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Gender and Ethnic Variation in Emerging Adults' Recalled Dating Socialization in Relation to Current Romantic Attitudes and Relationship Experiences

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Abstract

We investigated emerging adults' retrospective accounts of the family and peer socialization in relation to possible sexual double standards. With a sample of 672 ethnically diverse emerging adults ($M=19.4$ years; 51% female), we tested whether recalled socialization messages about *dating liberally* (i.e., dating multiple persons) predicted women's and men's current preferences to date liberally (i.e., to date multiple persons) and dating relationship experiences (number of lifetime sexual partners and current romantic satisfaction). As expected, recalled socialization messages predicted current attitudes about dating liberally; and current attitudes were negatively related to relationships satisfaction and positively to number of sexual partners. Ethnicity moderated the association between gender and socialization to date liberally. Findings highlight the potential of families and peers to influence relationship attitudes and outcomes within diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords Gender · Dating · Sexism · Family · Peers · Latinx · Asian American

Healthy romantic relationships have profound implications on psychological well-being (Fleming et al., 2010) and improved physical health (Reis et al., 2000). However, the type and number of romantic relationships people desire or pursue could vary in the United States, possibly being influenced by one's gender or ethnicity. Specifically, one young adult may aim to find a soul mate in college and desire to commit to marriage with this single person until death. In contrast, another young

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adult may date multiple partners at the same time and never settle down. What determines these dating attitudes?

Youth form their sexual–romantic attitudes during adolescence as they begin to consider dating. Among the potential influences on these attitudes, researchers have highlighted the family (Flores & Barroso, 2017) and peers (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). Notably, double standards exist for young women and men for sexual–romantic behaviors (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Paynter & Leaper, 2016). Adolescent girls commonly receive restrictive messages about their sexuality, and they are encouraged to maintain monogamous romantic relationships (Flores & Barroso, 2017). In contrast, adolescent boys are more likely encouraged to gain sexual experience possibly with multiple dating partners (Flores & Barroso, 2017), which we refer to as *dating liberally*. Our investigation's goal was to consider the messages that young adults in the US recalled hearing from family and peers while growing up about dating liberally or conservatively. Moreover, we tested whether these retrospective accounts predicted young adults' current attitudes about dating liberally and their reported dating experiences. In these analyses, we also investigated whether gender or ethnic differences occurred in these variables.

Traditional Sexual Scripts and Gender Roles

Sexual and dating scripts are intricately embedded in societal gender roles (Zaikman & Marks, 2014). In a review of studies on heterosexual dating practices conducted over 35 years primarily in the US, the authors concluded that *traditional dating scripts* among young adults have persisted across the decades (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Some examples of the traditional dating script include expectations that the man will initiate a first date and pay for it, while the woman will gauge whether the man is serious before becoming sexually involved (Paynter & Leaper, 2016). There are also traditional sexual scripts based on the *sexual double standard* (Crawford & Popp, 2003). It has been more acceptable for men than women to date casually, to have multiple sexual partners, and to be non-monogamous. Further, dating liberally has been seen as a male-dominated behavior, whereby dating is an arena in which men can compete, score, and dominate (Giordano et al., 2006). The double standard suggests women are either viewed as pure and virginal or promiscuous and easy (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Consistent with these cultural expectations in the US and many other societies, researchers found more men than women were interested in casual “hookups” rather than serious dating (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010). However, it did not appear that women and men differ in the incidence of casual sexual relationships during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Lyons et al., 2015).

Heteronormative scripts regarding sexuality and dating may be particularly salient to emerging adults as they determine their goals for sexual–romantic relationships (Arnett, 2015; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). However, for women, traditional gender socialization might emphasize that romantic relationships should entail engaging in a committed and monogamous relationship with the hope of achieving intimacy. In contrast, for men, traditional gender socialization might emphasize that emerging adulthood should be a time when they focus on career achievement and avoid

monogamous or long-term relationships that might stifle independence (Norona et al., 2016). Thus, we consider emerging adulthood, as this may be a particularly important stage to examine how women and men engage with dating relationships.

The context for traditional sexual–romantic scripts is explicated in ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 2001). According to this model, sexism operates through dual attitudes that justify men’s dominance through (i) sexual objectification and hostility at women who do not conform to traditional heterosexual roles, or through (ii) patronizing care for women who do conform. This model helps to explain sexual–romantic double standards (Zaikman & Marks, 2014). For men, dating multiple partners becomes a way to enact dominance in sexual relations; but for women, monogamous dating provides them protection from the backlash of expressing their sexual independence (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Zaikman & Marks, 2014). Thus, in the present study, we assessed young adults’ attitudes toward dating liberally—that is, the desirability to date multiple partners concurrently (non-monogamy) or over time (non-committal).

Socialization and Personal Endorsement of Gendered Dating Scripts

We additionally investigated young adults’ recalled messages from family and peers about dating liberally. According to the ecological-systems perspective, individuals develop in the context of multiple interconnected microsystems, including their families and their peers. These microsystems are embedded within the broader macrosystem or culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Similarly, sociocultural theory posits that culture is learned as people participate in their communities’ cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003). Youth often learn cultural ideals and traditions—including views about gender roles and dating—in family (Flores & Barroso, 2017) and peer relationships (Trinh & Ward, 2016). Much of this socialization transpires between adolescence and early adulthood when youth confront the developmental task of finding and forming a committed and satisfying intimate relationship (Hoegh & Bourgeois, 2002; Wong et al., 2018).

