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Positioning the Booty-Call Relationship on the Spectrum of Relationships: Sexual but More Emotional Than One-Night Stands

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Positioning the Booty-Call Relationship on the Spectrum of Relationships: Sexual but More Emotional Than One-Night Stands

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Most research on human sexuality has focused on long-term pairbonds and one-night stands. However, growing evidence suggests there are relationships that do not fit cleanly into either of those categories. One of these relationships is a “booty-call relationship.” The purpose of this study was to describe the sexual and emotional nature of booty-call relationships by (a) examining the types of emotional and sexual acts involved in booty-call relationships and (b) comparing the frequency of those acts in booty-call relationships to one-night stands and serious long-term relationships. In addition, the manner in which sociosexuality is associated with the commission of these acts was also examined. Demonstrative of booty-call relationships’ sexual nature was individuals’ tendency to leave after sex and infrequent handholding. In contrast, the romantic nature of booty-call relationships was demonstrated through the frequency of acts like kissing. The results suggest the booty-call relationship is a distinct type of relationship situated between one-night stands and serious romantic relationships.

Much research on human sexuality and romantic relationships has focused on two polar-opposite relationship types: long-term, committed relationships like marriage (Buss, 1989; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002) and short-term, casual-sex relationships like one-night stands or hook-ups (Cubbins & Tanfer, 2000; Fisher & Byrne, 1978; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Although insightful, such research is nevertheless limited. It is common for people in nearly all societies to form long-term bonds and marry (e.g., Fisher, 1992), and anonymous casual sex is variably present in most societies (e.g., Schmitt, 2005), despite the cultural and religious taboos or prescripts from engaging in that behavior. However, a growing body of evidence suggests the range of potential relationships is larger than these two alone. Recent research expands the variety of relationships to include ones where partners have some degree of sexual contact and some degree of friendship, but the partners are not in a

committed relationship. Some research has focused on “friends with benefits” (e.g., Afifi & Faulkner, 2000), whereas other research has focused on “booty-call¹ relationships” (e.g., Jonason, Li, & Cason, 2009). In this study, we focus on booty-call relationships.

Whatever term is used to refer to non-romantic sexual relationships, they share several features. These relationships appear to be simultaneously motivated by both short-term (e.g., physical attractiveness is prioritized) and long-term relationship (e.g., repeated interactions) factors (Jonason et al., 2009). Both relationships are likely to be appealing to men and women for different reasons. The low-investment sexual component may appeal to men (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Townsend, 1995; Townsend, Kline, & Wasserman, 1995; Townsend & Levy, 1990), and a prolonged period of interaction allows women to give mates a “trial run” (Greiling & Buss, 2000; Impett & Peplau, 2003; Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, & West, 1995; Li & Kenrick, 2006). If a relationship is a trial run, the partner has likely passed the minimum threshold and is being given

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¹A booty-call itself “is a communication initiated towards a non-long-term relationship partner with the urgent intent either stated or implied, of having sexual activity and/or intercourse” (Jonason, Li, & Cason, 2009, p. 3).

the opportunity to prove their worth as a serious partner. Alternatively, although not particularly well borne-out in the data, these relationships may function as a “placeholder relationship” until a better relationship comes along or as a source of stable social or emotional support that cannot be provided in one-night stands.²

These relationships are popular on college campuses. Estimates suggest between 50% and 65% of college students have experience in friends with benefits-type relationships (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Puentes, Knox, & Sussman, 2008). Alternative estimates suggest 30% of college students report involvement in a booty-call relationship (Jonason et al., 2009). Indeed, they are common enough to be addressed in work on sexual health (Singer et al., 2006). Whatever the percentage, it is clear friendship relationships that involve sex are reasonably common among college participants and, therefore, worthy of further study.

These types of relationships have proven to not only be popular in empirical research and on college campuses, but also garner interest in the popular press (e.g., Marklein, 2002). Indeed, *Men's Health Magazine* has featured research on booty-call relationships twice in recent years (Kylstra, 2009; Stoddard, 2010). There has been enough popular attention to booty-call relationships that they have been studied in media research on how images of sexuality in the media affect adolescents (Ashcraft, 2003). The media attention suggests these relationship types are of interest to the public and, therefore, that more research is warranted.

