5-2012

'Talking' During Early Romantic Courtship: An Empirical Examination of Potential Sex Differences in Self-Reported Beliefs and Behaviors

Eric James Anderson
East Tennessee State University

'Talking' During Early Romantic Courtship: An Empirical Examination of Potential Sex
Differences in Self-Reported Beliefs and Behaviors

_____

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Sociology

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Sociology

_____

by

Eric Anderson

May 2012

_____

Dr. Paul Kamolnick, Chair

Dr. Joseph Baker

Dr. Leslie McCallister

Keywords: Talking, Script Theory, Sociobiology Theory, Relationships, Differences in
Males and Females

ABSTRACT

'Talking' During Early Romantic Courtship: An Empirical Examination of Potential Sex

Differences in Self-Reported Beliefs and Behaviors

This thesis tests various hypotheses from a variety of research traditions that predict the

likelihood for potential sex differences in "talking": a newly-emergent phase of romantic

courtship. Data for this study was derived from a purposive sample of 566 students

enrolled during the Fall 2011 semester generated using a self-administered survey

available on the East Tennessee State University SONA system. Statistical analyses using

chi-square, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and binary logistic regression reveal

statistically significant differences for males and females on beliefs about sexual

exclusivity and sexual activity during the "talking" phase. Significant behavioral

differences exist in whether "talking" is viewed instrumentally as a means for

information gathering. However, contrary to expectation, males and females did not

reveal significant differences in how they defined "talking." It is suggested that future

research further expand the types of variables included, and further efforts be made to

combine quantitative and qualitative data sources.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "talking," in the sense of a romantic relationship, has not been subject to empirical examination. "Talking" is often viewed as a behind-the-scenes, private, and stepping-stone relationship by those in the current generation. Depending on who is asked, "talking" is close to either end of a spectrum, from "hooking-up[1]" to "officially dating." The present study examines select factors potentially influencing how persons interpret the substantive meaning of "talking." Various definitions of "talking," and acceptable and desirable rituals that accompany it are also described. Two theories inform the present study of this significant and distinct form of relationship: script theory and socio-biological theory. Script theorists focus on sexual rituals involved in the romantic relationship process, whereas sociobiologists focus the instrumental nature of sexual relationships to further reproductive success and hence adaptive advantage.

---

[1] Hooking-up refers to when two people that have either just met or have been casual acquaintances agree to engage in some form of sexual behavior, including but not limited to sexual intercourse. This initial action by both parties does not dictate that there is future action or commitment for either individual towards the other (Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Script Theory

When applied to the relationship context, social script theory states that individuals are guided by scripts, and these scripts themselves are based in cultural norms and the expectations of others. Gagnon and Simon (1973) explain that a script first creates a mutually shared convention that allow two people to participate in a complex sexual act involving mutual interaction; and second, incites arousal and a predisposition to sexual activity by affecting an individual's internal state and motivation. Script theory emphasizes the symbolic meaning of behaviors and asserts (e.g. Oliver and Hyde 1993) that sexual behavior is also symbolic and is associated with a variety of activities in the social realm, especially those actions involving the scripts designed to obtain sex (Laumann et al. 1994; Longmore 1998).

Laner and Ventrone (2000) assert that both men and women enter courtship with a definite wielding of the scripts they should adhere to. Moreover, Wiederman (2005) claims that scripts are internalized by individuals, as they try to create meaning out of behavior, responses, and emotions. This internalization enhances behaviors expressed by individuals during sexual and relational encounters, and as a result, each plays a complementary role in the relationship. Script theorists presume that scripts are adaptations created to fit desired interpersonal and intra-psychic contexts (Frith and Kitzinger 2001). Gagnon and Simon (1973) find that the sexual and relational behavior in which people engage is strongly patterned by a culture that creates and directs

expectations. Script theory posits that sexuality itself is learned from culturally available messages that define what counts as sex; how individuals recognize sexual situations; and, how they respond to those situations (Frith and Kitzinger 2001). Social scripts are adaptive in interpersonal, highly-charged situations that can reduce anxiety and decrease uncertainty because individuals gain assurance of what to expect and how to act appropriately in situations (Wiederman 2005).

Relationship scripts are cognitive structures that comprise all key events that take place in a romantic relationship (Baldwin 1992). Individuals may possess scripts outlining the overall development of a relationship and that helps them to think efficiently about relationship events and subsequently plan their own script of appropriate behavior. Despite their anchor in cultural norms and expectations, these relationship scripts are never defined exactly alike; there is much variability in relationship scripts themselves and how the notable events in a relationship should proceed. Past interpersonal experiences exert a powerful influence on current behavior and the construction and understanding of new social information (Baldwin 1992). Holmberg and MacKenzie (2002) found that scripts are based, for example, on the experiences of family, friends, and the individual's unique values and past experiences. Any previous negative experiences with dating will influence how one interprets situations and the behaviors involved in one's romantic interest. A social script is important during the earliest stage of a relationship as it strongly guides an individual's action but also as it changes into a mutual script for the couple as the relationship progresses (Wiederman 2005).

As individuals enter into a romantic stage in the relationship, the couple evolves and adapts differing scripts to enhance relationship development and the couple's chances of staying together. Societal scripts have made women more capable of handling love on an interpersonal level than their male counterparts due in large part to the social factors that influence relationship schema (Lipman-Blumen 1984). The relationship will be viewed positively if the relationship is progressing in the manner expected. Research by Holmberg and MacKenzie (2002) suggests that determining and correcting script differences in the very beginning of romantic interaction may, as the relationship progresses, reduce problems.

Individuals are faced in the college setting with new social scripts. College, for most in their earlier years, accompanies the transition from adolescence to youngest adulthood. The peer culture of these college-based adolescents and early adults tolerates and may even promote sexual promiscuity (Laumann et al. 1994). This permissive context facilitates behavioral ambiguity as well as ambiguity in scripts that can entertain a multiplicity of potential responses and actions by individuals in presentations of self (Goffman 1959). More permissive sexual attitudes, moreover, make it harder to distinguish when a genuine interpersonal relationship officially begins; there is no defined script on how this event is to take place (Pierce 2011). What is meant by "dating" is also increasingly difficult to define. Several rival interpretations exist and the available sexual and romantic script possibilities are multiple, marking a substantial change from courtship scripts from years and decades past.

Sociobiology Theory

Sociobiologists assert that romantic encounters of any nature are actively explained by our desire as members of a natural species to survive and reproduce (Oliver and Hyde 1993). Male and female interaction patterns are rooted in the difference in reproductive success for each sex; this is explained by Darwin (1871) and Trivers (1972) respectively. Darwin's focus was on the evolution of traits used for sexual selection. The two main focal points of Darwin's research for romantic relationships are the concepts of male-male rivalry and female choice. Males compete with each other for females (rivalry), while females choose among competing males. These points laid the groundwork for socio-biology and lead to the development of sexual strategies theory.

Work by Trivers (1972) expanded on Darwin's theory, as it more fully explained the parental investment aspect of reproductive success. Trivers's theory of Parental Investment explains that each sex approaches investment differently, leading to a difference in social interaction. The biological differences in males and females lend to behavioral sex differences such as ritualized courtship (Kamolnick 2011). Males are less investing in offspring, meaning they will be more sexual competitive and less indiscriminate in their choice of sexual partner (Trivers 1972).

Sexual strategies theory, a sub-variant of sociobiological theory applied to the study of human mate preferences, asserts that individuals behave in a romantic relationship in a manner conducive to that end. Buss and Schmitt (1993) find that in general, males seek to mate more frequently with a greater variety of females. This finding was later replicated by Schmitt (2003) in his infamous cross-cultural study.

Another aspect of sexual strategies theory is that males require less time to elapse than women do before consenting to sexual intercourse (Buss and Schmitt 1993). A short-term 'sexual strategy' or 'short-term relationship' has been operationalized in the literature (Buss and Schmitt 1993) to comprise non-committal relationships that are either "one-night stands[2]" or brief affairs. There are similarities between women and men in the early romantic period (Buss 1994), but they are most different in rituals and expectations during a one-night stand (Stewart, Stinnett, and Rosenfeld 2000).

