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Authors

Paynter, Alexa

Leaper, Campbell

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Heterosexual Dating Double Standards in Undergraduate Women and Men

Alexa Paynter¹ · Campbell Leaper¹

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Abstract Traditional heterosexual dating and courtship scripts (e.g., men pay for date, women take partner's last name in marriage) reflect different standards of desirable behavior for women and men. Analogous to sexual double standards, dating double standards reflect the greater agency and power traditionally accorded to men in society. In the present study, we investigated factors related to young heterosexual adults' endorsement of dating double standards. Participants were 330 female and male U.S. undergraduates at a California public university (57 % female, ages 18–25 years-old) from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale, respondents rate the desirability of five dating and courtship behaviors (initiate date, hold door open, pay for date, propose marriage, take spouse's last name) separately for women and men. Preliminary analyses revealed participants generally expressed double standards by rating the desirability of behaviors differently for female and male characters in the traditional direction (e.g., paying for a date rated more desirable for a man than for a woman). We predicted dating double standards would be positively related to factors previously found to predict traditional gender roles (viewing popular media, religious attendance) as well as attitudes that reflect traditional views (conservative political beliefs, benevolent and hostile sexism, disavowing a feminist identity). These hypotheses were generally supported. Among these correlations, dating double standards were strongly associated with benevolent sexism (among women and men) and

with hostile sexism (among men). Implications for future research are discussed.

Keywords Sex role attitudes · Dating · Sexism · Feminism · Heterosexual relationships · Double standards · Political attitudes · Religiosity · Mass media

Double standards occur when values regarding appropriate behavior are applied differently to groups based on their status (Foschi 2000). With regards to gender, double standards have usually been discussed in relation to the different standards regarding sexuality applied to women and men (see Bordini and Sperb 2013, for a review of studies conducted mostly in United States). Whereas sexual initiative and sexual activity have traditionally been disapproved in women (who risk being labeled as “sluts”), these same behaviors have been considered acceptable or even desirable in men (who might be praised as “studs”) (Orenstein 2001). In the present research, we extend the analysis of gender-based double standards to traditional heterosexual dating and courtship scripts. For example, as reviewed below, many people consider it appropriate for men rather than for women to initiate and pay for dates. Gender-based double standards reflect the greater privilege and power traditionally accorded to men in society (Foschi 2000).

As explicated in the ambivalent sexism model (Glick and Fiske 1996, 2012), male dominance is maintained through a combination of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism emphasizes the chivalrous ideology that women are weak and they require men's protection (also known as protective paternalism). In addition, benevolent sexism is premised on essentialist views of gender whereby men are seen as natural leaders and providers, whereas women are viewed as natural caregivers. This ideology underlies the

✉ Campbell Leaper
cam@ucsc.edu

¹ Department of Psychology, University of California, Room 277
Social Sciences 2, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA

different standards of courtship behavior traditionally expected for women and men. Thus, as illustrated in various studies conducted in the United States, it is considered desirable for men—and undesirable for women—to be the initiator and the provider (Glick and Fiske 2012; Jaramillo-Sierra and Allen 2013; Laner and Ventrone 2000). Conversely, it is more desirable for women to accept men's control and protection than the reverse. (Unless indicated otherwise, studies that are subsequently cited were conducted in the United States or Canada.)

In the ambivalent sexism model, benevolent sexism operates in conjunction with hostile sexism to ensure male dominance. Hostile sexism occurs when antagonism is directed toward women (or men) who challenge these traditional gender roles. For example, this would include negative reactions to women who take initiative in dating relationships (Laner and Ventrone 2000) or to men who might take the woman's surname in marriage (Robnett and Leaper 2013; Schweingruber et al. 2008). Although gender attitudes have become more egalitarian in many respects over recent decades (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004), studies suggest that traditional attitudes regarding heterosexual dating and courtship scripts may be more resistant to change (Robnett and Leaper 2013). In the present study, we sought to examine some factors that might be related to variability in the endorsement of heterosexual dating and courtship double standards.

Double standards occur to the extent that men are viewed positively for exerting agency and control in heterosexual dating and courtship whereas women are viewed negatively for the same behaviors. Different standards for women and men tend to occur during heterosexual dating and courtship in at least five ways (Eaton and Rose 2011; Glick and Fiske 1996; Jaramillo-Sierra and Allen 2013; Laner and Ventrone 2000; Robnett and Leaper 2013; Rose and Frieze 1993; Sarlet et al. 2012; Schweingruber et al. 2008; Yoder et al. 2002). Traditional expectations generally dictate that it is more appropriate for (a) the man than for the woman to initiate the date, (b) the man than for the woman to hold doors open for the other, (c) the man than for the woman to pay for the expenses of the date, (d) the man than for the woman to make a marriage proposal, and (e) the woman than for the man to take the spouse's last name. Conversely, it is often viewed as inappropriate for the reverse patterns to occur. These five manifestations of heterosexual courtship scripts are related to structural patterns in society that privilege men's control over economic resources and consequently place women in the position of depending on men for their security (Glick and Fiske 2012; Rudman and Glick 2008; Wood and Eagly 2012). In the present study, we investigated double standards in young adults' attitudes regarding these five heterosexual dating and marital scripts in a sample of U.S. undergraduates.

For the purpose of our research, we created a measure that directly evaluated the degree that individuals might hold

different standards for women and men during heterosexual courtship in the five ways described above. Participants rated how much they favored particular behaviors separately for women and for men (e.g., "I believe female undergraduates should be the ones who ask the other sex out for a first date" and "I believe male undergraduates should be the ones who ask the other sex out for a first date"). Most existing gender attitude measures are based on asking respondents to rate their agreement to single statements about particular behaviors of one gender (e.g., "Men should pay for the woman's expenses on a date"). Our approach provides an index of the magnitude that a participant might be similar or different in their standards for women and men.

