.			*	*		
Your date does not talk very much.			*	*		
Your date listens when you talk about yourself.	*	*			*	*

of the sample rated the item as a "5" or higher. There was some disagreement about payment issues however. Women included both "your date pays for everything" and "your date and you each pay for yourself" in their script for a good date whereas men did not.

The script that emerged for a typical date included all of the same behaviors that comprised a good date except that only men included "your date repeatedly tells you how sexy you look" as a component. Also, both men and women incorporated the item "your date and you each pay for yourself" into their scripts. The item "your date pays for everything" still belonged exclusively in women's scripts.

Finally, male and female respondents rated 4 events as likely on a bad date: "your date talks about his/her previous girl/boyfriend," "your date rejects your sexual advances," "your date does not talk very much," and "your date and you each pay for yourself." Women's scripts included additional items that expressed or connoted sexual interest which were not present in men's scripts: "your date makes sexual advances too early," "your date repeatedly tells you how sexy you look," "your date repeatedly touches you," "your date leans in close to you whenever you are sitting together," and "your date stares at you."

## DISCUSSION

In this study, undergraduates were recruited in order to investigate whether there are differences in women's and men's reports of partners' sexual and non-sexual behaviors in dating. As hypothesized, a relationship emerged between gender and the reporting of sexually oriented partner behaviors. The higher likelihood ratings male respondents gave to sexually suggestive partner behaviors in a good date supports earlier research that portrays men's dating goals as more likely to be sexually oriented (Gross, 1978; Peplau, Rubin, & Hill, 1978). Interestingly, female respondents gave higher likelihood ratings to these same events in bad dates. This finding is not inconsistent with the notion that women are more likely to emphasize the development of emotional intimacy rather than sexual intimacy during dating (Reiss, 1986; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). It seems plausible to suggest that men's greater acceptance of sexual activity within a casual dating relationship might lead to attempts at initiating/advancing sexual intimacy at a point that is perceived by dating partners as too early and therefore inappropriate. Other researchers take this argument a step further, asserting that the dating situation is sufficiently ambiguous that some men will inevitably resort to using coercive tactics in order to obtain sexual contact during dating (Ryan, 1988). It is therefore important to learn more about the interpersonal scripting strategies used to "fill in the gaps" in dating as some of these strategies may lead to coercive sex.

It is not known whether the unwelcome sexually suggestive behaviors reported by female respondents in their bad dates tended to occur during (1) casual or (2) more established relationships, although it seems that the former state of affairs is more likely. If the women in this sample were in fact referring to events that occurred in the early stages of dating relationships, then these unwanted acts may simply be attributable to misperceptions of sexual intentions by an unfamiliar partner. However, a recent study comparing men's and women's conceptualizations of what constitutes sexually coercive behavior casts some doubt on the notion that sexual intent is commonly misperceived (McCaw & Senn, 1993). Male participants in McCaw and Senn's study were capable of identifying the behaviors that signalled unwillingness to engage in sexual activity and acknowledged that it was wrong to disregard a woman's refusal to have sex. Yet, having demonstrated their comprehension of these issues, they went on to compose scenarios depicting how they might attempt to persuade a partner to have sex using coercive techniques. Given the substantial proportion of women in this study who reported unwanted sexually oriented behaviors as part of their bad dates, it is important to conduct further research on dating experiences to determine whether the factors that encourage males to place

greater emphasis on sexual activity (Marsiglio, 1988) also lead men to pursue that goal when they are aware that it is inappropriate.

Turning to nonsexual behaviors, 10 of the 11 items showed significant date type effects. This finding was in line with the hypotheses and consistent with the notion that there are identifiable interpersonal scripting strategies associated with different date types. Only 2 of the nonsexual behaviors showed gender-linked patterns of responses, with women rating both "your date pays for everything" and "your date makes you laugh" as more likely on a good date. Thus it appears that the effect of gender on dating scripts is more powerful in the sexual realm.

Overall, it seems that people have quite distinct scripts for what constitutes a bad date, and that men and women differ in the partner behaviors they include in these scripts. Women incorporated sexually charged partner behaviors in their bad date scripts (i.e., more than 25% agreed that sexually oriented events were likely to occur) whereas men did not. Women also gave higher mean likelihood ratings to sexually charged events in bad dates. The findings regarding good and typical dates were less clear; many of the same behaviors were rated as likely to occur in both types of dates. Nevertheless, there were significant differences with respect to the magnitude of the likelihood ratings that respondents assigned to each item in the two types of dates. Also, there were striking gender differences in the mean ratings of some of these events. Despite the fact that a substantial percentage (i.e., greater than 25%) of men and women did agree regarding the partner behaviors that were likely to occur in good and typical dates, the strategy used to construct scripts for each date type (see Bower et al., 1979; Rose & Frieze, 1989) obscured the fact that men actually gave significantly higher mean ratings to sexually suggestive partner behaviors in good dates. Thus, in both good and bad dates, the main differences between male and female dating scripts centered around sexual content. However, the results of the current study indicate that men's and women's scripts are most likely to differ when bad dates are examined; the finding that a sizable number of female respondents describe sexually oriented partner behavior in their bad dates is consistent with the possibility that some men's interpersonal scripting strategies include coercive tactics to obtain sex.

There were some limitations in the current study that the reader should bear in mind; these should be addressed in future research if possible. First, it is conceivable that a volunteer bias may have existed wherein participants who chose to take part in this study were individuals who felt more comfortable discussing "dating and sexual behavior." Second, in order to elucidate the factors that influence evaluations of dating experiences, it would be advisable to reproduce and expand on the results obtained here by using a larger sample and a more extensive list of partner behaviors.

Another approach would be to ask participants to describe their own dates via open-ended questions, allowing them to generate their dating scripts spontaneously rather than requiring them to respond to fixed options. Either of these approaches could assist in furnishing clearer distinctions between what constitutes a "good" versus a "typical" date. Third, respondents should be asked to specify whether they are referring to "early" or "later" dates in an effort to clarify whether a male "casual sex" script accounts for the tendency by women to mention partners' sexually oriented behaviors in the context of bad dates.

Given that there are gender differences in dating scripts, one of the next logical steps would be to examine at what age these script differences begin to emerge, and what stimulates these differences. For instance, it would be useful to determine whether dating scripts are invariant or whether they are influenced by factors such as upbringing, dating experience, peer pressure, and exposure to the media. Such knowledge would help sex educators develop better instructional material and may assist informed parents and counsellors in their efforts to provide accurate information regarding the development of gender-based dating norms.

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