Extant research supports the premise that familial and peer environments often inform romantic attitudes and dating behaviors. Several studies have documented that parents affirm sexual–romantic double standards in their socialization of daughters and sons (Epstein & Ward, 2008, 2011; Gutierrez et al., 2019; Heisler, 2014; Manago et al., 2015). In addition, researchers noted that peers communicate messages about norms for sexual–romantic relationships that are also generally consistent with heteronormative double standards that include attitudes towards non-committal dating (Bongardt et al., 2017; Crawford & Unger, 2000; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Manago et al., 2015). For boys, the message has often been to “sow their wild oats” (i.e., enjoy multiple partners). In contrast, girls have been warned that a future husband would not “buy the cow if he can get the milk for free” (i.e., seek monogamy and commitment).

To better understand the development of gendered dating scripts, we tested whether there were average gender differences in emerging adults’ recalled socialization messages and personal endorsement of dating liberally. Based on the reviewed

research, we expected that men would be more likely than women to report positive messages from both family and peers about dating liberally (Hypothesis 1), and to personally endorse dating liberally (Hypothesis 2).

We additionally tested whether the likelihood of dating liberal messages and personal endorsement to date liberally would vary depending on the young adults' ethnic background. In particular, our sample was comprised primarily of youth from Latinx, Asian, and White European ethnic backgrounds. Expectations regarding traditional gender roles associated with the sexual double standard appear prominent in each of these ethnic cultural communities. For example, in some Latinx communities, these may include traditional *machismo* and *caballerismo* for men and *marianismo* for women (Arciniega et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2010). *Traditional machismo* emphasizes men's assertion of masculinity in sexual relationships with women, whereas *caballerismo* reflects men's circumspection about past sexual experiences when dating women (Arciniega et al., 2008). *Marianismo* emphasizes the ideal image of women as virginal and chaste (Castillo et al., 2010). In some Asian communities, traditional gender roles are based on Confucian and Hindu values, in which women are similarly expected to remain sexually chaste (Tang et al., 2010). However, concepts of masculinity may be more flexible in Asian than other cultures (Chua & Fujino, 1999; Gutierrez et al., 2019). For instance, men from five Asian nations described sexual relationships as not central to their conceptions of masculinity (Ng et al., 2008).

It is important to note that both Latinx and Asian youth in the US navigate dominant narratives about their ethnic groups as hyper- or hypo-sexual, and many youth may internalize these ideals or reject these ideals but strive towards hegemonic US-American gender norms, that also emphasize sexual double standards (Chou & Taylor, 2019). For example, in White European-heritage communities, traditional gender values additionally reflect greater acceptability of sexual behaviors in men than women. In fact, much of the literature identifying and conceptualizing the sexual double standard was conducted with predominately White US samples (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Thus, attitudes regarding dating liberally may be relevant in all these communities, however the extent to which they are endorsed may vary.

Most prior research on dating double standards has been conducted primarily with White European American samples or it has not examined ethnic background (Fugère et al., 2008). However, Fugère and colleagues (2008) conducted a review of research testing ethnic group differences in sexual attitudes. They concluded that more permissive sexual attitudes were generally observed among African American individuals, followed by White American individuals, and then Latinx American and Asian American individuals. Similarly, in a study published after this review, Asian American young adults were found to be more conservative in their sexual and gender-role attitudes compared to either Latinx or White European American young adults; however, the latter two groups did not significantly differ (Ahrold & Meston, 2010). Similarly, in a recent study, sexual double standards were more likely to be endorsed by Asian American than White American adults (Guo, 2019). However, another recent study did not find any differences in Asian American, White European American, and Latinx undergraduates' endorsement of dating courtship double standards (Paynter & Leaper, 2016).

Thus, given the limited prior research comparing different ethnic groups in women's and men's recalled socialization messages or personal endorsements of dating liberally, we considered it informative to test these comparisons. Based on the reviewed literature, we expected double standards among each ethnic group; however, we expected that personal endorsement and positive messages about dating liberally from peers and family might be greater among Asian American and Latinx students, followed by European American students (Hypothesis 3 and 4).

Possible Outcomes Related to Socialization and Endorsement of Dating Liberally

Whereas several studies have examined socialization messages or young adults' current sexual attitudes, little research has tested whether these are related. Moreover, to our knowledge, there has been no prior study testing if emerging adults' endorsement of dating liberally mediated associations between family members' and peers' socialization messages to current dating experiences. Thus, an additional aim was to examine whether familial socialization, peer socialization, and personal endorsement to date liberally would predict specific relationship outcomes. We specifically examined two relationship outcomes: the number of reported sexual partners and current relationship satisfaction.

First, a person in pursuit of having several romantic partners over their lifetime can increase their chance of having higher numbers of sexual partners compared to a person who dates more selectively. This is a behavioral outcome that would be consistent with attitudes in favor of dating liberally (e.g., Manago et al., 2015). Second, we tested whether personal endorsement to date liberally would be associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. Individuals who do not maintain committed relationships are overall less invested in their romantic relationships—which is generally correlated with lower romantic satisfaction (Arriaga, 2001; Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Indeed, monogamy is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Martins et al., 2016; Schmookler & Bursik, 2007). Thus, we hypothesized that young adults who reported experiencing either liberal or restrictive socialization messages about dating from family and peers would be more likely to indicate similar personal views (Hypothesis 5). In turn, we hypothesized that emerging adults' current attitudes about dating liberally would mediate associations between recalled socialization messages from family and peers to their current sexual–romantic experiences (Hypothesis 6). We expected that these interrelationships between messages, current attitudes, and relationship behaviors would generalize across gender and ethnic group.