Socio-biology theory states that men are more permissive on extramarital sex, but they are stricter in their opinions with women doing the same thing (Oliver and Hyde 1993). Stewart et al. (2000) find that females and males differ in what they typically seek and expect in a short-term relationship. Women in general are more concerned with resource acquisition, whereas men seek reproductive value. Depending on the environmental circumstances and other cues present, males and females may shift their strategy (essentially a mixed strategy) in order to guide their choices in a short-term relationship (Gangestad and Simpson 2000).

Most research on sexuality and romantic behavior finds that women typically seek less sex than men and hold less positive attitudes about non-committal, casual, premarital sex (Oliver and Hyde 1993). Human capital economics states that individuals will use the concept of investment in a relationship to specify the amount of resources to be involved in the relationship (Laumann et al. 1994). Men typically are more approving of casual sex

---

[2] The idea of having a one-night stand implies that two individuals, of any interpersonal context, will have a sexual encounter that lasts for only a single night. This is conceptualized in the idea of a "short term relationship" as used by Buss and Schmitt (1993).

and have a larger number and variety of sexual partners (Regan and Berscheid 1999), whereas women typically have fewer sexual partners and typically disapprove of casual sex, as they risk losing more resources (Oliver and Hyde 1993).

The Nature and Meaning of Being in a Relationship

A positive romantic relationship may lead to better mental health, as those not in romantic relationships are more anxious than those who are in one (McCall 1982). Being in a negative romantic relationship, or one with problems or a premature ending, leads to relationship stress that can lead to internal distress and depression (La Greca and Harrison 2005). McCall (1982) notes that a failed relationship creates doubt as to the individual's ability to maintain a relationship, as well as one's competency as a social actor. This risk of a bad relationship coupled with the chance of depression could be an explanatory factor as to why there are differing stages of courtship than what was previously established. Goffman (1974) states that one does not bring one's underlying personality into a situation; instead presenting a folk personality. The varying stages of a relationship could signify more of the "core personality" (Goffman 1974) coming to light, further helping to explain why new relationship stages have emerged.

Women are reportedly more likely than men to act to control their partner's activities regardless of the stage of relationship (Stets 1993). Though apparently in contrast to typical sociological platitudes, women invest more in each stage of an interpersonal relationship (Lipman-Blumen 1984; Pierce 2011). Much of the power that women typically exert in society is based in interpersonal life such as love and romantic involvement with another individual (Lipman-Blumen 1984). The potential for increased

power or potential loss leads females to more strictly define their definition of acceptable rituals and practices during any stage of a romantic relationship.

Relational Uncertainty and Transitions

Berger and Bradac (1982) looked at the various fundamental aspects that create ambiguity in a relationship and found the most important being relationship uncertainty. This uncertainty deals with questions about the relationship itself and is more abstract in nature as it deals with the relationship as a dyad. Relationship uncertainty can ultimately lead to a break-up, as it will create either differing scripts or strain the sexual strategy employed by each participant in the relationship. Jackson et al. (2011) define dating as a form of courtship or ritualistic social activities between two individuals that can lead to deepening the relationship over time. The transition from casual dating to more serious involvement is particularly turbulent during courtship (Solomon and Knoblach 2004). Relational uncertainty is a form of dyadic turmoil that can lead to one of two routes largely based on investments made, and that provide a coping mechanism for the relationship transition(s) and uncertainty (Laumann et al. 1994). The first route is "extradyadic" involvement (Weiderman and Hurd 1999); the second, the redefinition of the dyadic relationship as an intimate one (Solomon and Knoblach 2004).

Relationships that fail are of importance to the broader network, as the break-up must be public (Blumstein and Kollock 1998). Some researchers feel there is an erosion of the middle ground in regard to relationships, as individuals can become serious in a distinct manner of ways (Pierce 2011). The increase in seriousness with another individual usually dictates that the level of interdependence in the relationship also

increases. A relationship with high interdependence is close but is also more apt to have conflict that could lead to a failed relationship (Blumstein and Kollock 1998). Casual dating rituals are commonly seen as part of the transition to a more serious relationship (Jackson et al. 2011). This may not hold entirely true as Denizet-Lewis (2004) discovered that students found it weird to be asked on a date.

Infidelity

Cheating on one's partner is considered wrong in a relationship by approximately 80 percent of adults (GSS 2008), yet it still occurs at all stages of interpersonal involvement. Infidelity violates relationship norms governing what is deemed an acceptable "extra-dyadic" interaction (Barta and Kiene 2005). One element of any relationship is the way an individual handles infidelity. A large majority of Americans feel that sexually intimate individuals should not be involved sexually with anyone else (Laumann et al. 1994). This applies to any stage of the relationship; sex at any stage will be viewed as cheating. Moreover, the more religious a person is, the more likely will one regards infidelity as unacceptable in all stages of a relationship (Mattingly et al. 2010).

Wiederman and Hurd (1999) found that despite the cultural ideal of sexual activity with another individual (outside one's partner), many individuals had been involved in some form of activity with an "extradyadic" partner. It would be interesting to look at an individual's history with infidelity when asked about current beliefs regarding the topic (Mattingly et al. 2010). In a study conducted on a Midwestern state university, 700 individuals were asked about their involvement in any "extradyadic" actions while they were in a serious relationship; 75 percent of the males and 68 percent

of the females had participated in at least one form of "extradyadic" dating and/or sexual activity (Wiederman and Hurd 1999). This is contradictory to research that states that an individual is less likely to cheat, or even come close, if one is highly committed to the relationship and there are few attractive alternatives (Mattingly et al. 2010).

Other Forms of Relationship

An interpersonal relationship is a unique object of analysis; it affects experience at the personal (psychological) level as well as the social (sociological) level (Blumstein and Kollock 1998). To date only a few forms of relationship have been studied by sociologists. Marriage, "dating," and "hooking up" have been analyzed, but little focus has been placed on relationships that defy these categories. There is no consensus on the specific difference between dating and non-dating relationships (Manning, Giordine, and Longmore 2006). Furthermore, advances in understanding have been mostly conceptual, with less emphasis on the empirical properties of interpersonal relations (Blumstein and Kollock 1998).

Jackson et al. (2011) focus their research on what activities would have to happen for the participants to consider a person their boyfriend or girlfriend. Because dating is relatively informal, there may be a new range of relationship forms and styles between dating, on one hand, and one night stands, on the other (Manning et al. 2006). Adolescents, for example, who have sex with non-dating partners are typically neither in one-night stands nor sleeping with a total stranger, as most teenage sexual experience is among people who have known each other for some time. From the study by Manning et al. (2006), it was determined that roughly a third of teenagers who were having non-

dating sex had hopes and expectations that the relationship would lead to a more conventional dating relationship.

Oversight in Previous Research

Laner and Ventrone (2000) discuss how scripts have not been examined for individuals of different races, ethnicities, and social classes. Race and ethnicity are overlooked in social psychology, often because of the assumption that basic social psychological theories apply to all groups (Hunt, Jackson, and Steelman 2000). Race and ethnicity are important to all social processes including romantic relationships, and as such should be included in studies in this field (Hunt et al. 2000; La Greca and Harrison 2005). Jackson et al. (2011) discuss how class should be a part of future research, as it is important to personal interaction.

"Talking"

Looking at script theory it is noted that correcting script differences early in the relationship may reduce problems overall (Holmberg and MacKenzie 2002). How "talking" is defined for two individuals who engage in it, may either create or reduce script differential problems. Recent changes in interpersonal relationship scripts make it difficult to distinguish when a relationship begins (Pierce 2011).The substantial change in dating scripts from years past incorporates the inclusion of the "talking" period in the romantic courtship schema. Denizet-Lewis (2004) found that students found it weird to be asked on a date, lending to the changing of the relationship script to include "talking" before going on dates commences.