In this study, we hope to provide evidence on what sexual and emotional acts characterize the booty-call relationship and how these acts might be associated with sociosexuality. The use of sociosexuality may be informative on the point that an emerging relationship may be indistinguishable from a pre-established booty-call relationship. Individuals with a restricted sociosexuality are likely to be engaging in less sexual acts overall than those who are unrestricted in their sociosexuality. Last, we attempt to situate the booty-call relationship on the spectrum of relationships between one-night stands and serious romantic relationships. To do so, we collect data in a two-phase approach to assess these factors in one-night stands, serious romantic relationships, and booty-call relationships.

One way to define the nature of a relationship is to document the acts associated with a given relationship (e.g., Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). If booty-calls are a hybrid of long- and short-term relationships (Jonason et al., 2009), the types of acts involved in booty-calls should be both emotional and sexual in nature. For instance, the most frequently committed acts should be

ones like kissing and hugging—ostensibly, acts that denote emotional involvement (e.g., Grello et al., 2006)—and sexual acts like engaging in penile-vaginal sex.

Although booty-call relationships are likely to share features with both short- and long-term relationships, booty-calls should also be distinct from either type of relationship. Nevertheless, they tend to align more strongly with relationships that are short-term rather than long-term in nature in that they are relatively sexual in nature, physical attractiveness is a highly valued trait, and commitment is lacking. Furthermore, although booty-call relationships are expected to have some emotional elements to them, they are not expected to have particularly high levels of acts such as kissing and handholding. Such emotional acts tend to be employed by partners seeking or demonstrating commitment (e.g., Grello et al., 2006) and, thus, should be relatively lower for booty-call relationships than for more committed romantic relationships.

If booty-call relationships are more sexual than emotional, we expect individuals to attempt to maintain the primarily sexual nature by minimizing unnecessary time spent together. Such time may otherwise lead to either the progression of the relationship to a more serious one or either partner developing feelings, thereby undermining the convenient arrangement that booty-call relationship partners may have worked out. To keep the booty-call relationship a relatively sexual relationship, individuals will likely need to use strategies that keep the relationship from progressing to a more serious relationship. One way to do this may be to leave after sex. Therefore, we predict that the frequency of leaving after sex will be higher in booty-call relationships than in long-term, romantic relationships characterized by spending time together and intimacy.

Similarly, the nature of booty-call relationships and one-night stands are different and, therefore, we expect the frequencies of acts committed to differ. One-night stands are about immediate sexual gratification and occur once, hence the name (Fisher & Byrne, 1978). Although sex is important in booty-call relationships (Jonason et al., 2009), they tend to occur over multiple occasions. Multiple occasions provide more opportunities for a greater range of sexual acts to be committed within booty-call relationships—that is, with greater “time on target,” one can expand the sexual repertoire the two partners engage in as both a function of time and a sense of comfort that surely develops. For instance, kissing various regions of the body, manual-genital sex, and anal sex might become part of the sexual repertoire of the pair if given enough time. In contrast, in one-night stands, the limited interaction and immediate sexual needs likely focus individuals to do only the “essential” sex acts. Therefore, we predict that generalized kissing acts and anal and manual sex will be committed more frequently in booty-call relationships than in one-night stands.

²For an alternative perspective on booty-calls—one that does not involve evolutionary psychology—see Caruthers (2006) for an examination of how sociocultural factors may impact the development of such relationships.

An additional way to understand the nature of booty-call relationships is to examine how individual differences, like sociosexuality (e.g., Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), relate to the commission of the acts and to compare sociosexuality scores across different relationship contexts. Individuals with an unrestricted sexuality are more willing to engage in casual-sex behaviors, whereas those who have a restricted sexuality are reticent about engaging in casual-sex behaviors. Therefore, we predict sociosexuality scores will be correlated with the commission of sexual acts and not emotional acts. Similarly, we expect individuals' sociosexuality will be associated with the tendency to leave booty-call relationship partners and one-night stand partners but not to leave their serious partners. Leaving booty-call relationship partners after sex may be a means to minimize emotional commitments, but leaving after sex in the context of one-night stands is simply part of the definition of a one-night stand.