One recent study lends support to our proposed model whereby earlier socialization messages about sexual–romantic relationships may predict current dating relationship behaviors. In one study, Latinx undergraduates were asked to recall sex communications from parents and friends and to report their current sexual activity (Manago et al., 2015). They noted that women were more likely than men to recall parents' messages emphasizing traditional sexual roles and friends' messages emphasizing the importance of only having sexual relations within the boundaries

of committed relationships. In contrast, men were more likely than women to recall receiving messages from parents and peers that were positive about recreational sex. On average, men also reported having more one-night stands than did women. However, for women and men, reported number of one-night stands were positively correlated with recalled messages from friends or parents in support of recreational sex, and negatively correlated with recalled friends' messages emphasizing having sex only in committed relationships.

The Current Study

Within the frameworks of sexual double standards and ecological systems, the current study investigated emerging adults' reported socialization messages from family and friends about dating liberally when they were growing up. Further, we tested whether these socialization messages predicted youths' current attitudes about dating liberally, as well as reported experiences in current dating relationships. We also examined gender and ethnic variation in these variables. In our analyses, we adjusted for participants' religiosity, political orientation, and maternal education, as each has been associated with gender and romantic attitudes in the past (e.g., Burdette et al., 2009; Leaper & Valin, 1996; Paynter & Leaper, 2016).

Method

Participants and Procedure

This study employs a retrospective survey design. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board for the study, undergraduate students ($N=710$) from two large universities in Southern and Northern California were recruited for this study (356 male and 354 female participants) from General Psychology courses. All participants were 18-years-old or older, gave consent before starting the survey, and received 1 h of course credit. Because we were interested in emerging adults' retrospective recollections of socialization, we excluded participants older than 27-years-old ($n=22$), which resulted in an emerging adult sample ($M_{age}=19.4$, $SD=1.83$). We also excluded participants who failed all three of the attention checks that asked participants to answer on certain options (e.g., *if you are reading this...*) ($n=16$; 2.25%). The remaining sample consisted of 672 participants (340 women, 332 men [zero participants chose other gender identities]; 234 Latinxs, 176 Asian Americans, 164 European Americans, 98 participants of other ethnicities [African American, Native American, and multiracial]).

For the sample, 88.3% of respondents identified as heterosexual, 3.3% as gay or lesbian, 4.8% as bisexual, 2.0% as questioning or not sure, and 1.5% identified as "other." Analyses excluding LGBTQ+ respondents showed substantially similar results. Thus, to be inclusive, our final sample included respondents of all sexual orientations. Fifty-four percent of the sample reported being single, 43.9% were currently in a relationship with one person, 1.2% were currently in a relationship with/

dating more than one person, and 1.2% did not respond. Around 20% of the participants' mothers had less than a high school education, 45.1% of mothers had a high school education or some college, and 35.4% had a college or graduate degree. Latinx participants generally reported lower levels of maternal education compared to European Americans and Asian Americans ($F[2, 537]=82.38, p<0.001, \eta^2=0.04$). The percent of mothers with less than a high school level of education was 45.2% for the Latinx sample, 10.3% for the European American sample, and 1.9% for the Asian American sample (See Table 1).

Measures

Familial Socialization to Date Liberally

Familial socialization to date liberally consisted of two items that were averaged together, "My female/male relatives encouraged me to date multiple people at once," with a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 = *very strongly disagree* to 7 = *very strongly agree* ($\alpha=0.71$). Beforehand, male and female relatives were defined as including mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. On average, the sample disagreed with the notion that female and male relatives encouraged them to date liberally. See Table 2 for means and descriptive statistics of all measures across the sample.

Peer Socialization to Date Liberally

Participants were asked how much they agreed with the following statement, "My friends would be impressed if I dated multiple people at once," with a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). On average, the sample disagreed with the statement.

Personal Endorsement to Date Liberally

Whether the participant personally endorsed attitudes that encourage dating liberally was measured using three items that were averaged together ("I want to date a lot of people in my lifetime," "It is desirable for me to date multiple people," and "I would be proud to have a lot of romantic partners") with a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*), $\alpha=0.74$. Several other questions were interspersed between this scale and the above familial socialization to date liberally scale to reduce reactivity among these measures. On average, the sample also disagreed with personally desiring to date liberally.

Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Levels

Participants that indicated they were currently in a relationship also filled out the 3-item Relationship Satisfaction subscale of the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventory (Fletcher et al., 2000), with a 7-point Likert

Table 1 Percentages of mother's formal education by gender and ethnicity

	Men					Women						
	Latinx	Asian American	European American	Other Ethnicities	Latinx	Asian American	European American	Other Ethnicities	Latinx	Asian American	European American	Other Ethnicities
Mother's Education	N=107	N=88	N=89	N=48	N=127	N=88	N=75	N=50				
Less than High School	43.9%	11%	2.2%	10.6%	46.2%	9.6%	1.4%	4.1%				
High School Graduate or some College	45.9%	37.8%	42.7%	51.1%	42.0%	48.2%	40.3%	63.3%				
College Degree and Higher	10.2%	51.2%	55.1%	38.3%	11.8%	42.2%	58.3%	32.7%				