We investigated possible correlates of U.S. undergraduate women's and men's endorsement of heterosexual dating and courtship double standards. Within the university setting, young adults typically explore their sexual-romantic and gender-role identities (Jones and Abes 2013). Although undergraduate women and men tend to express egalitarian attitudes in many respects (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004; Davis and Greenstein 2009), their attitudes about dating and courtship often fall back on traditional gender-role scripts (Robnett and Leaper 2013). To consider personal factors that might be related to variations in the endorsement of dating and courtship double standards, we took into account the participants' gender, preferences, and attitudes.

Predictors of Dating Double Standards

The traditional gendered division of roles has generally conferred greater status and power among men than among women (Glick and Fiske 2012; Wood and Eagly 2012). Sexist attitudes reify these inequalities. By extension, the paternalism underlying dating double standards bestows greater agency and status on men than on women (e.g., man provides for woman; woman takes man's last name). Hence, women may be more likely than men to challenge traditional gender roles that privilege men relative to women. Indeed, prior studies have generally observed more gender-egalitarian and nonsexist attitudes among women than among men (Glick and Fiske 1996). Also, in some reports, more men than women were found to endorse sexual double standards (see Fugère et al. 2008, for a review). In an analogous manner, we hypothesized that men would be more likely than women to favor traditional heterosexual dating double standards (Hypothesis 1).

According to the cultivation model, mass media can shape the formation of people's expectations of reality and attitudes (Gerbner et al. 2002). By extension, popular media consumption may inform and reflect women's and men's beliefs about heterosexual dating traditions (Brown et al. 2002). In content analyses of gender depictions in the media, girls and women are often portrayed in subordinate and traditionally feminine

roles (e.g., as sex objects) in dating and marital relationships (Collins 2011; Signorielli 2012; Ward et al. 2014). More generally, traditional images of sexual-romantic roles are commonly reflected in television programs (Signorielli 2012; Ward et al. 2014), in men's fitness magazines (Hatoum and Belle 2004), as well as in entertainment and women's fashion magazines (Stankiewicz and Rosselli 2008). Thus, frequent consumption of these popular media may reflect and reinforce traditional gender attitudes in viewers (Ward et al. 2014). For example, studies with adolescents and young adults indicated the amount of TV viewing was positively related to traditional dating-role attitudes (Rivadeneyra and Lebo 2008; Ward 2002). Therefore, we predicted that women and men who consume more mainstream media (overall TV viewing; reading entertainment, women's fashion, and men's fitness magazines) would be more likely to endorse heterosexual dating double standards (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, this included overall TV viewing, women's fashion magazines (or online sites), men's fitness magazines (or online sites), and entertainment magazines (or online sites).

Beliefs about gender roles are often embedded in people's religious and political beliefs (Sheeran et al. 1996). For example, women are viewed as subordinate, and only men are permitted to lead religious services in orthodox or fundamentalist versions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In studies conducted in the United States and United Kingdom, religiosity (or religious attendance) was related to sexual double standards, whereby those higher in religiosity were more apt to hold negative views of sexual activity in women (vs. men) (UK: Sheeran et al. 1996). Also, religiosity is generally associated with more traditional attitudes about gender roles (U.S.: Burn and Busso 2005; Kirkpatrick 1993; Woodberry and Smith 1998). In a similar manner, politically conservative views are also associated with traditional attitudes toward gender roles (U.S.: Christopher and Mull 2006; Eagly et al. 2004). Conservatism is often rooted in preserving existing institutions and power relations, which can include the preservation of male dominance and heterosexual traditions in society (Christopher and Mull 2006). Hence, we predicted religious attendance (Hypothesis 3) and conservative (vs. liberal) political ideology (Hypothesis 4) would predict a greater likelihood of endorsing heterosexual dating double standards.

According to Glick and Fiske (1996, 2012) ambivalent sexism model, benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are interrelated processes that maintain male dominance in society. To measure sexist attitudes, Glick and Fiske (1996) asked individuals to rate their benevolent and hostile attitudes towards women with items such as "Women should be cherished and protected by men" (benevolent sexism) and "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men" (hostile sexism). These attitudes reflect unequal standards for women and men (e.g., women need men's protection; women are subordinate to men), which are commonly

expressed in the traditional heterosexual dating scripts described previously (e.g., man pays for date; women takes man's last name). Prior studies have found positive associations between ambivalent sexism and endorsement of traditional dating and courtship scripts (Bermúdez et al. 2015; Hall and Canterbury 2011; McCarty and Kelly 2015; Robnett and Leaper 2013). Therefore, we hypothesized that benevolent (Hypothesis 5) and hostile (Hypothesis 6) forms of sexism would be positively associated with the endorsement of heterosexual dating double standards.

Feminism is based on the attainment of gender equality in the home, in the workplace, and in the larger society. Hence, women and men who self-identify as feminists should be more likely to reject gender-based double standards. Indeed, in one study, U.S. undergraduate women who identified as feminists were more likely to disavow sexual double standards than were women who supported gender-egalitarian attitudes yet did not identify as feminists (Bay-Cheng and Zucker 2007). In a related manner, other studies found that women who self-identified as feminists were less likely to favor traditional dating and marital roles (Backus and Mahalik 2011; Yoder et al. 2007). Thus, we hypothesized that feminist self-identification would be negatively related to the endorsement of double standards about heterosexual dating and courtship in women and men (Hypothesis 7).

Summary of Hypotheses

In the present research, we examined variations in U.S. undergraduate women's and men's endorsement of heterosexual dating and courtship double standards. Because we created the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale for the present study, we conducted preliminary tests to examine the extent that women and men rated the desirability of each of the five dating and courtship behaviors in the scale differently for "undergraduate males" and "undergraduate females." Afterward, we tested the following hypotheses using the composite Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale:

1. Men would be more likely than women to endorse dating double standards.
2. Popular media preferences would positively predict the endorsement of dating double standards. We tested this hypothesis separately for TV viewing, women's fashion magazines/websites, men's fitness magazines/websites, and entertainment magazines/websites.
- 3 and 4. Religious attendance and conservative (vs. liberal) political attitudes would each positively predict the sanctioning of dating double standards.
- 5 and 6. Benevolent and hostile sexism would each positively predict support of dating double standards.