Socio-biology conceptualizes periods of early romantic courtship (Buss and Schmitt 1993); and for many, courtship often leads to a serious long-term relationship or even marriage. Among the earliest stages of the romantic period is the "talking" period. Under this theory, "talking" is used because it requires a small investment initially but can lead to great reward with modest risk. The fact that males are typically more approving of casual sex, while females typically disapprove (Oliver and Hyde 1993), coupled with the sexual strategies theory, dictates that men will be more open to finding other sexual partners during the "talking" period. This may mean that men may be more likely to leave a "talking" relationship for sexual reasons.

The fact that relationships are becoming serious through a variety of methods (Pierce 2011), and high interdependence makes a relationship more apt to fail (Blumstein and Kollock 1998), could be a factor in the emergence of "talking" as a new stage in the schema of relationships, as it allows another testing period. The publicity involved with a failed relationship could also lend to the emergence of "talking" as it potentially allows the best of both hook-ups and dating with the subsequent loss of "face." "Talking" allows an individual to present part of one's "core personality" without risk of a bad relationship, and more or less can be presented depending on how the pseudo-relationship is playing out. Individuals involved in "talking" attempt to maintain self-respect (e. g. Goffman 1959), as self-respect is paramount in the realm of romantic endeavors.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used to conduct the research of this thesis.
This chapter contains a discussion of the sample, questionnaire construction and
administration, statistical analysis, ethics, and hypotheses.

Sample

The population of interest for the current study was ETSU students, including
graduate and non-degree seeking students. These individuals were surveyed using the
ETSU SONA system[3]. The ETSU SONA system is an online research pool that allows
users to participate in multiple surveys simultaneously; typically students are required to
participate in a set number of studies for class credit. The sampling strategy used was
essentially a purposive sample, as it was non-random and the sample was selected for
convenience. This strategy is based on a specific purpose rather than randomly selecting
individuals (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Specifically, the strategy is revelatory case
sampling, as it involved identifying an unstudied social phenomenon (Yin 2003).
Strengths of this approach include a low cost to the researcher, with a greater depth of
information compared to probability sampling (Patton 2002). This strategy is prone to
researcher bias, as well as it may be difficult to generalize results (Lund Research Ltd

---

[3] The SONA system is a research participant pool hosted by SONA Systems, and is maintained by ETSU's
psychology department. The participant pool consists of students in Introductory Psychology, as well as
any other courses taught by participating instructors.

2010). The sampling strategy was selected because it was readily available to the researcher and allowed for quick turnaround in data-collection.

ETSU is an accredited university in Johnson City, Tennessee, and it consists of a population composed of 43 percent males and 57 percent females (ETSU 2011). The strategy used was effective in obtaining participants for the current research study, and the sample was fairly representative of ETSU students. Table 1 provides demographic information for the current study.

Table 1 Demographic Information

						N= 566
Sex	Males – 33.7% (191)			Females – 66.3% (375)		
Race	Black 8.6% (49)	White 83% (470)	Asian 2.7% (15)	Latino 1.6% (9)	Native American 0.7% (4)	Other 3.7% (21)
Age	Range 18-67	Mean 21.5	Median 20	Mode 18		
Orientation	Heterosexual 92.3% (470)	Homosexual 2.4% (12)	Bisexual 5.3% (27)			
Class	Freshman 37.5% (212)	Sophomore 19.3% (109)	Junior 19.8% (112)	Senior 20.7% (117)	Graduate 1.9% (11)	Non-Degree Seeking 0.9% (5)

The sample is similar to the racial/ethnic makeup of ETSU, which consists of 84 percent white students, 6 percent black students, with the remaining students falling in other

categories (ETSU 2011). The sample was overrepresented by freshmen students

compared to other classes. This is expected as SONA is often used for introductory

psychology courses, meaning a large number of freshmen will be enrolled and active on

SONA. The sample is over representative of individuals 18-19 years old, as the

percentage for ETSU is 22.36 percent (ETSU 2011), while the sample consists of 44.8

percent of such individuals. The sex disparity approximates the sex ratio of the students

enrolled in psychology, 66 percent of graduates are female, while 34 percent are male

(ETSU 2011).

Questionnaire Construction and Administration

The questionnaire was developed using previous literature for control measures

that are significant in the development of statistical models for short-term relationships.

One section of the questionnaire, not used in the current study, features questions (25A-

P) asking which activities indicate "talking," "dating," and "hooking-up." This section is

borrowed and modified from the Jackson et al. (2011) study for later comparison between

"talking" and "dating." The questions of interest for the current study, as well as all other

questions regarding talking, were constructed by the researcher.

For the current study, a web survey was chosen, as it provides an efficient, quick

method for gathering information. Strengths of this approach are numerous and include: a

faster speed of response, increased anonymity of respondents, reduced cost, more detail

provided on open ended questions, and the survey software simplifies compilation and

analysis of data collected (Ipathia Inc. 2005). Weaknesses include that web surveys are

only available to those online and that it may not reflect the population as a whole

(Ipathia Inc. 2005). Specific to this research is the fact that the survey was only completed by those individuals with a SONA account. Another important issue in a web-survey is self-selection bias (Stanton 1998), but this was somewhat nullified as SONA participants are required to complete surveys for their respective classes.

The study uses data from a self-administered social survey (See Appendix A), employing 39 closed and open-ended questions. Data for the current study were collected during the Fall 2011 semester, between November 30th and December 10th.

The questionnaire was available online for users of the ETSU SONA system, and furthermore, an email with the survey information was distributed to all students on campus. Students were also informed of the research participation opportunity in numerous sociology courses. Those students that completed the survey were given the option to be entered into a random drawing for 1 of 10 cash prizes of $25 provided by the ETSU Department of Sociology. The rationale behind using incentives was to garner more participants for the study (Singer, Hoewyk, and Maher 1998), as SONA features a wide-array of research studies. Typically, there are numerous studies that SONA participants can choose from for credit for class, so incentivizing the current study was necessary to garner interest more than other available studies.

The main focus of the survey was a question asking the participant for his/her definition or understanding of the term "talking" in the context of a relationship. So the respondent could fully illustrate personal beliefs, this variable was asked in an open-ended format. The same type of question was asked of "dating" and "hooking-up." Variables were then coded into numbered responses by the researcher.

A set of questions was asked to assess one's understanding of the "acceptable actions/attitudes during the 'talking period.'" Respondents were also asked if, during the "talking" period, it was acceptable to (0=No, 1=Yes): "talk," go on "dates", or "have sex" with a different person. Participants were also asked if there is any difference in "talking," or just "hooking up" (0=No, 1=Yes), with someone. Finally, respondents were asked if "talking" to another person means they definitely intend to date that person (0=No, 1=Yes). A second set of questions measured whether talking is used as a means of gathering information about the other individual. Respondents were asked if they personally had ever used "talking" as a method of information gathering before considering a dating relationship (0=No, 1=Yes). If respondents answered yes, they were then asked if during the information gathering period they engaged in sex with another person(s), "talked" with another person(s), or went on "dates" with another person(s) (0=No, 1=Yes).

Other primary variables of interest are the sex (coded 0 if female, 1 if male) of the participants; self-assessed desirability as a "talking" partner (coded from 1=not at all desirable to 5=very desirable); and, self-assessed level of physical attractiveness (scale of 1 to 10). The questionnaire also featured questions about the person's self-assessed religiosity (1=not at all religious, 5=very religious), religious service attendance (0=Never, 8=Several times a week), sacred text reading (0=Never, 8=Several times a week), and prayer activities (0=Never, 5=Several times a day). Each participant was asked about previous relationship activity, including whether they had ever: dated someone (0=No, 1=Yes), been in love (0=No, 1=Yes), broken up with someone (0=No,

1=Yes), or been broken up with by someone (0=No, 1=Yes). The respondents were asked to provide the estimated number of sexual partners they have had in the past year.