Table 2 Zero-order correlations and total descriptive statistics of measures

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Familial Socialization	1								
2. Peer Socialization	.37***	1							
3. Personal Endorsement	0.46***	0.46***	1						
4. Number of Sex Partners [†]	0.16***	0.09	0.33***	1					
5. Relationship Satisfaction	-0.03	-0.15*	-0.41***	-0.18**	1				
6. Participant Religiosity	-0.06	-0.01	-0.17***	-0.12*	0.16**	1			
7. Parental Religiosity	-0.01	0.08	-0.04	-0.08	0.04	0.54***	1		
8. Parental Political Orientation	-0.06	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05	0.08	0.26***	0.25***	1	
9. Maternal Education	0.02	-0.08*	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.11**	-0.12**	0.03	1
<i>N</i>	656	656	663	456	293	660	660	537	639
Mean	2.16	3.05	2.68	1.63 ^a	6.11	3.63	4.88	4.88	2.16
Range	1-7	1-7	1-7	0-7.35 ^a	1-7	1-9	1-9	1-9	1-3
<i>SD</i>	1.24	1.74	1.17	0.95 ^a	1.15	2.33	2.12	1.91	0.72
Skewness	0.82	0.43	0.55	1.86 ^a	-1.78	0.45	0.16	0.11	-0.25
Kurtosis	-0.22	-0.77	-0.11	5.97 ^a	3.80	-0.95	-0.86	-0.63	-1.07

^a Measure has been square root transformed for normal distribution, descriptives of the original variable are described in the text

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$

Note. All measures were based on rating scales except for number of sex partners

response scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*), $\alpha=0.95$. If participants did not have any relationship history, this scale was skipped ($n=100$ participants [14.9% of the sample]). Also, if participants were not currently in a relationship, they responded to a modified past-tense version of the questions, but they were not included in this analysis ($n=254$ participants [37.8% of the sample]). An additional 25 participants either did not provide dating history information and skipped these scales or had a relationship history but preferred not to respond (3.7% of the sample). In total, 43.6% of participants ($N=293$; 56% female) filled out the *current* relationship satisfaction subscale. In general participants were mostly satisfied in their current relationships.

Number of Sexual Partners in One's Lifetime

Participants responded to an open-ended question, "In your entire lifetime, how many sexual partners have you had?" On average participants reported 3 to 4 lifetime sexual partners ($M=3.55$, $SD=0.95$; Range: 0–54; mode = 1). The distribution of number of sexual partners was positively skewed (4.98; kurtosis = 37.30), thus we utilized a square root transformation (Manikandan, 2010). The transformed variable did not indicate non-normal distribution.

Covariates

We included participants' religiosity, parents' religiosity, parents' political orientation, and maternal education as covariates. *Religiosity* (for parents and the participants) were assessed with the items: "How religious was your mother/father [or primary female/male influence]?" and, "How religious are you?" on a 9-point scale (1 = *not religious at all* to 9 = *extremely religious*). *Parents' political orientation* was measured with the item: "What is your mother's/father's political orientation?" (1 = *extremely liberal* to 9 = *extremely conservative*). *Maternal education* was assessed with the item, "What is the highest level of education of your mother [or primary female influence]?" Maternal education serves as a proxy for socioeconomic status and gender egalitarianism, as women's education has been historically restricted (Buchmann et al., 2008).

Results

We first present results testing for gender and ethnic group differences in the socialization and endorsement variables. Next, we present the findings from our path analysis testing our hypothesized model. Zero-order correlations can be found in Table 3.

Gender x Ethnic Group Analyses of Covariance

Our first set of analyses tested our hypotheses regarding average gender and ethnic group differences in socialization messages and personal endorsement to date

Table 3 Descriptive means (SD) and N for each continuous measure by gender and ethnic group

Measure	Men				Women			
	Latinx	Asian American	European American	Other Ethnicities	Latinx	Asian American	European American	Other Ethnicities
	N=107	N=88	N=89	N=48	N=127	N=88	N=75	N=50
Familial Socialization to Date Liberally	2.86 (1.38) n=103	2.34 (1.32) n=87	2.17 (1.14) n=88	2.09 (1.19) n=46	1.82 (1.13) n=125	1.73 (1.04) n=84	1.99 (1.08) n=74	2.23 (1.20) n=49
Peer Socialization to Date Liberally	3.60 (1.79) n=104	3.02 (1.76) n=87	3.11 (1.54) n=88	3.43 (1.71) n=46	3.24 (1.92) n=123	2.25 (1.53) n=83	2.60 (1.45) n=75	3.00 (1.71) n=50
Personal Endorsement to Date Liberally	3.07 (1.23) n=104	2.72 (1.04) n=87	2.94 (1.18) n=88	2.72 (1.33) n=47	2.47 (1.14) n=126	2.27 (1.04) n=85	2.56 (1.00) n=75	2.65 (1.26) n=50
Number of Lifetime Sexual Partners (Original counts)	4.51 (7.28) n=76	2.35 (1.91) n=46	4.01 (6.76) n=71	3.24 (3.39) n=34	3.13 (4.67) n=89	2.35 (2.17) n=46	4.20 (4.60) n=61	3.88 (4.17) n=33
Current Relationship Satisfaction	5.98 (1.01) n=38	5.96 (1.28) n=32	6.15 (0.88) n=39	5.77 (1.32) n=20	6.15 (1.24) n=61	6.11 (1.32) n=41	6.26 (1.13) n=45	6.35 (0.68) n=17
Personal Religiosity	3.38 (2.26) n=105	4.05 (2.46) n=86	2.56 (2.04) n=88	3.30 (2.18) n=47	4.24 (2.20) n=122	4.02 (2.27) n=88	3.52 (2.54) n=75	3.67 (2.36) n=49
Parental Religiosity	5.46 (1.75) n=102	5.43 (2.11) n=86	4.27 (1.99) n=89	4.66 (2.30) n=47	4.98 (1.88) n=126	5.20 (2.31) n=85	3.95 (2.36) n=75	4.68 (2.06) n=50
Parental Political Orientation	4.37 (1.60) n=78	5.20 (1.81) n=66	4.76 (2.12) n=82	4.88 (1.66) n=43	4.73 (2.06) n=98	5.45 (1.57) n=60	5.21 (2.14) n=70	4.53 (1.82) n=40

All of the main measures were based on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 to 7. The covariates (religiosity and political orientation) were based on 9-point rating scales ranging from 1 to 9

liberally when adjusting for demographic characteristics. In these analyses, we included only participants who identified as Latinx, Asian Americans, and European Americans ($n=574$) due to the low representations of other ethnic groups. A post-hoc power analysis using G-Power demonstrated we had adequate power (0.96) to detect effect sizes set at $F^2=0.15$.