7. Feminist self-identification would negatively predict approval of dating double standards.

In addition, we conducted three exploratory analyses. First, we tested for average gender differences in all of the variables (although Hypothesis 1 is the only prediction we advanced regarding average gender differences). Second, we tested if there were gender differences in the correlates of dating double standards (although we did not posit any differences). Finally, although not hypothesized, we tested if social desirability was correlated with the endorsement of dating double standards. Some individuals who hold sexist attitudes may nonetheless believe it is socially unacceptable to express them openly to others (Swim et al. 1995). This concern might be especially true for students in a mostly liberal university community. Therefore, we explored whether social desirability was a potential bias affecting how individuals responded to items in our double standards scale.

Method

Participants

The participants were recruited from a pool of students required to participate in studies (or to do alternative assignments) for psychology classes at a U.S. California public university. A total of 377 persons participated. Given the study's focus on double standards in cross-gender dating and courtship relations, we dropped participants who self-identified as gay, lesbian, questioning, not sure, or other ($n = 24$ women and 15 men). Also, we dropped student who were older than 25 years ($n = 7$ men), below 18 years of age ($n = 1$ woman), or were missing age information ($n = 1$ woman). Thus, the sample used in the present study includes 330 heterosexual undergraduates (188 women and 142 men; ages ranged from 18 to 25). Participants' background characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Procedure

Our study was listed among the posted psychology studies with the title "College Students' Attitudes." Students who opted to participate were directed to an online survey with questions (in the following order) pertaining to demographic background, endorsement of double standards, gender attitudes and self-concepts, adjustment (not used in the present study), and media preferences. Informed consent was secured before starting the survey, and a debriefing statement with information on how to contact the researchers appeared at the end of the survey. Participants received credit for their course requirement.

Measures

The measures used in the present study are described below. Unless indicated otherwise, items were rated on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Scale scores were derived by averaging ratings across items such that higher scores indicate a greater level of the variable measured (unless indicated otherwise).

Social Desirability

Strahan and Gerbasi (1972) shortened version of the Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability scale was used. There were 10 items (e.g., "I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake") with satisfactory internal reliability ($\alpha = .69$).

Media Preferences

Participants indicated how often they viewed each of the following popular media on the following 8-point scale: 1 (*never*), 2 (*about once or twice per year*), 3 (*a few times per year*), 4 (*about once per month*), 5 (*several times per month*), 6 (*about once per week*), 7 (*a few times per week*), or 8 (*almost every day*): television, fashion magazines/web pages, fitness magazines/web pages, and entertainment magazines/web pages. Participants were also asked how often they read different kinds of books, although this latter information was not used in the present set of analyses.

Religious Attendance

Attendance at religious services was reported using the following 7-point scale: 1 (*rarely or never*), 2 (*every few years*), 3 (*about 1–2 times per year*), 4 (*a few times per year*), 5 (*a few times per month*), 6 (*every week*), or 7 (*more than once per week*). Approximately half (48.9 %) of women and two-fifths (39.4 %) of men indicated they attended religious services at least once or twice per year. (Participants' reported religious affiliations appear in Table 1.)

Political Ideology

Political attitudes were measured using the following scale: 1 (*very liberal*), 2 (*somewhat liberal*), 3 (*slightly liberal*), 4 = (*don't know/don't care*), 5 (*slightly conservative*), 6 (*somewhat conservative*), or 7 (*very conservative*). Most of the women (74.5 %) and men (71.1 %) reported they were at least slightly liberal. We ran our analyses without participants who selected the midpoint, and our findings remained the same as those reported in the present paper.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Variable	Women (<i>n</i> = 188)	Men (<i>n</i> = 142)
Age: <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	19.41 (1.51)	20.39 (1.55)
Self-identified ethnicity		
White/European American	75 (40 %)	67 (47 %)
Latina/Latino/Hispanic	49 (26 %)	27 (19 %)
Asian/Pacific Islander	38 (20 %)	34 (24 %)
Other	26 (14 %)	14 (10 %)
Political Views		
Very liberal	41 (22 %)	31 (22 %)
Somewhat liberal	71 (38 %)	42 (30 %)
Slightly liberal	28 (15 %)	28 (20 %)
Don't Know/Don't Care	21 (11 %)	20 (14 %)
Slightly conservative	15 (8 %)	14 (10 %)
Somewhat conservative	11 (6 %)	6 (4 %)
Very conservative	1 (1 %)	1 (1 %)
Religious Affiliation		
Not religious	37 (20 %)	54 (38 %)
Spiritual but not religious	52 (28 %)	34 (24 %)
Catholic/Christian Orthodox	46 (25 %)	26 (18 %)
Other Christian	22 (12 %)	15 (11 %)
Jewish	10 (5 %)	8 (6 %)
Buddhist	12 (6 %)	0
Muslim	0	1 (1 %)
Hindu	1 (1 %)	0
Other	0	4 (3 %)
No response	8 (4 %)	0
Mother's highest education		
No high school diploma	29 (15 %)	25 (18 %)
High school diploma	31 (17 %)	19 (13 %)
Some college	54 (29 %)	29 (20 %)
Bachelor's degree or higher	74 (39 %)	69 (49 %)
Father's highest education		
No high school diploma	29 (21 %)	26 (18 %)
High school diploma	37 (20 %)	28 (20 %)
Some college	34 (18 %)	20 (14 %)
Bachelor's degree or higher	78 (42 %)	68 (48 %)

Note. There was a significant gender difference in age, $t(328) = 5.73, p < .001$. No significant gender difference occurred in ethnic identifications, $\chi^2(330) = 4.31, p = .230$

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

To evaluate participants' endorsement of sexist attitudes and beliefs, we used the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske 1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory includes separate scales to assess benevolent sexism (11 items) and hostile sexism (11 items). *Benevolent sexism* is the belief that women need to be protected by men (e.g., "In a disaster women should be rescued before men") and that women and men complement one another in their natures (e.g., "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess"). *Hostile sexism* refers to hostile attitudes towards women who are viewed as

trying to control men, or change the presumed natural order of gender relations (e.g., "Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash"). The scales for benevolent ($\alpha = .79$) and hostile ($\alpha = .90$) sexism had satisfactory internal reliability.