Accounting for the large variety of sexual behavior and attitudes has been a goal of sex research since its inception (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). For instance, the Sociosexuality Orientation Index (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) was designed to assess the "substantial variability that individuals displayed across a wide array of . . . attitudes and behavior" (p. 870). However, much of the research on mating has obscured the variety and variability in human sexuality by dichotomizing the variety in the sexuality of individuals. Specifically, relationships and mating strategies have been assumed to involve either long- or short-term relationships or both (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000), but not as distinct relationships that incorporate both short- and long-term elements (Jonason et al., 2009). Therefore, to better explore the variety of sexuality in people's lives, we examine one hybrid relationship type that is garnering interest in both academic and popular circles: the booty-call relationship.

Method

Participants, Procedures, and Measures

Prior research suggests few individuals had engaged in booty-calls within the last year (Jonason et al., 2009). Therefore, to be assured we had sufficiently large numbers of individuals who had engaged in this behavior, we collected data in two phases. Because booty-calls were central, the first phase focused on identifying participants who had at least one booty-call relationship in the last year. In both phases, student participants were directed to a Web page hosted by an online data-collection instrument after they signed up for the study.

In Phase 1, the first Web page asked participants whether they had been in a booty-call relationship in the past year. If they said "yes," they began the study; if they

said "no," they were redirected to another, unrelated study.³ To aid in this filtering process, we provided participants with the definition for a booty-call: "A communication initiated towards a non-long-term relationship partner with the urgent intent, either stated or implied, of having sexual activity and/or intercourse" (Jonason et al., 2009, p. 3). The Phase 1 sample was composed of 123 participants (45% male and 55% female) who received course credit for participation. The mean age of the participants was 21.84 years ($SD = 3.15$). Eighty-six percent were heterosexual (49 males and 57 females), 6% were homosexual, and 8% (four males and three females) were bisexual (two males and eight females). Participants reported an average of 7.16 ($SD = 14.24$) booty-call relationships in the last year, with men ($M = 7.47$, $SD = 13.45$) reporting equal amounts as women ($M = 6.91$, $SD = 14.95$), $t(121) = 0.22$, *ns*.

In Phase 2, we sought out participants who had experience with either one-night stands ($n = 69$; males = 17, females = 50, unreported gender = 2), long-term relationships ($n = 97$; males = 20, females = 69, unreported gender = 8), or both in the last year. Women reported significantly more one-night stands, $\chi^2(1, N = 69) = 16.25$, $p < .01$; and serious romantic relationships, $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 26.99$, $p < .01$, than men did.⁴ Again, participants were presented with a question that asked whether they have had either a serious romantic relationship or a one-night stand. If they said "yes," they proceeded to the study; if they said "no," they were redirected to another, unrelated study. We did this to make comparisons between acts committed in the context of these two relationship types and acts committed in booty-call relationships. The mean age of the participants was 21.58 years ($SD = 4.59$). Eighty-two percent were heterosexual (19 males and 63 females), 3% (zero males and three females) were homosexual, and 6% (two males and four females) were bisexual (the remainder were nonresponsive). Individuals who participated in Phase 1 could not participate in Phase 2.

In both phases, participants logged into a Web site to complete a survey that asked them the frequency with which they committed a series of acts in relation to a partner with whom they were engaged in a one-night stand, serious romantic relationship, or a booty-call relationship in the last year. In each phase, only those answers from unique IP addresses were included. Participants were asked, "How often did you do the following towards a person in the context of a [relationship type]?" The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Participants were presented with a series of 17

³Unfortunately, we did not keep track of this and, therefore, cannot provide another estimate of the frequency of these relationships.