Statistical Analysis

Two types of quantitative statistical analyses were used: regression and analysis of variance. Qualitative analysis was also performed. Because the dependent variables for the hypotheses are nominal, coded as either 1(Yes) or 0 (No), a binary logistic regression is mandated for analysis. The response variable for the hypotheses is categorical and only has two possible outcomes, commonly denoted as success or failure (Agresti and Finlay 2009). Binary logistic regression is used to analyze these questions bearing on the "acceptable actions/attitudes during 'talking'" and "utilization of 'talking' to gather information." The binary logistic regression output features a b coefficient, and the antilog of this number, as Exp (β). The antilog yields a model with an exponential relationship that implies every unit increase in x has a multiplicative effect on the odds (Agresti and Finlay 2009). Once the responses to the definition and understanding of the "talking" variable are coded, a logistic regression is performed. The main "talking" variable is also supplemented with descriptive qualitative data.

The questionnaire also featured basic demographic questions to establish control measures when the logistic regression is employed to see what, if any, differences there are based on age, parental upbringing (household type in which participant was raised), family structure (number of siblings), or social class (objective and subjective measures)

to account for a participant's background. When variables are placed in a regression model, control measures must be used to ensure the variables of interest are not spurious.

The main focus of the present investigation is the "talking" variable - how participants define it, their actions/attitudes toward it, and how they use it in their lives. Question 19 states: "Please provide your definition or understanding of the term "talking" in regard to interest in another person (think about courtship, sex, dating, relationship)." There was a wide array of responses to this question from the 555 participants who answered. These responses were coded from 0 to 9, with an emphasis separating the responses into meaningful groups[4]. If a respondent clearly states that "talking" was getting to know with the intent of a relationship, the response is coded as 2, whereas if the respondent was ambiguous or stated the getting to know was nonexclusive, the response is coded as 1. Looking at the stage before dating codes (3-5 respectively), the differences fall to whether the respondent clearly stated no exclusivity (3), left the response ambiguous (4), or clearly stated exclusivity (5). A code of 6 means that the respondent indicated "talking" was some form of relationship other than the distinct category of "dating"(7). The original coding did not lend to statistical analysis, creating need for a recode that eliminated "conversation" and "other" respectively[5]. The new coding scheme allowed the researcher to look at the differences in men and women in their definition of "talking" solely in a relationship context. Although the two categories constitute 27 responses (7.3 percent) for females and 26 responses for males (13.4

---

[4] 0=Mutual feelings/activities (undefined), 1=Getting to know (undefined or nonexclusive), 2=Getting to know with intent of relationship, 3= Stage before dating (nonexclusive), 4=Stage before dating (undefined), 5=Stage before dating (exclusive), 6=Some type of relationship, 7=Dating, 8=Conversation, 9=Other
[5] Conversation meaning the respondent simply describes what talking is in the traditional sense, and other meaning the participant responded in such a way it could not be placed in any of the other categories.

percent), they do not define "talking" in a relationship context, a chief interest of the current study. A final re-code of the "talking" variable was later performed in order to differentiate relationship orientation differences between males and females. The re-coding placed responses into three categories: not relationship oriented, moving towards relationship, and relationship. A common response that was coded as "relationship" was when a number of respondents answering simply "dating" as their definition of "talking," or stated "in a relationship but not serious." Numerous responses simply said the word "dating," indicating that the respondent did not see any difference in "talking" and dating in the typical relationship sense. A response that was typical of those that got coded as not relationship oriented, was "getting to know one another, hanging out one on one, very flirty," or "hanging out, going on dates, maybe sex also." These responses indicated that the individual did not see "talking" as defined as being towards a relationship but instead as a group of activities that individuals can conduct with one another.

Ethics

The current study was granted IRB approval under exempt status, meaning that it qualified as less than a minimal risk to participants, and it posed no threat of discomfort. Participants were given full anonymity, as they signed on to SONA in order to take the current study. The SONA system is secure and is constructed so that users are not identifiable when they complete research studies. The current study was completely voluntary, and participants could opt to stop the questionnaire at any time.

Hypotheses

Numerous hypotheses can be made about "talking" and the significant differences between males and females. The assertion by Laner and Ventrone (2000) that both males and females enter courtship with a definite wielding of the scripts to which they should adhere potentially could hold true for "talking." An individual could formulate a specific definition of "talking" as scripts are internalized by an individual (Wiederman 2005). Hypothesis 1 is that males and females will differ in their definition of the term "talking."

> H_0: *An individual's sex and personal definition of talking are statistically independent.*
> *Ha: An individual's sex and personal definition of talking are statistically dependent.*

Another definitional difference could be evident in how one views "talking" and "hooking-up" with another individual(s). How the sexes see "talking" could be significantly different from "dating" and "hooking up" altogether. Hypothesis 2 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether there is a difference in "talking" and "hooking-up."

> H_0: *An individual's sex and personal opinion regarding whether there is a difference in "talking" and "hooking-up" are statistically independent.*
> *Ha: An individual's sex and personal opinion regarding whether there is a difference in "talking" and "hooking-up" are statistically dependent.*

The fact that social scripts have made women more capable of handling love on in interpersonal level (Lipman-Blumen 1984) could be evident in how males and females define "talking" in a way that includes a subsequent dating relationship. Hypothesis 3 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether "talking" to someone means definite dating intentions with that person.

H$_0$: An individual's sex and personal opinion regarding whether "talking" to someone means definite dating intentions with that person are statistically independent.
Ha: An individual's sex and personal opinion regarding whether "talking" to someone means definite dating intentions with that person are statistically dependent.

There are numerous hypotheses regarding the acceptable rituals involved in "talking," which are influenced by various theories. Using sociobiological theory, one can posit that males will be more likely than females to engage in sexual activity during the "talking period." This idea is based in research by Buss and Schmitt (1993), who find that in general males seek to mate more frequently with a greater variety of females. Hypothesis 4 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding sex with another while "talking."

H$_0$: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of having sex with another while "talking" are statistically independent.
Ha: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of having sex with another while "talking" are statistically dependent.

The following hypotheses have no predicted directional outcome by the researcher, as there are compelling arguments for both males and females regarding what is acceptable during the "talking" period. Males could find going on dates with a different person and "talking" to more than one person as beneficial, as it allows for more sexual opportunity. Females could find the same two parameters advantageous, as "talking" allows a decreased amount of resources for potential gain. Hypothesis 5 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether it is acceptable to go on "dates" with a different person while "talking" to another.

H_0: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of "talking" to one person and going on "dates" with another are statistically independent.
H_a: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of "talking" to one person and going on "dates" with another are statistically dependent.

Hypothesis 6 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether it is acceptable to "talk" to more than one person during the "talking period."

H_0: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of talking to more than one person are statistically independent.
H_a: An individual's sex and personal interpretation of talking to more than one are statistically dependent.

Using sexual strategy theory as employed by Stewart, Stinnett, and Rosenfeld (2000), one can conclude that females more highly regard resource acquisition in a relationship. This fact may be evident in "talking," as females could be more likely to use "talking" as a method of gathering information about the other person. Using "talking" in this manner allows females the opportunity to gain information about potential resource acquisition with little to no resources lost. Hypothesis 7 is that males and females will differ in their use of "talking" as a method of gathering information about the other person.

H_0: An individual's sex and personal use of "talking" to gather information about a person are statistically independent.
H_a: An individual's sex and personal use of "talking" to gather information about a person are statistically dependent.

Using sociobiological theory, one finds that women typically seek less sex than men (Oliver and Hyde 1993), and males seek to mate more frequently with a greater variety of females (Buss and Schmitt 1993). Results for Hypothesis 8 are expected to be congruent with Hypothesis 4, regarding finding sex acceptable during "talking." Hypothesis 8 is that

males and females will differ in whether they had sex with another person(s) during the "information gathering period."

> H_0: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to have sex with another person(s) are statistically independent.
> Ha: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to have sex with another person(s) are statistically dependent.