We performed separate 2 (Gender) \times 3 (Ethnic group: Latinx, Asian American, European American) ANCOVAs with familial socialization, peer socialization, and personal endorsement to date liberally. See Table 2 for means and standard deviations.

Familial Socialization to Date Liberally

Consistent with our first hypothesis, the ANCOVA revealed a main effect for gender. Across all ethnic groups, men reported higher familial socialization to date liberally than women, $F(1, 409)=32.37$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.07$. There was also a significant main effect of ethnicity, $F(1, 409)=6.96$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.03$, but this was subsumed by a significant Gender \times Ethnicity interaction, $F(2, 409)=4.94$, $p=0.008$, $\eta^2=0.02$. For men, there was a simple main effect for ethnicity, $F(2, 204)=6.80$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.06$. Continuing to control for the covariates, simple effects indicated, partially confirming our third hypothesis, Latinx men had the highest levels of familial socialization to date liberally in comparison with Asian men ($p=0.017$) and European American men ($p<0.001$). There was no significant difference of familial socialization between Asian American men and European American men, $p=0.155$. No simple effect emerged for women, $F(2, 201)=2.56$, $p=0.080$ (see Fig. 1).

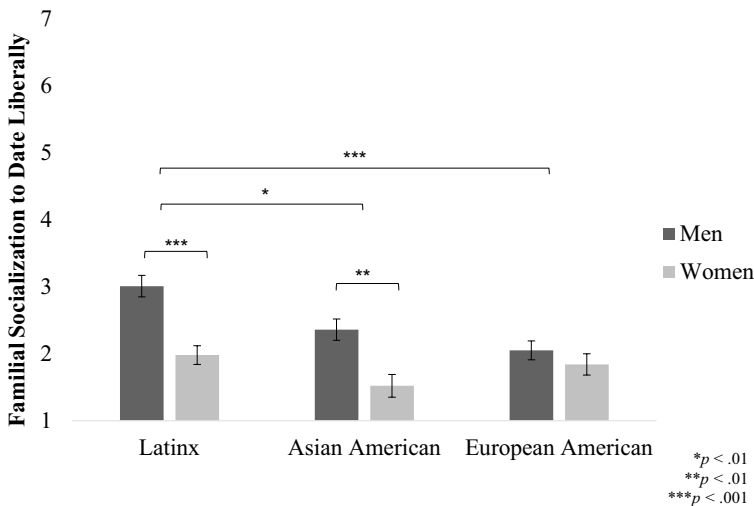


Fig. 1 Estimated marginal means and standard errors of reported familial socialization to date liberally by gender and ethnicity, covarying personal religiosity, parental religiosity, parental political orientation, and mother's education

Peer Socialization to Date Liberally

Again, consistent with our first hypothesis, the ANCOVA revealed a main effect for gender. Across all ethnic groups, men reported higher peer socialization to date liberally than women, $F(1, 409)=5.74$, $p=0.017$, $\eta^2=0.01$. The ANCOVA also revealed a main effect for ethnicity, $F(2, 409)=5.04$, $p=0.007$, $\eta^2=0.02$ (see Fig. 2). Partially confirming expectations, post-hoc analyses showed that Latinx participants reported higher levels of peer socialization to date liberally compared to both European American ($p=0.012$) and Asian American participants ($p=0.003$). European American and Asian American participants did not significantly differ in peer socialization to date liberally $p=0.578$. The Gender x Ethnicity interaction was not significant, $F(2, 409)=0.27$, $p=0.766$. No covariates were significant.

Personal Endorsement to Date Liberally

Confirming our second hypothesis, the ANCOVA revealed a main effect for gender. Across all ethnic groups, men reported greater personal endorsement to date liberally than women, $F(1, 411)=21.39$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.05$ (see Fig. 3). Contrary to our fourth hypothesis, no effect was found for ethnicity, $F(2, 411)=1.15$, $p=0.319$, or the Gender x Ethnicity interaction, $F(2, 411)=0.950$, $p=0.387$. Additionally, greater participant religiosity was significantly associated with less endorsement to date liberally, $F(1, 411)=4.57$, $p=0.033$, $\eta^2=0.01$ (see Table 3). No other covariates were significant.