⁴In most research, women report fewer sexual and romantic relationships than men do (e.g., Jonason & Fisher, 2009). This discrepancy, we suspect, is the result of the small sample size and not veridical differences.

Table 1. Mean Frequencies of Committing Acts in Booty-Call Relationships (Phase 1), One-Night Stands, and Serious Relationships (Phase 2)

Variable	One-Night Stand (n = 69)		Booty-Call Relationship (n = 123)		Serious Relationship (n = 97)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Kissed my partner on the lips.	3.88	1.17	3.92	1.27 ^a	4.58	0.94 ^a
Penile-vaginal sex with my partner.	3.54	1.42	3.83	1.38	3.83	1.40
Kissed my partner on the neck.	3.03	1.36 ^h	3.40	1.33 ^h	3.70	1.21
Hugged my partner.	3.39	1.42	3.28	1.26 ^b	4.33	1.03 ^b
Kissed my partner on some other body part.	2.88	1.18 ⁱ	3.27	1.32 ⁱ	3.66	1.17
Talked with my partner after we had sex.	3.16	1.36	3.19	1.26 ^c	3.93	1.32 ^c
Fondled my partner's breasts or chest.	2.60	1.34 ^j	3.16	1.44 ^j	3.16	1.27
Kissed my partner on the breasts or chest.	2.59	1.29 ^k	3.11	1.43 ^k	3.27	1.21
Manual-genital sex with my partner.	2.62	1.32 ^l	3.11	1.40 ^l	2.88	1.40
Oral-genital sex with my partner.	2.73	1.12	3.02	1.48	3.11	1.34
Fondled my partner's butt.	2.52	1.37	2.80	1.38	2.88	1.40
Kissed my partner on the face (but not the lips).	2.70	1.25	2.75	1.38 ^d	3.36	1.21 ^d
Held hands with my partner.	2.99	1.52 ^m	2.45	1.36 ^{e,m}	3.97	1.23 ^e
Left immediately after I had sex with my partner.	2.03	1.33	2.32	1.29 ^f	1.41	0.64 ^f
Penile-anal sex with my partner.	1.28	0.72 ⁿ	1.77	1.42 ⁿ	1.52	0.88
Kissed my partner on the hand.	1.91	1.12	1.76	1.28 ^g	2.44	1.25 ^g
Vaginal-vaginal sex with my partner.	1.33	0.96	1.53	1.21	1.29	0.92

Note. Comparisons among superscripts are significant at $p < .05$. The scale ranges from 1 (not at all), 2 (a little), 3 (moderately), 4 (much), to 5 (very much).

author-generated acts. These acts were randomly presented to participants (see Table 1 for a list of these acts).

We also used the seven-item SOI (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). On a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*), participants were asked how much they agreed with statements like, "I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying casual sex with different partners." Participants were also asked the frequency with which they had sex with someone only one time. The seven items were standardized (z scored) and averaged before creating indexes from Phase 1 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$) and Phase 2 ($\alpha = .64$) data. In Phase 1, $t(121) = 3.59, p < .01$ (Cohen's $d = 0.65$) and Phase 2, $t(89) = 3.47, p < .01$ ($d = 0.74$), men had a less restricted sociosexuality than women did. Sociosexuality scores did not differ across the three relationship types ($ts = 0.11-1.10, ns$).

To understand overall tendencies toward sexual and emotional acts across the relationship durations, we created two composite variables. We averaged all the items that explicitly referred to sex (four items; e.g., manual-genital sex and penile-vaginal sex) and emotional acts (10 items; e.g., handholding and kissing) for long-term, romantic relationships ($\alpha s = .69$ and $.90$, respectively); short-term, casual-sex relationships ($\alpha s = .76$ and $.90$, respectively); and booty-call relationships ($\alpha = .66$ and $.86$, respectively).

Results

We conducted two types of analyses. First, we conducted item analyses to understand the actual acts

that characterize booty-call relationships. Second, we conducted similar analyses using indexes of emotional and sexual acts to understand overall trends and associations. Data from both phases were combined in the results because of the equivalency of the samples.