Feminist Self-Identification

Participants completed the four-item Self-Identification as a Feminist questionnaire (Szymanski 2004). Examples of items from this questionnaire are "I consider myself a feminist" and "I identify myself as a feminist to other people." The scale had

satisfactory internal reliability ($\alpha = .89$). Among the women, 45.2 % “slightly” to “strongly” agreed that they considered themselves a feminist and 25.5 % “slightly” to “strongly” agreed that they identified as a feminist to others. Among men, these percentages were 31.7 and 19 %, respectively.

Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale

For the present research, we devised the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale to assess people’s double standards regarding different forms of paternalism in traditional heterosexual dating and courtship. Our scale seeks to improve upon popularly used gender attitude measures by directly comparing the behavioral standards that individuals hold for women and men. In most of the existing measures, respondents are asked to rate their agreement to statements that stipulate either gender-egalitarian arrangements (e.g., “A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage” from Spence and Helmreich 1978, Attitudes Toward Women Scale) or traditional arrangements (e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men” from Glick and Fiske 1996, Ambivalent Sexism Scale). Individuals are seen as holding relatively gender-egalitarian attitudes if they agree with statements about gender-egalitarian arrangements and disagree with items specifying traditional patterns.

However, the format of these items does not allow for all possibilities in how individuals might view the relative desirability of a behavior for women and men. For a given behavior, there are four alternative attitudes that might be endorsed: The behavior might be viewed as equally desirable for women and men (equal standard); it might be viewed as equally undesirable for women and men (equal standard); it may be viewed as more desirable for men than for women (double standard); or the behavior might be viewed as more desirable for women than for men (double standard). The method that we utilized allows for these various possibilities (see Axinn et al. 2011; Muehlenhard and McCoy 1991, for similar approaches). In our Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale, it is possible to compare the behavioral standards that individuals held for women and men. Moreover, it assesses the magnitude of difference in the standards that individuals might hold for women and men (i.e., whether the average differences in ratings for male and female characters are negligible, small, medium, or large).

The directions preceding the items assessing double standards stated that we wanted participants’ “opinions about appropriate behavior for different kinds of people such as undergraduates, teachers, politicians, actors, and so forth.” In addition, the directions stated: “Some of the items pertain to sexual-romantic behaviors. In these instances, please indicate your opinions about people in heterosexual relationships regardless of your own sexual orientation.” Participants subsequently rated their views regarding the appropriateness of specific behaviors separately for different types of persons. They rated agreement

for all items regarding “female undergraduates” and “male undergraduates.” Also, to help disguise the questionnaire’s focus on gender attitudes, participants were asked to rate many (but not all) of the behaviors for additional target groups that included “wealthy persons,” “religious persons,” “politicians,” “actors,” and “teachers.”

The order of items was randomized across participants. This included the gender and the type of target being rated. Also, while taking the survey, each item needed to be completed before proceeding to the next item; and it was not possible to return to earlier items.

Item Selection Twenty-four item types were initially generated through a review of prior gender attitude measures and research on double standards. We conducted preliminary analyses to evaluate potential items for the final scale. Some items were dropped because they were considered peripheral to our present focus on heterosexual dating and courtship behaviors. These include some items created to evaluate possible double standards about drinking alcohol (“I think that [target group] who get very drunk must have poor self-control”). Some items related to dating were dropped due to low internal reliability with the other items. We found the least reliable items focused more on sexual behaviors in dating relationships (e.g., “I believe it is fine if [target group] date someone much older than them,” “I believe that [target group] who are sexually experienced would be desirable romantic partners”). Further inspection revealed that our sample generally did not hold double standards about these sexual behaviors.

Our final scale was comprised of 5 items that focused specifically on traditional heterosexual dating and courtship scripts: “I believe [target group] should hold open doors for the other sex,” “I believe [target group] should be the ones who ask the other sex out for a first date,” “If [target group] go out on a date, they should usually pay for most or all of the expenses,” “If [target group] later get married, I believe they should be the ones who do the marriage proposal,” and “If [target group] later get married, I believe they should adopt the last name of the other partner.” Traditional dating double standards were reflected if the respondent rated stronger agreement for male undergraduates than for female undergraduates, with the exception of the last item (taking partner’s last name) which was reverse scored. The scale had satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$ for women; $\alpha = .77$ for men).

Scoring Separate ratings of “female undergraduates” and “male undergraduates” were used to evaluate double standards (“I believe a *female undergraduate* should hold open doors for the other sex” vs. “I believe a *male undergraduate* should hold open doors for the other sex”). As mentioned above in the general description of the measures, items were rated on a 6-point scale. The difference between ratings of

female and male characters for each behavior was computed. Difference scores were positive integers if they reflected traditional double standards (e.g., stronger agreement for men than for women as the ones to pay for a date; or stronger agreement for women than for men as the ones to take partner's last name). Negative scores reflected nontraditional double standards (e.g., stronger agreement for women than for men as the ones to pay for a date). Scores closest to zero reflected egalitarian attitudes (i.e., no difference in ratings of behavior for females and males). The composite score for the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale reflects the average difference score across the five items (i.e., a possible range for mean scores of -5 to $+5$). Higher scores reflect stronger endorsement of double standards in the traditional direction.