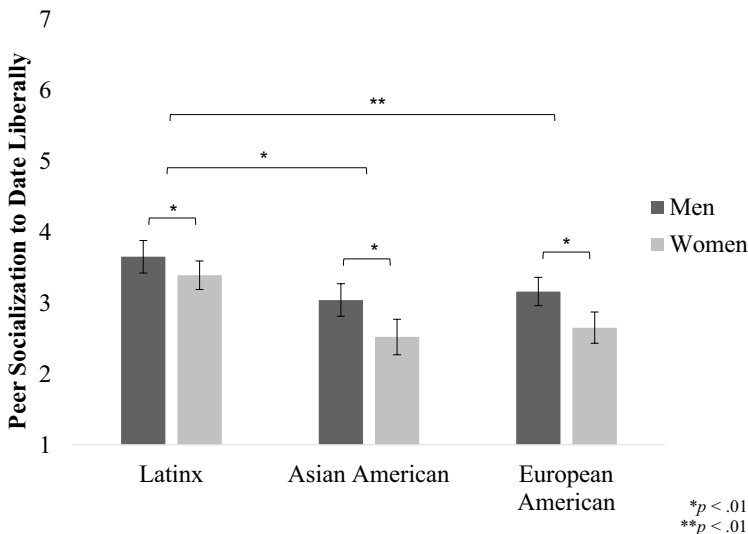


Fig. 2 Estimated marginal means and standard errors of reported peer socialization to date liberally by gender and ethnicity, covarying personal religiosity, parental religiosity, parental political orientation, and mother's education

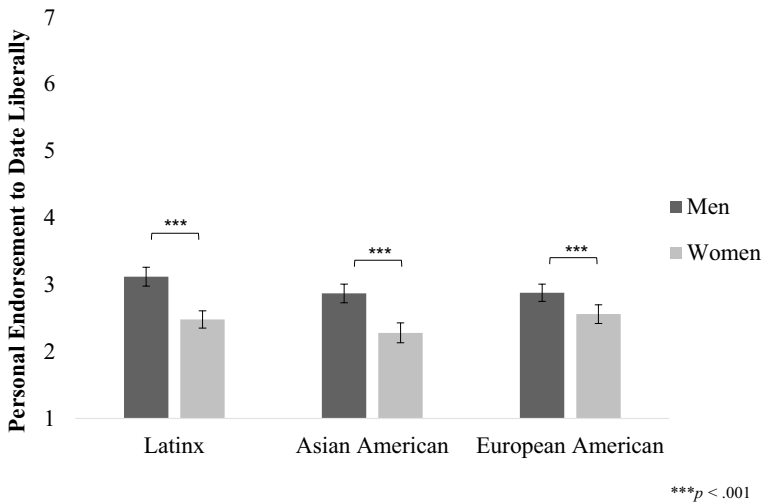


Fig. 3 Estimated marginal means and standard errors of reported personal endorsement to date liberally by gender and ethnicity, covarying personal religiosity, parental religiosity, parental political orientation, and mother's education

Path Analysis

In our fifth hypothesis, we expected that both familial and peer socialization to date liberally would each independently predict greater personal endorsement to date liberally. In turn, we posited that personal endorsement to date liberally would influence relationship outcomes (lower romantic relationship satisfaction and a greater number of lifetime sexual partners). Thus, our sixth hypothesis was that personal endorsement would mediate the associations between reported socialization experiences and current romantic relationship outcomes.

To test our hypothesized model, we conducted a comprehensive path analysis using maximum likelihood estimation (see Fig. 4). This approach allowed us to include participants with missing values for any measures. For example, many of the adults in our sample were not currently in a dating relationship and were unable to provide indices of their relationship satisfaction. The number of participants with data for each variable is presented in Table 2. Also, using path analysis reduced the possibility of making Type I errors given the number of associations we wanted to investigate. Thus, we conducted a path analysis model that simultaneously included all associations between the variables of interest ($N=665$). This sample size was sufficient for our planned analysis (Wolf et al., 2013). We adjusted for participant gender and ethnic group (dummy coded) as exogenous covariates of all of the other variables (not shown in Fig. 4). The full model we first tested was saturated, so no model fit indices were initially available. However, when we trimmed the model to only include significant paths, results indicated satisfactory model fit, $X^2(3)=2.75$, $p=0.432$, supporting our overall conceptual model (see Fig. 4; for clarity, only significant paths are depicted). See Supplemental Materials (Table 1s) for all estimated

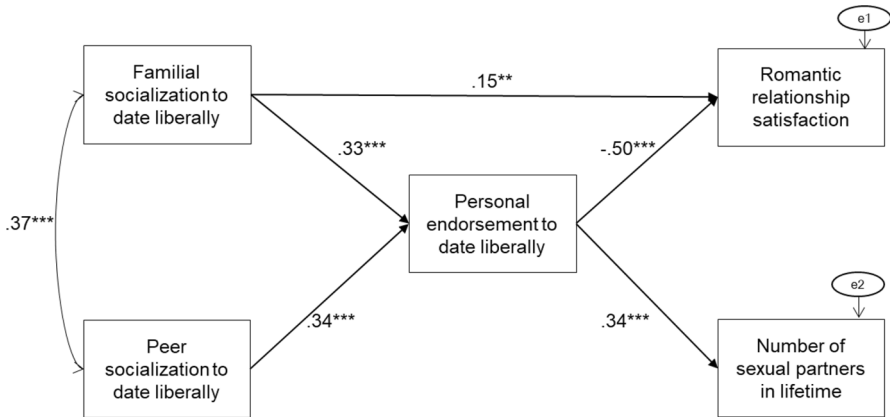


Fig. 4 Familial and peer socialization to date liberally predicting personal endorsement to date liberally, romantic relationship satisfaction, and lifetime number of sexual partners. Although all possible paths were estimated only significant paths are depicted for visual clarity. Participant gender and ethnicity were adjusted for in the equations directly predicting all of the other variables, but these paths are not depicted for visual clarity

coefficients. Using multiple groups analyses, we additionally tested whether paths were moderated by gender or ethnic group, but found no support for significant moderation by either gender or ethnic group (see Supplementary Materials).