Item Analyses

In Table 1, we present overall means for the frequency with which participants committed the acts across the relationship types, in descending order. Kissing the partner on the lips or the neck and penile-vaginal sex were the three most-common acts, whereas penile-anal sex, vaginal-vaginal sex, and kissing the partner on the hand were the three least-common acts associated with booty-call relationships. The fourth most common act was hugging the partner, and sixth was talking to a booty-call relationship partner after sex. These are consistent with Jonason et al.'s (2009) approach to booty-call relationships. Acts that are more characteristic of some degree of emotional intimacy (e.g., kissing on the lips) were most common in serious relationships but were also committed frequently in the context of booty-call relationships. This also suggests that part of the nature of booty-call relationships contains some degree of emotional intimacy, as per Jonason et al.

Results in Table 1 also suggest that the booty-call relationship falls between one-night stands and serious romantic relationships in terms of the frequency of acts. For eight (47%) out of 17 of the acts, the booty-call relationship was in between the one-night stand and serious romantic partner in terms of mean frequencies. To determine which acts are more characteristic of each

relationship and how the booty-call relationship is situated between the other two, we compared the means presented in Table 1 from Phase 1 and Phase 2. To do so, we compared the frequency of acts from serious romantic partners to booty-call relationships, and found eight differences: kissing on the lips ($t = 4.13, p < .01; d = 0.59$), hugging one's partner ($t = 6.43, p < .01; d = 0.91$), kissing partner on some other body part than the face ($t = 2.22, p < .05; d = 0.31$), talking with one's partner after sex ($t = 4.12, p < .01; d = 0.57$), kissing partner on the face but not the lips ($t = 3.33, p < .01; d = 1.07$), holding hands with partner ($t = 8.33, p < .01; d = 1.17$), and kissing partner on the hand ($t = 2.84, p < .05; d = 0.54$). All of these acts were more common in serious relationships than in booty-call relationships, except for one: leaving immediately after sex ($t = -6.10, p < .01; d = -0.89$).

We repeated this analysis procedure for one-night stands, and found seven differences: Kissing partner's neck ($t = -1.97, p < .05; d = -0.28$), kissing some other body part ($t = -2.21, p < .05; d = 0.31$), fondling partner's breasts or chest ($t = -2.87, p < .01; d = -0.40$), kissing partner's breasts or chest ($t = -2.71, p < .01; d = -0.38$), manual-genital sex ($t = -2.57, p < .05; d = -0.36$), and penile-anal sex ($t = -2.97, p < .01; d = -0.44$) were more frequently committed in booty-calls than one-night stands. In the case of holding partner's hand, this act appeared to be committed more frequently in the context of one-night stands than booty-call relationships ($t = 2.71, p < .01; d = 0.37$).

In Table 2, we present the associations between sociosexuality and the frequency of acts across relationships. Consistent with our contention that the booty-call relationship is more closely aligned with casual-sex relationships, results suggest that an unrestricted mating

style predicts more of the sexuality of one-night stands and booty-call relationships than serious romantic relationships. For example, individuals' scores on the SOI were positively correlated with their tendency to leave immediately after sex for booty-call relationships and one-night stands, but not for serious romantic relationships.

In Table 3, we examined the extent to which men and women differ in reported acts across relationship contexts. Sex differences were localized to a few acts. For instance, women were more likely than men were to report talking to their partners after having sex, whereas men were more likely than women were to report manual-genital sex with their partners. However, overall, the sexes did not differ much in the acts committed across relationship contexts, suggesting men and women do not differ in the commission of these acts across relationship types.

Overall Analyses

We compared rates of frequency of act type (i.e., sexual acts vs. emotional acts) across relationship contexts and correlated them with sociosexuality. In doing so, we repeated the prior analyses, which used item-level analyses, but now we used the indexes. First, we compared the frequency of emotional and sexual acts within each relationship context. As reported in Table 4, frequency of sexual versus emotional acts did not differ in booty-call relationships. Emotional acts were more common than sexual acts in serious romantic relationships than in booty-call relationships and, counter to what was predicted, more common in one-night stands than booty-calls relationships.