The last hypotheses have no predicted directional outcome by the researcher, as there are compelling arguments for both males and females regarding what is practiced during the self-assessed "information gathering" period. Males could find going on dates with a different person and "talking" to more than one person during the "information gathering period" as beneficial, as it allows for more sexual opportunity. Females could find the same two parameters advantageous under the "information gathering period," as "talking" allows a decreased amount of resources for potential gain. Results are expected to be congruent with Hypothesis 5 and 6 respectively. Hypothesis 9 is that males and females will differ in whether they engaged in "talking" with another person(s) during the "information gathering period."

> H_0: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to "talk" with another person(s) are statistically independent.
> Ha: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to "talk" with another person(s) are statistically dependent.

Hypothesis 10 is that males and females will differ in whether they went on "dates" with another person(s) during the "information gathering period."

> H_0: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to go on "dates" with another person(s) are statistically independent.
> Ha: An individual's sex and personal use of "information gathering" as a means to go on "dates" with another person(s) are statistically dependent.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Definition

Hypothesis 1 is that males and females will differ in their definition of the term

"talking." Analysis from a chi-square test stated that $\chi^2 = 10.026, p(7,502)=.187$, meaning

there is no evidence to refute the null. The data show that an individual's sex and

personal definition of "talking" are statistically independent of each other. Percentages

and frequencies for the differences in the definition for "talking" are noted in Table 2.

Table 2 Differences in Sex for Definition of "Talking"

	Not Relationship Oriented (frequency)	Moving Towards a Relationship (frequency)	Relationship (frequency)
Males	18.6% (30)	73.9% (119)	7.5% (12)
Females	22.3% (76)	69.5% (237)	8.2% (28)

There is no real difference in the responses from males and females, but the data show

that "talking" is most commonly seen as the stage before dating, or the steps one

undertakes moving towards a relationship. This is noted at 73.9 percent of males and 69.5

percent of females signify "talking" as moving towards a relationship.

Hypothesis 2 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding

whether there is a difference in "talking" and "hooking-up." Analysis from an ANOVA

stated that $F(1,565)=2.891, p=.090,$ meaning there is no statistically significant evidence

to refute the null.

Hypothesis 3 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether "talking" to another person means definite dating intentions with that person. Looking at analysis from ANOVA, one can see that *F(1,565)=1.379, p=.241*, meaning there is no evidence to refute the null. The data show that an individual's sex and personal definition of "talking" to include definite intentions to date the other individual are statistically independent of each other.

Although males and females do not appear to differ in their definition of "talking," possible differences in their opinions of acceptable rituals and practices during the phase are examined through further analyses of responses to questions 26-28 and 33-34.

Acceptable Rituals

Hypothesis 4 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding sex with a different person while "talking" to another. Using ANOVA to assess responses (0=No, 1=Yes) for the question, "During the 'talking' period, is it acceptable to have sex with another person," means for males and females significantly differ at the $p \leq .05$ level; *F(1,565)=4.020, p=.045*. The male mean (x̄=.42) is significantly greater than the female mean (x̄=.33), meaning males in general believe it more acceptable to have sex with another person other than the one with whom they are "talking" during the "talking" period. A second test using binary logistic regression also reveals this (Table 3).

Table 3 Binary Logistic Regression Model of the Dependent Variable of Finding Sex Acceptable With Another Person(s), n=566

Variables	B (SE)	Exp (B)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	-1.605 (.538)			
Sex	.396* (.198)	1.486	1.008	2.190
Age	.110*** (.021)	1.116	1.071	1.163
Religiosity	-.389*** (.078)	.677	.581	.789
Income	-.131* (.052)	.877	.792	.971

R^2=.138 (Cox and Snell), .189(Nagelkerke) Model χ^2 (4)= 83.858, p<.001
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Being male increases the odds of believing it is acceptable to have sex with another during "talking" by 48.6 percent. Other significant variables in the model include age, religiosity, and income. As income (*p=.012*) increases one unit, an individual is 14 percent less[6] likely to have sex with another than the one with whom they are "talking." Religiosity is significant (*p=.000*) and for each unit increase, an individual is 47 percent less likely to find sex with a different person acceptable during the "talking" period. For

---

[6] For an odds ratio, any Exp (B) greater than one is interpreted as that much of an increase of the total greater than one, i.e. an odds ratio of 1.11 means the odds increase by 11% for each increase in an independent variable for the given dependent variable. If the Exp (B) is negative, the proper interpretation of the log odds requires using the given coefficient as a divisor of one. Using the current output, income has an Exp (B) of .877, meaning to properly interpret the odds ratio: one must be divided by this number (1/.877 =1.14). This means that for every unit increase in "income" there is a 14% unit decrease in the log odds.

each additional year of age (*p=.000)*, a participant is 11 percentf more likely to find sex with a different person acceptable during the "talking" period.

Hypothesis 5 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether it is acceptable to go on "dates" with a different person while "talking" to another. An ANOVA stated that *F(1,565)=.267, p=.605*, meaning that there is no evidence to refute the null. The data show that an individual's sex and personal interpretation of whether it is acceptable to go on "dates" with a different person while "talking" to another is statistically independent of each other.

Hypothesis 6 is that males and females will differ in their opinion regarding whether it is acceptable to "talk" to more than one person during the "talking period." An ANOVA stated that *F(1,565)=.155, p=.694*, meaning that there is no evidence to refute the null. The data show that an individual's sex and personal interpretation of whether it is acceptable to "talk" to more than one person during the "talking period" is statistically independent of each other.

Practices

Hypothesis 7 is that males and females will differ in their use of "talking" as a method of gathering information about the other person. How "talking" is used to gather information about the other individual shows significant differences between males and females in practice. Respondents were asked if they have ever used "talking" as a method of information gathering before considering a dating relationship (0=No, 1=Yes). An ANOVA shows that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding whether "talking" is deemed a method of information gathering;

F(1,565)=6.829, p=.009. The female mean (x̄=.95) was higher than that of males

(x̄=.89), meaning women are more likely to use "talking" in this manner. Binary logistic

regression is also used to determine significant predictors for the use of "talking" as a

method of information gathering to determine if the other individual is relationship

material (Table 4).

Table 4 Binary Logistic Regression Model of the Dependent Variable of Using "Talking" as a Method of Gathering Information, n=566

Variables	B (SE)	Exp (B)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	-.134 (.530)			
Sex	-.909* (.348)	.403	.204	.797
Ever_Date	1.657** (.499)	5.242	1.970	13.944
Heard_Talk	-.389*** (.078)	4.866	2.174	10.891

R^2=.057 (Cox and Snell), .143(Nagelkerke) Model χ^2 (4)= 83.858, p<.001
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The output shows that women are about 2.5 times more likely to use "talking" to

gather information than men (*sig=.009*). Other significant variables include whether the

participant has ever dated someone (*p=.001*), which shows that those who have dated

someone are about 5.2 times as likely to use "talking" in order to gather information.

Finally, whether the respondent had ever heard of "talking" is significant (*p=.000*). Those

individuals who had heard of "talking" were about 4.8 times as likely to have used

"talking" in order to gather information.

Hypothesis 8 is that males and females will differ in whether they had sex with a different person during the "information gathering period." A significant difference exists between males and females in whether the participant engaged in sex with another person(s) during a self-described "information gathering period." An ANOVA reveals that mean differences for males is significantly higher than the female mean; $F(1,531)=18.808, p=.000$. Binary logistic regression further indicates that sex is a significant predictor (p=.000) of whether sex with another is appropriate during the talking stage (Table 5).