Results

Three sets of analyses were conducted using the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale. First, we performed a preliminary series of paired-*t* tests and correlations to examine if participants rated female and male undergraduates differently on each of the five items in the scale. (When describing the item characters in the scale, we refer to ratings of “female undergraduates” versus ratings of “male undergraduates. When describing the gender of the participants, we refer to women versus men.) These analyses were conducted to explore how well the items in the new scale reflected heterosexual dating double standards among women and men. For the second set of analyses, we tested for average gender differences on all of the measures. Finally, we ran bivariate correlations between the composite score on the Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale and each of the hypothesized predictors. Although we did not hypothesize gender differences in these correlations, we did test if any occurred.

Item Analyses

The results from the paired *t*-tests comparing participants' ratings of item characters (i.e., undergraduate women and men) on each of the dating and courtship behaviors are summarized in Table 2. For each item, ratings of “undergraduate females” are compared with ratings of “undergraduate males.” The table presents both (a) the correlation between pairs of items, run separately for women and men participants, as well as (b) the values from the paired *t*-tests (including Cohen's *d* measures of effect size) comparing the difference between each pair of ratings. Tests for gender differences between correlations were performed, and these results are additionally indicated in Table 2. Overall, women and men endorsed traditional double standards regarding the various

dating and courtship behaviors. One exception was the item pertaining to holding doors. Although men tended to support a traditional double standard here, women generally did not.

Large effect sizes ($d \geq .70$) occurred among women and men who expressed traditional double standards about paying for a date and proposing marriage. Also, large effect sizes were indicated among women about who should ask for a date and among men about who should take the marriage partner's last name. The trend was for traditional scripts (i.e., man initiates date, pays for date, and proposes marriage; woman takes man's last name) to be viewed positively and for nontraditional scripts to be viewed negatively (e.g., woman proposes marriage). Thus, these average patterns reflect a gender-based double standard in how these heterosexual courtship behaviors were evaluated.

Group Comparisons

For our next set of analyses, we compared women's and men's score on all of the measures. However, first, we performed a preliminary 4×2 ANOVA to test for possible differences in heterosexual dating double standards based on participants' ethnicity (White/Euro, Latino/a, Asian, or other) or gender. There were no significant main effects for ethnicity, $F(3, 322) = 1.81$, $p = .145$, or gender, $F(1, 322) = .74$, $p = .319$. Also, the interaction effect was not significant, $F(3, 322) = 2.20$, $p = .088$. Given that ethnic background did not appear related to double standards, we did not consider it as a factor in subsequent analyses.

Next, we carried out a MANOVA to test for average gender differences across the 11 measures used in the present study. There was a significant multivariate main effect for gender, $F(11, 316) = 18.84$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .40$. As summarized in Table 3, there were significant univariate gender effects associated with dating double standards (women higher), hostile sexism (men higher), feminist identity (women higher), reading women's fashion magazines/websites (women higher), reading men's fitness magazines/websites (men higher), and reading entertainment magazines/websites (women higher).

In Hypothesis 1, we posited higher average endorsement of dating double standards among men than among women. However, the opposite pattern was indicated. That is, women were significantly more likely than were men to support heterosexual dating double standards. Thus Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Correlates of Double Standards

We conducted bivariate Spearman correlations to test whether the hypothesized predictors were related to variations in the composite Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale. The

Table 2 Paired *t*-tests comparing ratings of item characters

Item	Item Character				<i>r</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	“undergraduate males”		“undergraduate females”					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
1. Hold door for other sex								
Women	4.14	1.32	4.20	1.37	.71 _a	−.78	.437	.08
Men	4.18	1.37	3.38	1.41	.29 _b	5.75	.000	.68
2. One to ask first date								
Women	3.97	1.42	2.64	1.02	−.15 _a	9.75	.000	1.01
Men	3.37	1.38	3.10	.94	.14 _b	2.11	.037	.25
3. One to pay for date								
Women	3.81	1.31	2.16	1.01	−.09 _a	13.22	.000	1.36
Men	3.69	1.29	2.31	1.11	−.15 _a	9.03	.000	1.07
4. One to propose marriage								
Women	3.81	1.31	2.16	1.01	−.09 _a	13.22	.000	1.36
Men	4.13	1.47	2.51	1.14	−.29 _a	9.24	.000	1.10
5. Adopt marriage partner’s last name								
Women	2.26	1.12	3.21	1.54	−.10 _a	6.54	.000	.68
Men	2.33	1.10	3.68	1.39	−.13 _a	8.55	.000	1.02

Note. *n* = 188 women and *n* = 142 men. Ratings of “undergraduate males” and “undergraduate females” were made on a 6-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scores for the *t*-tests and Cohen’s *d* are positive when they reflect traditional double standards (ratings of “undergraduate males” higher than of “undergraduate females” for items 1–4, and the reverse for item 5. For *r* correlations for each item, different subscripts indicate significant (*p* < .01) differences for women and men participants

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001

correlations among all variables, separately by participants’ gender, are presented in Table 4. In addition, tests for gender differences in the correlations between double standards and the hypothesized predictors are presented in Table 5.