We also compared the frequency of each type of act between one-night stands and booty-call relationships,

Table 2. *Correlations Between Sociosexuality and the Frequency of Acts Committed Across Booty-Call Relationships (Phase 1) and One-Night Stands and Serious Relationships (Phase 2)*

Variable	One-Night Stand	Booty-Call Relationship	Serious Relationship
1. Kissed my partner on some other body part.	.20	.23**	.09
2. Penile-anal sex with my partner.	.25	.43**	.18
3. Penile-vaginal sex with my partner.	.37**	.21*	.28**
4. Hugged my partner.	-.10	-.06	.04
5. Kissed my partner on the face (but not the lips).	.02	.02	.01
6. Fondled my partner's butt.	.23	.30**	.08
7. Manual-genital sex with my partner.	.18	.25**	.08
8. Talked with my partner after we had sex.	-.06	-.14	-.05
9. Vaginal-vaginal sex with my partner.	-.02	.19*	.01
10. Kissed my partner on the lips.	.01	.05	.09
11. Left immediately after I had sex with my partner.	.32**	.27**	.18
12. Kissed my partner on the breasts or chest.	.32**	.31**	.20
13. Oral-genital sex with my partner.	.28*	.30**	.23*
14. Fondled my partner's breasts or chest.	.31*	.21*	.27*
15. Kissed my partner on the hand.	-.06	.21*	.05
16. Held hands with my partner.	-.14	-.09	-.04
17. Kissed my partner on the neck.	.23	-.01	.15

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

Table 3. Sex Differences for the Acts Committed in Booty-Call Relationships (Phase 1) and One-Night Stands and Serious Relationships (Phase 2)

Variable	One-Night Stand		Booty-Call Relationship		Serious Relationship	
	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
Kissed my partner on the lips.	-1.62	-0.41	-2.10*	-0.38	0.29	0.06
Penile-vaginal sex with my partner.	0.73	0.18	-0.87	-0.16	-0.67	-0.14
Kissed my partner on the neck.	0.12	0.03	-0.67	-0.12	0.59	0.13
Hugged my partner.	-0.83	-0.21	-1.18	-0.21	-0.97	-0.21
Kissed my partner on some other body part.	0.44	0.11	1.14	0.21	0.72	0.15
Talked with my partner after we had sex.	-2.24*	-0.56	-2.85**	-0.51	-1.99*	-0.43
Fondled my partner's breasts or chest.	3.96**	0.99	5.13**	0.94	4.58**	0.98
Kissed my partner on the breasts or chest.	2.64**	0.66	4.61**	0.84	3.59**	0.77
Manual-genital sex with my partner.	0.77	0.19	1.40	0.25	-0.02	-0.00
Oral-genital sex with my partner.	0.52	0.13	0.82	0.15	0.76	0.16
Fondled my partner's butt.	3.43**	0.86	5.05**	0.92	1.86	0.40
Kissed my partner on the face (but not the lips).	-0.90	-0.23	-1.07	-0.20	0.40	0.09
Held hands with my partner.	-1.82	-0.46	-0.74	-0.13	-0.68	-0.15
Left immediately after I had sex with my partner.	0.89	0.23	-0.48	-0.09	-0.12	-0.03
Penile-anal sex with my partner.	0.60	0.15	2.28*	0.41	-0.98	-0.21
Kissed my partner on the hand.	0.34	0.09	1.05	0.19	1.19	0.26
Vaginal-vaginal sex with my partner.	0.13	0.03	0.74	0.13	-1.35	-0.29

Note. Means and standard deviations were omitted to save space, and can be obtained by contacting Peter K. Jonason. Negative values mean women scored higher than men.

