An Analysis of Personality Type and Relationship Desirability Within Hook-up Culture: Nice-Guys vs. Bad-Boys

Introduction

- Do nice guys really finish last when it comes to relationships? How do women feel about the nice guy vs. the bad boy?
- Hook-up culture is a recent social development which seems to have significant effects on female perception of male personality traits.
- Women in a dating game scenario preferred a nice guy to a jerk guy even at varying levels of physical attractiveness.
- Participants who read two dating vignettes rated a nice guy as more desirable than a fun/sexy guy for a second date.
- In 2008, 1/3 of college students admitted to hook-up the first time they had sex.
- Men with lower levels of agreeableness tend to have more frequent, casual-sexual relationships.
- Men with higher levels of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy tend to have a higher number of sexual partners and a greater preference for short term flings.
- Definitions of “hooking-up” have varied in literature reviews; therefore, a comprehensive operational definition is required.

Hypothesis

H1: There will be no difference in hook-up desirability between the nice guy and bad boy for participants who indicate an interest in hook-up.

H2: There will be a positive correlation for the association between preference of hook-up (before scenario) and likelihood of hook-up (after scenario) for both the nice guy and the bad boy.

H3: There will be greater frequency, more significant, and stronger correlations between personality trait ratings for second date desirability than there will be between personality trait ratings for hook-up desirability.

Methods

- Online survey was distributed only to female UWEC students (n=231).
- Survey included demographic questions, then a relationship preference question to indicate initial desirability.
- Participants were randomly assigned to one of two hypothetical dating scenarios: nice guy or bad boy.
- Participants were asked to evaluate the personality characteristics of their date and indicate their likeliness to pursue either a second date or to hook-up with their date.
- Participants were asked to define “hooking-up” in their own words. The “bases” metaphor was used in coding of definitions.
- Study was a 2x2 between-subjects design.

Results

- Mean ratings of desirability in the hook-up condition rated nice guy to be statistically similar to bad boy, thus confirming H1.
- Correlation associations between preference of hook-up and likelihood of hook-up were significantly positive for nice guy (.652) and for bad boy (.600). Total associations were .623 and all were significant at the .001 level (H2).
- In general, perceived personality traits were frequently, significantly associated to relationship likelihood in second date conditions for both nice guy and bad boy, as opposed to hook-up conditions. (H3)
- Participants provided a variety of definitions of “hooking-up”, indicating inconsistency in the definition; however, many aspects of the different definitions overlapped. This reveals consistency in conception of the hook-up phenomenon.
- The most common definition of “hooking-up” was sex.

Discussion

- If there is no preference of personality type when it comes to hooking-up, men who are more aggressive would be more likely to hook-up with a higher number of women. This may explain the ‘nice guys finish last’ phenomenon. (H1)
- Women who indicate a greater preference for hook-up also indicate a higher likelihood of hook-up. (H2)
- Men’s personality traits are of little importance when women consider hooking-up, but are of great influence when women consider a second date. (H3)
- One reason for this might be that women reliably defined hooking-up as being confined to a single encounter with a man, indicating little concern for fidelity; a primary motivation for female’s trait preferences.
- Definitions of “hooking-up” varied, but frequently overlapped because of the inclusive nature of progressing sexual behaviors.
- Specific personality traits are indicators of desirability for different types of relationships.
- Future research should include an analysis of current relationship status and its effect on desirability. Sexual orientation and the role they play in influencing relationship desirability should also be examined.
- We rated internal validity to be high and external validity to be moderate to high.

Special Thanks

We wish to thank:
- Dr. Blaine F. Peden for encouraging our research and learning with his guidance and advice.
- UW-Eau Claire’s poster printing service maintained by Learning and Technology Services.
- Gene Leisz, Learning and Technology Services, UW-Eau Claire.

Note. Statistical significance (*=.05; **=.001)