Social Desirability

Although not hypothesized, we explored whether there was any association between social desirability and double standards. The results indicated these two variables were not

Table 3 Gender comparisons on study measures

	Possible Range	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i> (1, 326)	η_p^2	<i>d</i>
Dating Double Standards	−5 to +5	1.44 (1.36)	1.09 (1.31)	5.45*	.02	.26
Benevolent Sexism	1 to 6	3.29 (.89)	3.19 (.85)	1.21	.00	.11
Hostile Sexism	1 to 6	2.91 (.98)	3.20 (1.09)	6.49*	.02	−.28
Feminist Identify	1 to 6	3.48 (1.26)	3.13 (1.35)	5.78*	.02	.27
Political Views	1 to 6	2.65 (1.48)	2.76 (1.47)	.36	.00	−.07
Religious Attendance	1 to 7	2.63 (1.70)	2.43 (1.76)	1.08	.00	.12
TV Viewing	1 to 8	6.53 (1.61)	6.59 (1.52)	.21	.00	−.04
Women’s Fashion Magazines	1 to 8	2.90 (1.52)	1.37 (1.03)	105.52***	.25	1.18
Men’s Fitness Magazines	1 to 8	1.30 (.82)	2.01 (1.61)	27.12***	.08	−.56
Entertainment Magazines	1 to 8	2.98 (1.73)	1.92 (1.55)	32.15***	.09	.65
Social Desirability	1 to 6	3.33 (.74)	3.42 (.65)	1.38	.00	−.13

Note. Paternalism was the only scale allowing possible negative scores (range −5 to +5) with scores above zero reflecting traditional double standards. Political views range from very liberal (low) to very conservative (high). A MANOVA testing for gender differences across all measures was significant, *F*(13, 314) = 16.43, *p* < .001, η_p^2 = .41

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001

Table 4 Spearman correlations among study measures by gender

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	5	7	8	9	10
1. Dating Double Standards	–	.51***	.17*	–.11	.18*	.11	.06	.16*	–.09	.14 ⁺
2. Benevolent Sexism	.51***	–	.40***	–.05	.26***	.21**	.14	.06	.00	.17*
3. Hostile Sexism	.52***	.51***	–	–.39***	.40***	.07	–.08	–.06	.10	–.02
4. Feminist Identity	–.36***	–.20*	–.39***	–	–.32***	.07	–.01	–.04	–.04	–.01
5. Political Attitudes	.32***	.38***	.36***	–.41***	–	.21**	.01	–.01	.04	.08
6. Religious Attendance	.20*	.24**	.17*	–.03	–.05	–	.08	–.03	.05	.05
7. Television Viewing	.18*	.08	.07	–.13	–.03	–.08	–	.00	–.03	.17*
8. Women's Fashion Magazines	–.01	.16 ⁺	.09	.19*	.04	.19*	–.02	–	.23**	.50***
9. Men Fitness Magazines	.16 ⁺	.19*	.19*	–.05	.21*	.14	–.12	.55***	–	.14 ⁺
10. Entertainment Magazines	–.01	.10	.01	.07	.04	.20*	.08	.47***	.46***	–

Note. $n = 188$ women and $n = 142$ men. Correlations for women appear above the diagonal; for men, below. Political views range from liberal (low) to conservative (high)

⁺ $p < .06$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

significantly correlated for both women ($r = .12$, $p = .089$) and men ($r = -.08$, $p = .348$).

Media Preferences

We predicted a positive association between participants' mainstream media preferences and their endorsement of dating double standards (Hypothesis 2). We tested this hypothesis in relation to participants' reported consumption of the following media: television, women's fashion magazines (or websites), men's fitness magazines (or websites), and entertainment magazines (or websites). Among women, the hypothesized pattern was seen with regards to reading women's fashion and entertainment magazines, but not in relation to TV viewing or reading men's fitness magazines. Among men, the expected pattern was observed with TV viewing and (marginally) with reading men's fitness magazines, but not with reading women's fashion magazines or entertainment magazines. There were no

significant gender differences in the correlations between double standards and media consumption regarding TV viewing, women's fashion magazines, and entertainment magazines. However, the correlation between double standards and reading men's fitness magazines was significantly stronger for men than for women (see Table 5).

Religious Attendance and Political Ideology

The endorsement of heterosexual dating double standards was expected to be more likely among those scoring higher in religious attendance (Hypothesis 3) and conservative political attitudes (Hypothesis 4). Religious attendance was significantly associated with the double standards only among men. However, endorsing conservative (vs. liberal) political attitudes was significantly and positively related to double standards in men and women. There were no gender differences in the latter correlations (see Table 5).

Benevolent and Hostile Sexism

As hypothesized, both hostile (Hypothesis 5) and benevolent (Hypothesis 6) sexism were positively and significantly related to endorsing double standards. Both correlations were indicated for women as well as men. The magnitude of correlation between benevolent sexism and dating double standards was comparable for women and men, but the association between hostile sexism and double standards was significantly stronger for men than for women (see Table 5).

Feminist Self-Identification

The hypothesized association between feminist self-identification and dating double standards (Hypothesis 7)

Table 5 Gender comparisons of correlations between hypothesized predictors and dating double standards

Variables	Women	Men	$Z_{\text{difference}}$
Benevolent Sexism	.51***	.51***	–.15
Hostile Sexism	.17*	.52***	–3.68***
Feminist Identity	–.11	–.36***	2.43*
Political Attitudes	.18**	.32***	–1.33
Religious Attendance	.11	.20*	–.85
TV Viewing	.06	.18*	–1.08
Women's Fashion Magazines	.16*	–.01	1.53
Men's Fitness Magazines	–.09	.16 ⁺	–2.24*
Entertainment Magazines	.14*	–.01	1.35

Note. $n = 188$ women and $n = 142$ men. Political views range from liberal (low) to conservative (high)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

was indicated among men but not among women, and the gender difference was significant (see Table 5).

Discussion

The items in our Heterosexual Dating Double Standards Scale were designed to assess different standards of behavior for women and men during heterosexual dating and courtship. The selection of the items was guided by prior research on the topic (Eaton and Rose 2011; Glick and Fiske 1996; Laner and Ventrone 2000; Robnett and Leaper 2013; Rose and Frieze 1993; Sarlet et al. 2012). In general, women and men in our U.S. undergraduate sample generally endorsed double standards about heterosexual scripts. By employing a difference score—whereby participants rated the desirability of particular behaviors separately for women and men—it was possible to infer the magnitude of the double standard that individuals held. When we explored this patterns for specific items, we observed medium and large effect sizes in double standards toward asking for a date, paying for the date, proposing marriage, and adopting a marriage partner's last name. On average, women and men evaluated each of these behaviors positively when they reflected traditional scripts (e.g., man initiates date, man proposes marriage) and negatively when they reflected nontraditional scripts (e.g., woman initiates date, man takes woman's last name in marriage). Thus, many women and men endorsed double standards about heterosexual dating and courtship—even in our mostly liberal undergraduate sample.