Table 5 Binary Logistic Regression Model of the Dependent Variable of Having Sex with Another Person(s) During the Self-Assessed Information Gathering Period, n=566

Variables	B (SE)	Exp (B)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	-2.183 (.506)			
Sex	.877*** (.222)	2.404	1.557	3.713
Age	.056*** (.017)	1.057	1.023	1.093
Sex Partners	.186** (.060)	1.205	1.071	1.355
Religiosity	-.297** (.089)	.743	.624	.885

R^2=.106 (Cox and Snell), .160(Nagelkerke)   Model χ^2 (4)= 59.855, p<.001
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Looking at the regression model, we see that sex is a significant predictor (*sig=.000*). The odds ratio shows that men are 2.404 times more likely to have had sex with a different person during the information gathering period than women. Other

significant predictors include age (*p=.001*), meaning that with each additional year of age, an individual is 5.7 percent more likely to have sex with a different person during the information gathering period. The number of sexual partners an individual has had is statistically significant (*p=.002*), as each increase in sexual partners means an individual is 20.5 percent more likely to engage in sex during the information gathering period. The final statistically significant predictor is religiosity (*p=.001*), whose negative odds ratio holds that for each unit increase in religiosity, an individual is 35 percent less likely to engage in sex under the given parameters.

Hypothesis 9 is that males and females will differ in whether they engaged in "talking" with a different individual during the "information gathering period." An ANOVA states that *F(1,481)=1.251, p=.264,* meaning there is no evidence to reject the null. The data show that an individual's sex and personal interpretation of whether it is acceptable to "talk" to more than one person during the self-assessed "information gathering period" is statistically independent of each other.

Hypothesis 10 is that males and females will differ in whether they went on "dates" with a different person during the "information gathering period." An ANOVA states that *F(1,461)=.129, p=.720,* meaning there is no evidence to refute the null. The data show that an individual's sex and personal interpretation of whether it is acceptable to go on "dates" with a different person during the "information gathering period" is statistically independent of each other.

 As this study focuses on a previously unexamined area of the relationship schema, general information about "talking" and the overall differences in males and

females regarding "talking" are notable. Table 6 contains general information about

"talking," and indicates overall responses made by participants.

Table 6 General Information about "Talking"

	Yes (frequency)	No (frequency)
Difference in "talking" and "hooking-up"?	94.9% (537)	5.1% (29)
Does "talking" mean definite dating intentions?	25.3% (143)	74.7% (423)
Is it acceptable to "talk" to another person?	75.4% (427)	24.6% (139)
Is it acceptable to go on dates with another person?	63.3% (358)	36.7% (208)
Is it acceptable to have sex with another person?	36.2% (205)	63.8% (361)
Ever used "talking" to gather information before considering a dating relationship?	92.9% (526)	7.1% (40)
If yes, did you have sex with another person(s)?	23.5% (125)	76.5% (407)
If yes, did you "talk" with another person(s)?	53.3% (257)	46.7% (225)
If yes, did you go on a date with another person(s)?	38.3% (177)	61.7% (285)

Note: Because of non-response on several questions, not all column frequencies sum to 566.

Looking at Table 6, one can see that for a large majority, there is a difference in "talking"

and "hooking-up," as well as the use of "talking" to gather information before

considering a dating relationship. The table also indicates that for a large majority,

"talking" does not mean definite dating intentions, nor do individuals have sex with

another person(s) during a self-assessed "information gathering period." Table 7

highlights the differences in males and females for the same questions.

Table 7 Difference in Males and Females for "Talking"

	Males Yes (frequency)	Males No (frequency)	Females Yes (frequency)	Females No (frequency)
Difference in "talking" and "hooking-up"?	92.7% (177)	7.3% (14)	96% (360)	4% (15)
Does "talking" mean definite dating intentions?	28.3% (54)	71.7% (137)	23.7% (89)	76.3% (286)
During "talking," is it acceptable to "talk" to more than one person?	76.4% (146)	23.6% (45)	74.9% (281)	25.1% (94)
During "talking," is it acceptable to go on dates with another person(s)?	61.8% (118)	38.2% (73)	64% (240)	36% (135)
During "talking," is it acceptable to have sex with another person(s)? *	41.9% (80)	58.1% (111)	33.3% (125)	66.7% (250)
Ever used "talking" to gather information before considering a dating relationship? *	89% (170)	11% (21)	94.9% (356)	5.1% (19)
If yes, did you have sex with another person(s)? ***	34.7% (61)	65.3% (115)	18% (64)	82% (292)
If yes, did you "talk" with another person(s)?	57% (90)	43% (68)	51.5% (167)	48.5% (157)
If yes, did you go on a date with another person(s)?	39.5% (60)	60.5% (92)	37.7% (117)	62.3% (193)

Note: Because of non-response on several questions, not all column frequencies sum to 566.
*p<.05, ***p<.001

Looking at Table 7, one could note the significant differences in males and females for

three questions; during "talking," is it acceptable to have sex with another person(s), ever

used "talking" to gather information before considering a dating relationship, (if yes)- did you have sex with another person. One area of interest to the researcher is the responses indicated for whether there is a difference in "talking" and "hooking-up," as 92.7 percent of males said "yes" compared to 96 percent of females. There is not a significant difference between males and females in regard to this question, but substantive difference should be noted.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Definition

Looking at the three hypotheses for the definition of "talking"[7], it is concluded that there is no statistical difference in the responses from males and females. The data show that "talking" is most commonly seen as the stage before dating, or the steps one undertakes before committing to a relationship. As one respondent said "Talking, in my opinion, is the "stage" before being in a relationship, kind of like a test run to see if you want to be exclusive with that person and explore things that you have in common." In the relationship schema, "talking" can be seen as "the level between just friends and dating, and considering dating someone." These responses establish "talking" as an intermediate relationship, that can lead to something more or can be used as a step to someone else (if the original person did not work out). This "stepping-stone" quality is evident in Hypothesis 3, as individuals do not see "talking" as a definite intention on dating the other party.

Although a statistically significant difference was not found for Hypothesis 2, whether there is any difference in "talking" to someone and just "hooking-up" with him/her ($F(1,565)=2.891$, $p=.090$), it should be noted that this finding may reveal a trend that is consistent with male/female differences in appropriateness of sex while talking. The script for "talking" may not be fully established culturally, leading to the non-significance at this point in time. There is not statistical significance, but substantive

---

[7] Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 Respectively

evidence (91 percent chance of evidence) was found for the difference in "talking" to someone and just "hooking-up" with them.

Acceptable Rituals

When looking at the responses for the hypotheses regarding an individual's opinion about the acceptable rituals for "talking," there is as significant difference for Hypothesis 4. Through statistical analysis it is concluded that men, significantly more than women, find it acceptable to have sex with a different person during the "talking period." This finding is what is to be expected through socio-biology theory, which finds that men are more permissive of sex than women, who risk losing more resources (Oliver and Hyde 1993). Age is also a significant predictor in the model; this appears to be an example of a "cohort effect," as for the most part, the sample consisted of individuals who had been socialized with some form of "talking" script. In terms of religiosity, as one's level increases he/she is less likely to condone or partake in sexual activity in an "extra-dyadic" fashion (Mattingly et al. 2010). Income is seen as a negative relationship, because more income equates to more resources that can potentially be involved in the relationship, causing individuals to be less likely to risk them (Laumman et al. 1994).

There is no statistical difference for males and females for Hypotheses 5 (regarding dates) and 6 (regarding "talking" to more than one person), respectively. The current research predicted no direction for these hypotheses, as sound arguments could be made for either side to accept these rituals more so than the other.

