

Summary of:

Wade, Joel T., Butrie, Lauren K. & Hoffman, Kelly M. (2009). Women's direct opening lines are perceived as most effective. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 47, 145-149.

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Introduction

To be selected as a mate by someone of the opposite sex is an adaptive problem faced by all men and women. Intrasexual competition dictates the pattern of this mate selection process. The variables evaluated vary depending on gender and are universally consistent. Men evaluate women on a basis of reproductive potential while women evaluate men on a basis of paternal investment and good genes for their offspring. Mate selection all begins with the initial approach by either a man or woman, specifically an opening line. There are different types of opening lines and they reflect varying levels of interests, from alluding to sex to displaying personal interest. Women are the choosier sex during mate selection, since they have higher stakes at risk during sexual interactions with men.

A while back, women approaching men with mating interest was very rare. Times have changed and the increasingly liberal generations have made way to an increase in women making the initial approach towards men during the process of mate selection. Wade, Butrie, Hoffman (2014) establish that the assumption can clearly be made that women also use opening lines on men who they are attracted to and interested in as potential mates. This research article examines this subject in three studies. Study 1 examines what a woman says to hint interest to a man she is interested in and determine the likelihood of women to approach men first upon interest. Study 2 evaluates women's opening lines on a scale of effectiveness as perceived by men and whether there is a discrepancy between the women's expected effectiveness of their lines and the man's judgement of effectiveness. Study 2 also observes birth control usage as a variable that can affect the effectiveness of opening lines. Study 3 evaluates which of the opening lines are perceived as most directly suggestive of the woman's interest towards the man as a potential mate.

Methods & Results

Study 1

Participants

40 women participated between the ages of 18 and 23. Some of the women participated as an introductory psychology course requirement at a US university. The rest of the participants were approached at the same US university and asked if they were interesting in participating. No compensation was given to any participants.

Procedure

All participants received a questionnaire as a self-report measure. The women were asked to record five statements they would say or have said to a man to show interest in dating or spending time with him. They were asked how likely they were to initiate the approach towards a man they were attracted to. They were also asked their age, sex, race, sexual experience history, sexual orientation, current relationship status, and whether they were on birth control.

Results

The questionnaire responses were categorized ten ways. All of the opening lines recorded were put onto one list. 10 opening line categories were established based on commonalities among the recorded lines. The opening line categories ranged from directly asking on a date, to saying subtle hellos. Individual responses were categorized by the ten categories created. “The most popular/frequent responses were: directly asking on a date with 36 responses, hinting at a date with 32 responses, and “saying a subtle hello” with 11 responses. The least popular response was sexual humor with five responses” (Wade, Butrie & Hoffman, 2009). The question regarding women initiating interest with a man confirmed that women may approach a man they are interested in. There was no difference in this result between women who were or were not using birth control.

Study 2

Participants

38 women and 32 men participated in the second study, all between the ages of 18 and 23. Some of the students participated as an introductory psychology course requirement at a US university. The rest of the participants were approached at the same US university and asked if they were interested in being a part of the study. No compensation was given to any participants.

Procedure

A self-report measure was used in this study. All participants were asked to evaluate each of the ten opening line categories from Study 1 on a basis of effectiveness in communicating a woman’s interest in dating or spending time with a potential mate from a scale of 1, not very effective, to 7, very effective. Participants were also asked some questions regarding their age, sex, race, sexual orientation, sexual experience history, current relationship status, and sexual orientation. Women in this study were asked whether they were on birth control.

Results

Opening lines directly signaling interest were perceived as most effective. There was an interaction between the sex of the participant and the opening lines category, in that men view receiving a phone number from a woman as more effective than women do.

Study 3

Participants

33 Women and 7 men participated between the ages of 19 and 22. They were all students from an introductory social psychology course at a university in the US.

Procedure

A self-report measure was used in which participants rated each of the ten opening in categories from Study 2 on a basis of how direct each type of line is in delivering a woman's interest in dating or spending time with a potential mate. The scale went from 1, not very direct, to 7, very direct. Participants were also asked to respond to some questions regarding their age, race, sex, current relationship status, sexual experience history, current relationship status, and sexual orientation. The women were asked whether they are on birth control.

Results

"The opening lines that straightforwardly signal interest in dating, ask whether the man is single, and convey a phone number/request a phone call were perceived as most direct" (Wade, Butrie & Hoffman, 2009).

Discussion

This research study hoped to thoroughly analyze what women would say to a man when approaching him with mate potential interest. It also evaluated the likelihood of a woman approaching a man first when interested. Sex differences were also looked at in regards to the perceived effectiveness of a woman's opening line and which opening lines were considered to be most direct. Results show that both men and women "agree that a women directly asking a man on a date, hinting at a date, giving a man her phone number/requesting a call, or trying to find out what things they may share in common are the opening lines that are most effective for attracting a man. In addition, both sexes perceive lines that directly as for a date, ask if the man is single, or convey as phone number as the most direct lines" (Wade, Butrie & Hoffman, 2009).