One notable gender difference occurred in participants' ratings of the item about holding the door ("I believe undergraduate [males/females] should hold open doors for the other sex"). Whereas men in general viewed this more appropriate for undergraduate males than for undergraduate females (with a large effect size), women in general viewed it equally desirable for undergraduate males and females. Unfortunately, in our survey items, we did not specify whether holding doors for the other gender was specific to a dating context. Yoder et al. (2002) observed patterns of door holding among mixed-gender pairs in public settings (e.g., on campus) and dating contexts (e.g., at a restaurant). In mixed-gender pairs, women were somewhat more likely to hold doors in public settings, whereas men were much more likely to hold doors in dating settings. Therefore, for future use, we recommend adding the phrase "during a date" to our item.

When examining the correlates of endorsing dating double standards, we explored whether social desirability concerns might bias participants' willingness to endorse dating double standards. When individuals with traditional gender attitudes are part of a liberal college community, they may be reluctant to share their traditional gender attitudes (Swim et al. 1995). However, we found no evidence that responses on our double standards scale were significantly related to social desirability for either women or men.

Undergraduates' overall endorsement of heterosexual dating double standards varied with the other personal factors that we examined. First, we tested for average gender differences in the endorsement of dating double standards. Prior studies (conducted mostly in the United States) have found that men were more likely than women to endorse sexist attitudes (Rudman and Glick 2008). In a similar manner, we observed higher average endorsement of hostile sexism among men than among women. However, our first hypothesis that more men than women would favor double standards was not supported. Instead, the reverse pattern was indicated whereby women scored higher on average than did men. An inspection of the specific items in the Heterosexual Dating Double Standards Scale (see Table 2) suggests this was mainly due to the item addressing who initiates the first date. Although both women and men tended to express traditional double standards regarding this behavior, the trend was much stronger among women (very large effect size) than men (small effect size). This may reflect the anxiety often associated with initiating a date (McNamara and Grossman 1991), which many men may find intimidating.

In our second hypothesis, we proposed that popular media preferences would predict dating double standards. We focused on popular media in the United States that tend to reinforce traditional gender roles, including overall television viewing, women's fashion magazines (or web sites), entertainment magazines (or web sites), and men's fitness magazines (or web sites). Traditional sexual-romantic roles are commonly depicted in television and other popular media (Signorielli 2012). Furthermore, women are commonly portrayed as sex objects in fashion magazines (Stankiewicz and Rosselli 2008). At the same time, traditional images of masculinity are reinforced in men's fitness magazines (Hatoum and Belle 2004). These images underscore notions of women needing to appeal to men who might ask them on dates, as well as men needing to appear strong and powerful; in turn, these patterns may contribute to traditional dating roles. Consistent with our predictions, double standards were more likely among women who reported reading women's fashion or entertainment magazines (or web sites). Also, as expected, we found double standards were more likely among men who reported either more television viewing or more reading of men's fitness magazines (or web sites).

The observation that different types of print media were related to endorsing double standards for women and men is unsurprising. These differences reflected the media habits that women and men reported. Reading fashion and entertainment magazines were more common among women, whereas reading men's fitness magazines was more likely among men. The additional finding that TV viewing was associated with dating double standards only among men, however, deserves exploration. There was no average gender difference in amount of reported television viewing. One possible explanation is that

men are overrepresented as characters in television shows (Collins 2011; Signorielli 2012), which may provide men with proportionally more gender-stereotypical role models to observe.

Frequent consumption of popular media may reinforce the internalization of cultural stereotypes (Signorielli 2012), which often include double standards about dating scripts (Eggermont 2006; Rivadeneyra and Lebo 2008). To the extent that media often inform and guide people's gender-role expectations, the latter explanation follows from social role theory (Eagly and Wood 2012), as well as from the cultivation model (Gerbner et al. 2002). Although all of our results are correlational and causation cannot be inferred, prior experimental studies demonstrated that viewing gender-typed television content led to increases in people's endorsement of gender stereotypes (Signorielli 2012; Ward 2002). We suspect the causal influence is bidirectional, whereby mass media shape people's attitudes and also people tend to favor media that reflect their views. To better understand possible television influences, it may be more revealing in future research to look for links between particular television programming and dating attitudes (Rivadeneyra and Lebo 2008; Tolman et al. 2007; Zurbriggen and Morgan 2006).

Religious attendance and political views were additional facets of individuals' experiences and ideology that we tested as correlates of dating double standards. As predicted in our respective third and fourth hypotheses, both factors were associated with the endorsement of heterosexual dating double standards. Greater religious attendance was related to stronger endorsement of double standards (although the association was significant only among men). This finding is consistent with prior research noting a positive association between religiosity and support for protective paternalism (Burn and Busso 2005). Most mainstream religions emphasize patriarchal roles for men and women (Sheeran et al. 1996). In future work, however, it may prove helpful to distinguish among fundamentalist and more progressive sects of particular faiths (Bang et al. 2005; Woodberry and Smith 1998).

In addition, undergraduates with a more conservative political ideology (in our mostly liberal sample) were more likely to endorse gender-role double standards in dating and courtship. Support for traditional heterosexual roles is a common tenant of conservative political ideology (Eagly et al. 2004; Henley et al. 2000; Klein 2006). The results involving religious attendance as well as political attitudes underscore how traditional views of heterosexual relations are intertwined with other cultural ideologies in society.