Practices

There is statistical difference in males and females regarding the actual practices employed during "talking," in Hypothesis 7 (using "talking" to gather information) and 8 (having sex during information gathering period), respectively. Females use "talking" to gather information more so than males, because females have more to lose in a relationship and it allows them to gather resource acquisition information (Stewart, Stinnett, and Rosenfeld 2000). Using "talking" to gather information allows an individual the opportunity to save not only resources but also to save "face." Other significant variables include whether the participant has ever dated someone, and whether the participant had ever heard of "talking" in a romantic context. Prior dating experience dictates that an individual is more experienced in the context of a relationship, which makes it understandable the individual is more in tuned to the societal script. Baldwin (1992), states that past personal experiences exert a powerful force on current behavior and the construction and understanding of new social information. This finding is also emphasized, as those who have heard of "talking" are more likely to have used "talking" as means to gather information. It should be noted that of the 566 respondents for this question, 526 answered that they personally had used "talking" as a method to gather information before dating is considered. This is congruent with the earlier findings for the definition of talking. Hypothesis 8 looks at the differences in sexual activity during the self-assessed "information gathering period" based on an individual's sex. The finding that males are more likely than females to have had sex with a different person during the "information gathering period," is congruent with the finding for Hypothesis 4, and

socio-biology (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Oliver and Hyde 1993). An increase in age or number of sexual partners makes it more likely that the participant will have engaged in sex with another during the information gathering period: These predictors make sense, as age is an example of the "cohort effect," and increased sexual partners theoretically makes sense, as it means openness to more partners in general. An increase in an individual's religiosity makes that person less likely to have engaged in a sex with another individual. This is congruent with prior findings regarding religiosity (Mattingly et al. 2010) and the current study, specifically Hypothesis 4. An important point of interest is that for the question, 407 participants said they had not had sex with another person(s) during the "talking" period, compared to 125 who said they had.

There is no statistical difference for males and females for Hypotheses 9 and 10, respectively. Hypothesis 9 is that males and females will differ in whether they engaged in "talking" with a different individual during the "information gathering period." Hypothesis 10 is that males and females will differ in whether they went on "dates" with a different person during the "information gathering period." The current research predicted no direction for these hypotheses, as sound arguments could be made for either side to use "talking" in either manner more so than the other. This finding is congruent with that of Hypotheses 5 and 6, as they dealt with similar ideas, just under a different context.

Overview

All of the results do not indicate a significant difference in males and females, but they do help in understanding how "talking" fits into the relationship schema. This examination has yielded information that is helpful to the understanding of "talking" and the rituals/practices involved in this process. The overall lack of differences in terms of definition, acceptable rituals, and actual practices in "talking" could reflect a genuine lack of differences between males and females for the items in question. The lack of differences could also reflect that "talking" has not been fully defined as a relationship script. Romantic relationships fall heavily on script theory (Laner and Ventrone 2000), and there could be no discernible understanding of what scripts males and females are to follow during "talking." The current research takes great strides in establishing the societal script that "talking" encompasses. This "script" will be adapted to fit the interpersonal context that an individual desires (Frith and Kitzinger 2001). Males were more open to finding other sexual partners during the "talking" period, as socio-biology theory dictates. Women were more likely to use "talking" as a means of gathering information, as it allows an insight into a prospective partner without a great loss of resources. The current study does provide a baseline understanding of how "talking" is defined in the relationship context. "Talking" is mostly commonly defined in the relationship context as the stage before dating by each sex, where individuals gauge whether they would like to pursue a relationship with the other individual.

Limitations

A limitation of the current study could be in the wording of questions, which alters how a participant will answer. Changes need to be made to the questionnaire to get more at the heart of what each specific individual feels about "talking," and not one's interpretation of the societal definition. The apparent lack of differences between males and females in their interpretation of talking could be due to the wording of the question, as participants could have given their understanding of how everyone else defines talking, not themselves personally. Both the personal definition and the societal definition of "talking" are important but should be addressed in distinct questions. Another limitation of the current study was the coding/recoding involved. A large number of responses, coupled with complexity in producing boundaries for the codes, created difficulty in coding overall. Finally, limitations in sample diversity for race eliminated the possibility of statistical analysis based on this variable. The race distribution in the sample was similar to that of ETSU, but it is not representative of a national sample.

Future Research

Future research could more fully address how individuals have experienced "talking" in their own lives using both a questionnaire and a focus group. The focus group could help qualitatively analyze responses in a more meaningful and efficient manner than the current study. One of the limitations of the current study was the wording of questions, specifically the definition of "talking" question. Whether the question was an artifact of the survey, or whether there are no differences between males

and females in their definition of "talking" could be addressed by future research. Future

research could also look at the differences between males and females in activities

regarding indication two individuals are "talking." These activities could subsequently be

compared to those activities reported for "dating" or "hooking-up."

REFERENCES

Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finlay. 2009. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences.* 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Baldwin, Mark W. 1992. "Relational Schemas and the Processing of Social Information." *Psychological Bulletin* 112(3): 461-484.

Barta, William D., and Susan M. Kiene. 2005. "Motivations for Infidelity in Heterosexual Dating Couples: The Roles of Gender, Personality Differences, and Sociosexual Orientation." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 22(3): 339-360.

Blumstein, Philip and Peter Kollock. 1998. "Personal Relationships." *Annual Review of Sociology* 14:467-490.

Berger, C. R., and Bradac, J. J. (1982). *Language and Social Knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relationships*. London: Arnold.

Buss, D.M. 1994. "The Strategies of Human Mating." *American Scientist* 82: 238-249.

Buss, D.M., and Schmitt, D.P. 1993. "Sexual Strategies Theory: An Evolutionary Perspective on Human Mating." *Psychological Review* 100: 204-232.

Darwin, Charles. 1871. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London: Murray.

Denizet-Lewis, B. (2004, May 30). Friends, Friends with Benefits and the Benefits of the Local Mall. New York Times, 30.

ETSU. 2011. ETSU Fact Book: Degrees Conferred. URL = < http://www.etsu.edu/opa/fact/factbooks.aspx > Accessed March 14, 2012.

Gagnon, J. H., and Simon, W. (1973). *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine.

Gangestad, Steven W., and Jeffry A. Simpson. 2000. "The Evolution of Human Mating: Trade-Offs and Strategic Pluralism" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 23(4): 573-587.

General Social Survey. 2008. "General Social Survey 2008 Cross-Section and Panel Combined" URL = < http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Downloads/GSS08PAN_DL2.asp> Accessed December 7, 2012.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Anchor.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Frith, Hannah and Celia Kitzinger. 2001. "Reformulating Sexual Script Theory." *Theory and Psychology* 11(2): 209-232.

Holmberg, Diane and Samantha MacKenzie. 2002. "So Far, So Good: Scripts for Romantic Relationship Development as Predictors of Relational Well-Being." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 19(6): 777-796.

Hunt, Matthew O., Pamela Braboy Jackson, Brian Powell, and Lula Carr Steelman. 2000. "Color-Blind: The Treatment of Race and Ethnicity in Social Psychology." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63(4): 352-364.

Ipathia Inc. 2005. "Mail Surveys vs. Web Surveys: A Comparison." URL =< http://knowledge-base.supersurvey.com/mail-vs-web-surveys.htm> Accessed March 29, 2012.

Jackson, Pamela B., Sibyl Kliener, Claudia Geist, and Kara Cebulko. 2011. "Conventions of Courtship: Gender and Race Differences in the Significance of Dating Rituals." *Journal of Family Issues* 32 (5): 629-653.

Kamolnick, Paul. 2011. "Sex Differences and Human Sexuality." Presented at East Tennessee State University, April 25, Johnson City, Tennessee.

La Greca, Annette M., and Hannah Moore Harrison. 2005. "Adolescent Peer Relations, Friendships, and Romantic Relationships: Do They Predict Social Anxiety and Depression?" *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 35(1):49-61.

Laner, Mary R. and Nicole A. Ventrone. 2000. "Dating Scripts Revisited." *Journal of Family Issues* 21(4): 488-500.

Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., and Michaels, S. (1994). *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1984). *Gender Roles and Power*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Longmore, Monica A. 1998. "Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Sexuality." *The Journal of Sex Research* 35(1):44-57.

Lund Research Ltd. 2010. "Purposive Sampling: An Overview" URL = < http://dissertation.laerd.com/articles/purposive-sampling-an-overview.php> Accessed April 1, 2012

Manning, Wendy D., Peggy C. Giordino, and Monica A. Longmore. 2006. "Hooking Up: The Relationship Context of 'Nonrelationship' Sex." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 21(5):459-483.

Mattingly, Brent A., Karen Wilson, Eddie M. Clark, Amanda W. Bequette, and Daniel J. Weidler. 2010. "Foggy Faithfulness: Relationship Quality, Religiosity, and the Perceptions of Dating Infidelity Scale in an Adult Sample." *Journal of Family Issues* 31(11): 1465-1480.