Consistent with our fifth hypothesis, greater familial and peer socialization to date liberally were each independently associated with greater personal endorsement to date liberally (familial socialization predicted personal endorsement: $\beta=0.33$ [0.03], $p<0.001$; peer socialization predicted personal endorsement: $\beta=0.34$ [0.03], $p<0.001$).

Also, greater personal endorsement to date liberally was associated with lower satisfaction in one's romantic relationship and a greater number of sexual partners in one's lifetime (Personal endorsement predicting relationship satisfaction, $\beta=-0.50$ (0.06), $p<0.001$; personal endorsement predicting number of sexual partners: $\beta=0.34$ (0.05), $p<0.001$).

In the same model we tested whether personal endorsement to date liberally mediated the effects of familial and peer socialization to date liberally on relationship outcomes. For three of the four potential mediation models tested, no significant direct effects were found (i) between familial socialization and number of sexual partners, $\beta=0.03$ (0.05), $p=0.520$, or (ii) between peer socialization to date liberally and number of sexual partners, $\beta=-0.08$ (0.05), $p=0.106$, or (iii) between peer socialization to date liberally and relationship satisfaction, $\beta=0.01$ (0.06), $p=0.841$. Instead, indirect effects from the socialization variables through personal endorsement to date liberally to the relationship outcomes were each significant. Familial and peer socialization to date liberally predicted number of sexual partners through personal endorsement to date liberally, $\beta=0.11$ (0.03), $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.12$ (0.02), $p<0.001$, respectively. Also, peer socialization predicted relationship satisfaction through personal endorsement to date liberally, $\beta=-0.17$ (0.03), $p<0.001$.

Hence, partially confirming Hypothesis 6, the model suggests that family and peer socialization influenced relationship outcomes through their impact on one's personal endorsement to date liberally.

Unexpectedly, the model also revealed that familial socialization to date liberally predicted *greater* satisfaction in one's romantic relationship through a direct path, $\beta=0.15$ (0.06), $p=0.010$, when taking into account the indirect effect from familial socialization to personal endorsement to *lower* relationship satisfaction, $\beta=-0.16$ (0.03), $p<0.001$. The total effect of familial socialization to date liberally on relationship satisfaction was thus nonsignificant, $\beta=-0.01$, *ns*. These results suggest that the effect of familial socialization to date liberally on relationship satisfaction was mixed depending on the path.

Discussion

The current study provides novel contributions to our understanding of gender-based double standards reflected in family and peer socialization messages about dating and emerging adults' attitudes towards dating in connection to relevant relationship outcomes. Moreover, we tested our predictions across a diverse sample, broadening the developmental lens, which has primarily studied European Americans from middle-class backgrounds (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Further, we centered our examinations on a developmental stage where dating and relationships may be particularly salient (Arnett, 2015).

Gender and Ethnic Group Variations

Overall, both women and men generally favored dating selectively rather than liberally; that is, they tended to reject non-monogamous and non-committed dating. Nonetheless, as predicted in our first hypothesis, women were more likely than men to indicate that their family and peers were discouraging of dating liberally. Also, as posited in our second hypothesis, in our sample of young adult undergraduates, young men desired to date multiple people to a greater extent than did young women. These results are consistent with prior reports of sexual-romantic double standards, granting males more leniency and agency than females during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Although studies suggest gender attitudes and roles are more egalitarian now compared to previous generations (Pampel, 2011), traditional gender roles continue to persist in heterosexual dating scripts (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Eaton & Rose, 2011). An important contribution of our work is that these gender effects, previously limited primarily to European American samples (Crawford & Popp, 2003), were robust across the Latinx, Asian American, European American groups we tested, which underscores the pervasiveness of these gender scripts and expectations.

One notable feature of our study was to consider whether the young adults' ethnic backgrounds moderated the likelihood of gendered messages or their current attitudes towards dating liberally. Ethnic group moderated recalled socialization

messages from family about dating liberally. On average, Latinx men reported more encouragement to date liberally from families than did Asian American and European American men. This is consistent with prior work demonstrating Latinx undergraduates tended to adhere to dating double standards (Eaton & Rose, 2012). A potential explanation for this could be the residual influence of Spanish colonization in Latinx cultures, which introduced traditional machismo ideals for men (Mirandé, 1997). Aspects of these ideologies might make it acceptable or desirable for Latinx men in some communities to strive for various romantic or sexual partners (Nuñez et al., 2016; Raffaelli & Iturbide, 2009; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

In addition, it appeared that both Latinx women and men were more likely than those from the other ethnic groups to find their peers more tolerant or accepting of dating liberally than their Asian American and European American counterparts. For the men, it may have reflected concerns with masculinity. For the women, it may have reflected a resistance to the dominant culture. Many young Latinx women have embraced feminist strategies that challenge patriarchy (e.g., taking control of their romantic and sexual lives) (Garcia, 2012). It is notable that these ethnic differences emerged even when considering sociodemographic characteristics of the family, suggesting that ethnic group differences in religiosity, political orientation, and socioeconomic status cannot explain the observed ethnic differences in socialization.

Whereas some socialization messages about dating liberally differed between Latinx undergraduates and the Asian American and European American undergraduates, the latter two groups did not significantly differ. Prior research is mixed in this regard (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Guo, 2019). Perhaps covarying factors such as parents' religiosity, political views, and maternal education mitigated some average group differences (Fugère et al., 2008).