It is difficult for a man to evaluate a woman's interest in the first few minutes of an initial approach. Both men and women rate a direct approach as most effective because of this fact. The opening lines rated as more effective in communicating interest were therefore those rated as more direct, such as those that asked a man on a date or requested a phone call from the man. The opening lines rated as most effective by both men and women were those in which women directly or indirectly stated they wanted to date a man.

An interesting sex difference was observed in the opening line in which women give men their phone number. Women rated this type of line as effective, but less than men rated this line. This could be explained by the fact that a woman giving a man their phone number without him asking for it could be perceived as a potential short term mate because of how direct that move is. Men prefer short term and less committing intersexual encounters and therefore respond to this clear indication of interest at a

higher rate, evaluating it as more effective in communicating a woman's interest. Women may rate this opening line as less effective because the man has full control in the outcome in choosing whether he calls the woman or not, therefore determining the effectiveness of the women's initial approach of interest. Aside from this finding, there was an overall lack of sex differences observed in this study.

Overall, this study found that women can effectively use opening lines to attract men and are more likely to do so than they would in years past. Direct opening lines are perceived as more effective than opening lines that require a man to decode interest. Essentially, playing hard to get was not observed to be a good methodology in communicating interest to potential mates. It is important to note that the study was all hypothetical and not observed in mundane scenarios. Future research could be useful if carried out in an observational method. Men's opening lines could also be an area of research that would be interesting to compare these findings to.

Outline

1. Study 1
 - a. 40 women participated in a questionnaire as a self-report measure to record five statements to show interest in dating, and if they initiate.
 - b. The most popular responses were: Directly asking on a date, hinting at a date, and saying a subtle hello. The least popular response was sexual humor.
2. Study 2
 - a. 38 women and 32 men participated in a self-report measure to evaluate ten opening line categories from Study 1 on effectiveness in communicating a woman's interest from a scale of 1 to 7.
 - b. Opening lines directly signaling interest were perceived as most effective
3. Study 3
 - a. 33 Women and 7 men participated in a self-report measure to rate the ten opening lines in categories from Study 2 on how direct each line is from 1-7.
 - b. The straightforward answers were more direct

Critical Review

A. Arguments we found interesting:

1. *That the more direct women are with the approach the more effective.* This is the overall theme of the article, it is interesting because most women as read have been following the trend of not approaching males when it will actually leave them with the exact opposite of what they want and they are also decreasing their choices when it comes to potential partners.
2. *Men rates receiving a women's phone number more effective than women.* This is an interesting point, because in hindsight one would see receiving a phone number as direct and straight to the point, especially in showing interest. It can also be looked at as a way of flattery, which we could assume that both males and females would accept the offer evenly.
3. *Women are more 'careful' about the ways in which they approach a potential mate because they have a higher risk when it comes to mating.* As we've learned throughout the course we have seen that women do have more risks when it comes to mating and selection, however, it would also make more sense to put yourself out there more allowing you more potential partner to choose from.

B) Arguments that we questioned:

1. *That sexual humor was the least attractive conversation route.* We would have liked to see this theory expanded. Why does this seem to be the least appeal to most people as compared to other methods?
2. *Opening lines that directly indicate an interest in dating are expected to be perceived as direct by men and women.* This argument could have used more substance, it seems redundant and could have been better explained if broken down in a different way. For example, what is direct? What do women see as direct? What do males see as direct?
3. Argument that wasn't brought up, however, could have been touched upon, may be the act of flirting and also adding that into the mix. It would have been interesting to see a study on what men consider flirting vs. women and how recognizing flirting can also play into the opening line.

Test Questions

(T/F)

1. In recent generations the act of women approaching men first has increased. (T/F)
2. Only in America do women expect men to approach them first. (T/F)
3. The most effective opening lines are the ones which are direct because they don't require decoding. (T/F)

4. The first conversational interaction between male and a female can be classified as:
 - a. A conversation
 - b. An interview
 - c. Small Talk
 - d. Opening Line (d)

5. According to study, the least favored way to be approached is:
 - a. Sexual humor (a)
 - b. Subtle hello
 - c. Hinting to a date
 - d. Directly asking for a date

6. Which scenario best describes the male vs. female "fear" ratio when approaching the opposite sex:
 - a. Women are less afraid to approach a potential partner than men.
 - b. Women are more afraid to approach a potential partner than men.
 - c. Men and Women have a similar levels of fear or nervousness when approaching a person of interest. (c)
 - d. Neither men or women experience fear or nervousness when approaching new partners.