As predicted in our fifth and sixth hypotheses, respectively, benevolent and hostile sexism were positively related to participants' backing of double standards. Among the examined correlates of double standards, benevolent sexism was the only factor with a large effect size among both women and men. This is not surprising given that our double standards scale focuses on forms of protective paternalism (benevolent

sexism) in dating and courtship scripts. Hence, the strong association with benevolent sexism supports the validity of dating double standards measure. One distinctive feature of our measure, however, is that it specifically focuses on attitudes regarding heterosexual dating and courtship scripts.

Although hostile sexism was significantly correlated with dating double standards among women and men, the association was substantially stronger among men than women. Men's and women's patterns of correlations among hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and dating double standards are compatible with Glick and Fiske's (1996) ambivalent sexism model. Hostile sexism reifies men's traditional dominance over women, whereas benevolent sexism offers women the putative reward of men's protection in exchange for women's deference. Thus, endorsing double standards about heterosexual courtship may be especially likely for women who believe it is important for the man to protect the woman (i.e., benevolent sexism). In a complementary manner, endorsing these double standards may be more common among men who value male dominance or the role of male as protector (i.e., both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism) (Fischer 2006; Hammond et al. 2014; Rudman et al. 2013).

In our seventh and last hypothesis, we posited that feminist self-identification would be negatively related to expressing double standards. Although the correlation was negative for women and men, it was significant only for men. Also, the gender difference in the correlations was significant. The lack of a significant association between feminist self-identification and double standards among women may reflect the "I'm not a feminist but" phenomenon documented in prior studies in the United States (Leaper and Arias 2011; Zucker 2004). That is, some women may endorse gender-egalitarian attitudes but reject the feminist label because of misunderstandings and negative perceptions regarding feminism. Conversely, men who reject double standards that generally privilege their own gender may more readily associate gender equality with feminism. These conjectures require testing in future research.

Having discussed the results pertaining to our hypotheses, we now turn to some implications of our study for future research. The Heterosexual Dating Double-Standards Scale assesses different behavioral standards for women and men during heterosexual dating and courtship. Analogous to sexual double standards, dating double standards reflect the greater power conferred upon men than upon women in society. Also, as seen in sexual double standards, participants tended to view men positively for expressing agency and control in dating and courtship, whereas they tended to view women somewhat negatively for the same behaviors.

We note some advantages of our method for assessing double standards in future research. First, our scale improves upon the approach used in many gender attitude questionnaires by separately assessing the desirability for women and for men of particular heterosexual courtship behaviors. In this manner, it is

possible to index the degree that individuals might hold double standards (see Axinn et al. 2011; Muehlenhard and McCoy 1991, for similar approaches). Our scale also includes a cohesive set of items that collectively address paternalistic arrangements in heterosexual dating and courtship (Glick and Fiske 2012).

Heterosexual courtship is not the only domain in which paternalism and double standards are enacted. Therefore, to build on our approach, we recommend expanding the scale to include multiple domains in which double standards are expressed. Besides heterosexual dating and courtship roles, other domains might include sexual behavior (Lai and Hynie 2011; Zaikman and Marks 2014), decision making (Harvey et al. 2002), socioemotional support (Burlinson et al. 2005), aggression (Strauss 2008), and marital role-sharing (Gaunt 2013). Considering multiple domains in which gender-based double standards operate might prove helpful when evaluating how and when double standards guide behavior (Eaton and Matamala 2014; Forste and Fox 2012; Kaufman and Taniguchi 2006).

There is untapped potential of our difference-score approach that we were unable to consider the present study. It can be used in situations when individuals might have cross-gender-typed attitudes (e.g., believing it is more appropriate for a woman than for a man to initiate a date). There were insufficient incidences of such patterns to explore in the present study. Also, the difference-score method can distinguish between individuals who consider a behavior as equally acceptable versus equally unacceptable for women and men. This distinction might be more pertinent when considering attitudes about sexual behaviors. For example, some people might have similar views about having a “one-night stand” for women and men—but one group might see this behavior as equally acceptable whereas another group sees it as equally undesirable. Perhaps these two egalitarian patterns are differentially related to other outcomes.

Further testing of heterosexual dating and courtship double standards is recommended with other populations. The present study was based on a sample of heterosexual and mostly liberal undergraduates. They were young adults (18 to 25 years old) who may still be exploring their ideas and opinions about romantic and marital roles (Jones and Abes 2013). There are reasons to study both younger and older samples. Paternalistic attitudes about dating are apparent in U.S. adolescents (Farkas and Leaper 2016). Also, previous research in the United States suggests gender attitudes often become more traditional after heterosexual couples have children (Hackel and Ruble 1992; Katz-Wise et al. 2010). We also encourage examining gender-role double standards in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. For example, some evidence suggests the internalization of double standards may affect romantic relationship quality among gay men (Wade and Donis 2007). However, this may be less likely in lesbian

relationships for whom egalitarian roles might be more likely than gay men’s or heterosexuals’ relationships (Kurdek 1998).

Finally, we encourage investigation into the potential consequences of endorsing double standards. Drawing on the gender-role strain model, double standards can be psychologically and physically debilitating for women and men (Levant and Philpot 2002; Richmond et al. 2015; van Well et al. 2005). Conversely, research on heterosexual, gay, and lesbian romantic couples suggests that transcending traditional double standards may bolster relationship satisfaction and psychological adjustment (Casad et al. 2015; Forste and Fox 2012; Kaufman and Taniguchi 2006; Kurdek 1998; Levant and Philpot 2002). When individuals in a romantic relationship are equally free to express their agency and to support one another, their lives together may be more fulfilling.

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Both authors collaborated in the design of the study and the writing of the article. AP was responsible for initially proposing a study on gender-based double standards. Also, AP identified relevant behaviors to include in the scale. CL was responsible for creating the difference-score format for the scale and conducting the statistical analyses. Also, CL was primarily responsible for revisions of the manuscript.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Research Involving Human Participants The Institutional Review Board at the authors’ university reviewed and approved the research protocol.

Informed Consent Informed consent was secured from all participants.

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