McCall, G. J. 1982. Becoming Unrelated: The Management of Bond Dissolution. In S. Duck (Ed.), Personal Relationships 4: Dissolving personal relationships. London: Academic Press: 211-31.

Oliver, Mary Beth and Janet Shibley Hyde. 1993. "Gender Differences in Sexuality: A Meta-Analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 114(1): 29-51.

Paul, Elizabeth L., Brian McManus, and Allison Hayes. 2000. "Hookups": Characteristics and Correlates of College Students' Spontaneous and Anonymous Sexual Experiences. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 37: 76-88.

Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pierce, Lara Zain. 2011. "Will you Still Love me Tomorrow?: How Undergraduate Students Navigate Contemporary Dating Scripts." Master's thesis, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, George Mason University.

Regan, Pamela C. and Ellen Berscheid. 1999. Lust: What we know about Human Sexual Desire. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Schmitt, David P. 2003. "Universal Sex Differences in the Desire for Sexual Variety: Tests from 52 Nations, 6 Continents, and 13 Islands." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(1): 85-104.

Singer, Eleanor, John Van Hoewyk, and Mary P. Maher. 1998. "Does the Payment of Incentives Create Expectation Effects?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62: 152-164.

Solomon, Denise H. and Leanne K. Knoblach. 2004 "A Model of Relational Turbulence: The Role of Intimacy, Relational Uncertainty, and Interference from Partners in Appraisals of Irritations." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 21(6): 795-816.

Stanton, Jeffrey M. 1998. "An Empirical Assessment of Data Collection Using the Internet." *Personnel Psychology* 51(3): 709- 725.

Stets, Jan E. 1993. "Control in Dating Relationships." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55(3): 673-685.

Stewart, Stephanie, Heather Stinnett, and Lawrence B. Rosenfeld. 2000. "Sex Differences in Desired Characteristics of Short-Term and Long-Term Relationship Partners." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 17(6):843-853.

Tashakkori, Abbas and Charles Teddlie. 2003. *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Trivers, Robert L. 1972. Parental Investment and Sexual Selection. In B. Campbell (Ed.), Sexual selection and the descent of man. Chicago: Aldine:136-79.

Wiederman, Michael W. 2005. "The Gendered Nature of Sexual Scripts." *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families* 13(4): 496-502.

Wiederman, Michael W. and Catherine Hurd. 1999. "Extradyadic Involvement During Dating." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 16(2): 265-274.

Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX

Anderson "Talking" Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your sex

   - o Male
   - o Female

2. Please indicate your age   ____

3. Please indicate your current classification

   - o Freshman
   - o Sophomore
   - o Junior
   - o Senior
   - o Graduate
   - o Non- Degree Seeking

4. Please indicate your race/ethnicity

   - o White
   - o Black
   - o Asian
   - o Latino
   - o Native American
   - o Other

5. Please indicate your sexual orientation

   - o Heterosexual
   - o Homosexual
   - o Bisexual

6. For the 2010 tax year, what was your household income from all sources?

   - o $0-9,999

- $10,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$69,999
- $70,000-$89,999
- $90,000-$109,999
- $110,000+

7. Please indicate your current social class

- Lower Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class

8. For the parent with the highest level of educational attainment, please indicate the level they achieved

- Some high school
- High School Degree
- Some College
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Degree
- Doctorate

9. Which family structure best describes the majority of your upbringing?

- One-parent household
- Two-parent household
- Other:_____

10. Please indicate the number of siblings you have _____

11. Please describe the relationship you have with the person who was responsible for raising you

- Very close

- o Moderately Close
- o Somewhat Close
- o Not Close
- o No Relationship

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all religious and 5 being very religious, please indicate your level of religiosity _____

13. How often do you attend religious services?

- o Never
- o Less than once a year
- o Once or twice a year
- o Several times a year
- o Once a month
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About weekly
- o Weekly
- o Several times a week

14. Outside of religious services, how often do you read the Bible, Torah, Koran, or other sacred book?

- o Never
- o Less than once a year
- o Once or twice a year
- o Several times a year
- o Once a month
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About weekly
- o Weekly
- o Several times a week

15. How often do you pray or meditate outside of religious services?

- o Never
- o Only on certain occasions
- o Once a week or less
- o A few times a week

       o   Once a day
       o   Several times a day

16. Are you currently or have you ever:

    a. dated someone   Y   N

    b. been in love   Y   N

    c. broken up with someone   Y   N

    d. been broken up with   Y   N

17. In the past year (since Jan 2011), how many sexual partners have you had?_____

18. Have you ever heard/used the term "talking" in reference to romantic relationships?

                                                        Y   N

19. Please provide your definition or understanding of the term "talking" in regard to interest in another person (think about courtship, sex, dating, relationship).

_____
_____
_____

20. In your life have you ever "talked" to someone in the same manner you just described?

                                                         Y   N

21. Please provide your definition or understanding of the term "dating" in regard to interest in another person (think about courtship, sex, dating, relationship).

_____
_____
_____

22. In your life have you ever "dated" someone in the same manner you just described?

Y   N

23. Please provide your definition or understanding of the term "hooking up" in regard to interest in another person (think about courtship, sex, dating, relationship).

_____
_____
_____
_____

24. In your life have you ever "hooked up" with someone in the same manner you just described?

Y   N

25. What of the following activities would indicate that you are "talking" to or "dating" or "hooking-up" with another person?

    a. attend social activities in a group (e.g. Movies, athletic events)

            T   D   H

    b. attend social activities alone (e.g. Movies, athletic events)

            T   D   H

    c. hang out with other person's friends

            T   D   H

    d. sexual exclusiveness

            T   D   H

    e. meet my family

            T   D   H

    f. meet his/her family

            T   D   H

    g. dress up and go out

            T   D   H

    h. buy affordable gifts

            T   D   H

    i. buy expensive gifts

            T   D   H

    j. receive affordable gifts

		T	D	H
k.	receive expensive gifts			
l.	communicate regularly via facebook, texting, or some other media	T	D	H
m.	find each other mutually attractive	T	D	H
n.	want to potentially date that individual	T	D	H
o.	sexual activity (but still can/do with others)	T	D	H
p.	other (for each T D H) (please indicate)_____	T	D	H

26. During the "talking" period, is it acceptable to "talk" to more than one person?
Y   N

27. During the "talking" period, is it acceptable to go on dates with another person(s)?
Y   N

28. During the "talking" period, is it acceptable to have sex with another person(s)?
Y   N

29. In your opinion, is there any difference in "talking" to someone and just "hooking up?"
Y   N

30. Does "talking" to another person mean that you definitely intend to date that person?
Y   N

31. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your own desirability as a "talking" partner (1=not at all desirable, 5=extremely desirable) _____

32. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate your level of physical attractiveness perceived by others (1=low, 10=high) _____

33. Have you ever used "talking" as a method of information gathering before considering a dating relationship?   Y   N

34. If yes, then during the information gathering period: Did you engage in:

      a. sex with another person(s)?   Y   N

      b. "talking" with another person(s)?   Y   N

      c. going on a date with another person(s)?   Y   N

35. To the best of your knowledge, has anyone ever used "talking" as a method to delay dating you?   Y   N

36. If so, during the information gathering period: Did the other party engage in:

      a. sex with another person(s)?   Y   N   DK

      b. "talking" with another person(s)?   Y   N   DK

      c. going on a date with another person(s)?   Y   N   DK

39. Did you go on to date that person?   Y   N

VITA

ERIC ANDERSON

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: April 4, 1988
	Place of Birth: Charlotte, North Carolina
	Marital Status: Single
Education:	Lebanon High School, Lebanon, Virginia 2006
	B.S. Sociology, University of Virginia's College at Wise, Wise, Virginia 2010, magna cum laude
	M.A. Sociology, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2012
Professional Experience	Lecturer, East Tennessee State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 2011
	Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 2010-2012