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

Table 4. Comparisons across Act Type by Relationship Context

Variable	Emotional		Sexual		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
One-night stand	2.93	1.03	2.57	0.97	3.30*	0.36
Booty-call relationship	3.01	0.90 ^a	2.94	1.00 ^b	-0.91	-0.07
Serious relationship	3.68	0.88 ^a	2.84	0.90 ^b	9.71*	0.94

Note. Comparisons among superscripts are significant at $p < .05$.

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

and serious romantic relationships and booty-call relationships. Emotional acts were more common in the context of romantic relationships than booty-call relationships ($t = 5.46, p < .01; d = 0.75$). Sexual acts were more common in booty-call relationships than serious romantic relationships ($t = -2.22, p < .05; d = -0.38$).⁵ When we compared the frequency of emotional and sexual acts across relationship type for men and women, we found no significant sex differences.

Last, we assessed the association between sociosexuality and the frequency of acts across the relationship types. In the context of one-night stands, sociosexuality was correlated with the frequency of sexual acts, $r(59) = .38, p < .01$. In the context of booty-call relationships, sociosexuality was correlated with the frequency of sexual acts, $r(123) = .42, p < .01$. For serious romantic

relationships, sociosexuality was correlated with the frequency of sexual acts, $r(61) = .25, p < .05$. No other correlations were significant.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to address the lack of research on romantic relationships other than those at opposite ends of the spectrum of human sexuality. In so doing, we focused on one type of relationship: the booty-call relationship. The booty-call relationship has been identified as a relationship that does not fit well within the apparent dichotomy between one-night stands and serious romantic relationships. Although the underlying motivations have been documented (Jonason et al., 2009), little research has been done to understand the nature of these relationships. This study partially fills that gap by assessing frequency of acts committed in the context of booty-call relationships, comparing those frequencies across two other relationship types, and assessing how associations with sociosexuality are related across these relationship contexts and how they vary within the contexts of the relationships.

Booty-call relationships appear to be characterized by a combination of emotional (e.g., kissing on the lips) and sexual (e.g., penile-vaginal sex) acts. Emotional acts are of particular importance to demonstrate that booty-call relationships are distinct from one-night stands. One-night stands occur a single time, where sexual gratification is paramount and emotional feelings or acts

⁵This difference is on the small side and, thus, we urge caution in its over-interpretation.

are rather absent (Fisher & Byrne, 1978). In contrast, booty-call relationships have the longevity to explore other aspects and interests of the individuals' sexuality. Consistent with that, we found that booty-call relationships were characterized by higher levels of kissing, in general, as well as manual and anal sex than in one-night stands. It may be that the limited time that characterizes one-night stands forces individuals to prioritize a small number of sex acts, or it may be that they do not feel comfortable making sexual requests for less common acts because they might lead to a global rejection and, therefore, to no sex at all. In the relatively less temporary and more acquainted context of booty-call relationships, individuals may have the freedom to explore their sexuality more because they have more time and less fear of being entirely rejected. Such possibilities should be examined in the future.

Similarly, emotional acts can also demonstrate how the booty-call relationship is distinct from serious relationships. The frequencies of committing acts like talking and handholding were higher in serious relationships than booty-call relationships. Such acts may denote a degree of emotional intimacy that individuals in booty-call relationships may want to avoid. Indeed, one glaring difference between acts committed with serious versus booty-call relationship partners was that leaving after sex was more frequent with booty-call relationship partners. By minimizing acts that are emotionally intimate and leaving after sex, partners may effectively prevent booty-call relationships from turning into committed, long-term relationships. For instance, remaining after sex may lead to the development of feelings in one partner, which will undermine the "convenient arrangement" they have—perhaps implicitly—negotiated (Jonason et al., 2009). Indeed, men and women reported equal amounts of leaving after sex, suggesting both partners are invested in maintaining the casual nature of the booty-call relationship. Similarly, individuals were more likely to leave after sex in the context of booty-call relationships than one-night stands. This may be because there is an implicit understanding between one-night stand partners that the nature of the relationship is casual and temporary, whereas the repeated encounters for booty-call relationship partners requires such a strategy to maintain the quasi-sexual nature of booty-call relationships.