Meditational Model Linking Recalled Socialization and Current Dating Experiences

Our path analyses confirmed our hypothesized model that young adults' personal attitudes about dating liberally would mediate associations between recalled socialization messages and current dating experiences. First, both parents' and peers' socialization messages independently predicted emerging adults' current attitudes toward dating liberally. Our findings suggest that families and peers may both shape emerging adults' dating attitudes. This has been an implicit assumption in prior studies of families' and peers' socialization messages about dating to adolescents (see Flores & Barroso, 2017). However, these earlier investigations generally did not look at whether these messages coincided with young adults' own sexual-dating attitudes.

Second, emerging adults' personal endorsement to date liberally was associated with lower reported relationship satisfaction and a greater number of sexual partners. The observed association between dating attitudes and number of reported sexual partners indicates concordance between emerging adults' attitudes and behavior. We additionally discovered that youths' attitudes about dating liberally most strongly predicted their satisfaction in current dating relationships. Prior research

suggests that adults who favor non-monogamous relationships may be less committed to making the relationship work and, therefore, may experience less satisfaction (e.g., Schmookler & Bursik, 2007). Also, some of the adults who endorsed dating liberally may have desired to date multiple partners at once (which only 8 [1.2%] participants indicated they were doing). For them, dissatisfaction may have reflected their preference not to be in a monogamous relationship (Mattingly et al., 2011). Overall, desire for non-monogamous or non-committed dating relationships may hinder young adults from forming meaningful and intimate romantic relationships, which has been considered a key developmental task of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015).

The path model further suggested that family and peer socialization may indirectly influence emerging adults' relationship outcomes through a direct influence on their personal attitudes. (We only propose the *possibility* of causal influence as the path analysis is based only on correlations.) To our surprise, however, familial socialization to date liberally was directly and *positively* associated with relationship satisfaction. Perhaps this pattern reflects youth's perception of their family's greater acceptance of dating in general. For example, in many immigrant families dating during late adolescence or early adulthood is discouraged all together (Kim & Ward, 2007; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). Thus, if youth feel their family is generally more accepting of dating, they may subsequently feel more satisfied in their current dating relationship because dating, in itself, does not challenge their family's views.

Limitations and Future Directions

Before reviewing limitations of our study, a few of its strengths can be highlighted. First, we conducted one of the few studies testing whether recalled socialization messages from family and peers predicted emerging adults' current attitudes about sexual-romantic double standards. Second, we conducted this research with an ethnically diverse sample and compared undergraduates from Latinx, Asian American, and European American backgrounds. At the same time, we adjusted for factors such as parental religiosity, parental political orientation, and maternal education. Third, we tested whether adults' current views about dating liberally mediated associations between reported socialization and current dating outcomes. Finally, we confirmed our hypothesized path model linking socialization messages, current dating attitudes, and dating outcomes.

Despite these strengths, we note some limitations with corresponding suggestions for future research. First, when examining families' and peers' socialization messages, we did not consider specific types of family members or peers. We also did not consider other potentially influential sources, such as the media (Seabrook et al., 2016). We also were only able to include measures in our study with a limited number of items. Thus, we consider our study a first step in understanding dating socialization and recommend that future research separately evaluating the contributions of different types of family members (siblings, cousins, etc.) with more in-depth measures (Wheeler et al., 2016). Similarly, we suggest differentiating among peers who

are close friends or important role models versus those who may have less influence (Napper et al., 2015).

Second, our study was reliant on retrospective accounts from only the participants. Future research could triangulate findings by asking for accounts from parents and peers as well. However, it should be noted that research on autobiographical memory has demonstrated that the way individuals recall events, regardless of accuracy, may shape their sense of self (Conway, 2005; Furman & Collibee, 2018). That is, young adults' *perceptions* of socialization may matter the most. We also recommend investigating the manner that socialization messages about sexual-dating behaviors were conveyed from various persons of reference. For example, this might include distinguishing between implicit messages via modeled behavior or explicit messages via prescriptive or prohibitive directives (see Bigler & Liben, 2007).

Third, it would be informative to look at the generational status and cultural participation of Asian American and Latinx youth, as these factors might affect adherence or resistance to traditional gender norms (Garcia, 2012; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Finally, we suggest considering if and how heteronormative sexual-romantic scripts might affect LGBTQ+ youths' beliefs and behaviors. Some research suggests that these norms also affect non-heterosexual youths' sexual attitudes (Hoskin, 2019).

Implications and Conclusions

Our research sheds light on an area that has rarely been examined: family influence on ethnically diverse emerging adults' dating scripts and relationship outcomes. When families and peers perpetuate the expectation that men should be "players" but that women should be chaste, they may not consider possible negative consequences. For instance, dating attitudes might have implications for sexual attitudes. Young women who feel pressured to date selectively might later regret not exploring more options, including different sexual experiences. Women who choose to explore multiple dating options may feel guilt and shame afterwards. At the same time, a young man could feel inferior because he is romantically inexperienced. Or a young man continuing to hear messages that he must be romantically experienced may come to view women as sexual objects to conquer (Seal et al., 2000), a mindset that has been related to higher levels of sexual risk-taking and the dehumanization of women (Rudman & Mescher, 2012).

Beyond emotional and sexual well-being, dating attitudes may have health implications. Our research showed that young adults who desired to date liberally tended to have more sexual partners, a risky sexual behavior that could increase the chances of having unprotected sex (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015; Soler et al., 2000), higher incidences of substance abuse (Crockett et al., 2006), and an increased risk of HIV transmission and other sexually-transmitted infections (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2009). Thus, understanding the family's and peers' roles in perpetuating these gendered romantic scripts could be important in reducing these negative outcomes.

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