However, booty-call relationships are not simply one-night stands that repeat with the same person. They appear to be distinct. For instance, unlike one-night stands, booty-call relationships are characterized by an equal amount of sexual and emotional acts. Indeed, results suggest that one-night stands and serious romantic relationships are more alike than they are different when characterized by rates of commission of emotional or sexual acts. Such evidence is consistent with the contention of Jonason et al. (2009) and our previous discussion, which suggests that focusing on one-night

stands and serious romantic relationships obscures the complex nature of human sexuality. However, the fact that there is this similarity between one-night stands and serious romantic relationships could be an artifact of our small sample size in Phase 2 across the two types of relationships. Future work should further investigate this issue.

One notable discrepancy is that participants who engaged in one-night stands reported more emotional than sexual acts. We did not predict this. However, on second thought, this does make sense. If one-night stands are characterized by a time constraint, few sexual acts can occur, and the emotional acts may be used in quick succession as means of escalating the relationship to sex. The commission of both types of acts were most frequent in serious relationships, which is consistent with our time-based contention. Indeed, the use of emotional acts to accelerate relationships to copulation—what one might call *foreplay*—may be necessary in both one-night stands and serious romantic relationships. This trend toward increased emotional acts in serious romantic relationships and one-night stands is demonstrated in the results reported in Table 4, where emotional acts were committed more frequently than sexual acts in both types of relationships.

The fact that booty-call relationships did not differ on the commission of either type of act may confirm prior contentions that sexuality is not one-dimensional (Jonason et al., 2009). Prior bipolar conceptualization may reflect an underlying facet of time: one-night stands being short in duration and serious relationships being lengthy in duration. More time together may allow for the development of comfort, and increased comfort may facilitate a larger range of acts to be committed of both a sexual and emotional nature. In contrast, where time is constrained, like in one-night stands, there are fewer sexual acts committed. Future work might benefit from treating time in a relationship in a continuous fashion instead of the *de facto* trichotimization used here. This may yield interesting results about how relationships progress from one form to another and how the parameters of the relationship are negotiated over time.

We found few sex differences in the acts individuals committed across three relationship contexts. Men and women may have a "standard" set of sexual acts that they commit across various contexts. The few sex differences appeared to focus on men emphasizing the breast and butt regions and women talking more. At least two paradigms could account for this.

It is possible that these acts are part of the sexual scripts that men and women have (DeLamater, 1987; Gagnon & Simon, 1973). The sexual script of men is characterized by sexual acts, whereas women's sexual script is characterized by emotional acts. For instance, women may have been socialized to be oriented toward relationships and to use language and communication to

connect to their partners (e.g., Caruthers, 2006; Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000). This could be one explanation for the results that showed women wanted to talk after sex more than men did.

Alternatively, and consistent with prior work on booty-call relationships (Jonason et al., 2009), an evolutionary perspective may be instructive. It may be that men are predisposed to focus more on sexual fulfillment as a function of their lessened need to invest in their offspring (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Women, in contrast, may be predisposed to focus on emotional acts as a means of testing a mate's willingness to invest as per the potentially high cost she pays for engaging in sex (e.g., Li & Kenrick, 2006).

Two anomalous sex differences emerged in the context of booty-call relationships. Women appeared to report kissing their partners on the lips more than men did, and men appeared to have more penile-anal sex than women did. Although these differences may be spurious, there are other possible explanations. For example, men may report more penile-anal sex than women do as a by-product of their tendency to over-report their sexual experiences (e.g., Jonason, 2007; Jonason & Fisher, 2009) or because women underreport sexual experiences for social desirability or to manage self-image (e.g., Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998).

Alternatively, these self-report asymmetries may be the result of sex differences in preferred acts. For example, women may especially value kissing their booty-call relationship partners because they are trying to assess their partner's long-term potential. In contrast, men, trying to maintain a sexual relationship, may minimize kissing, as is common in both sexes for one-night stands. As such, kissing may be more salient to women in booty-call relationships. This conjecture is informed by the idea that kissing may signify that two individuals are a couple. A man's willingness to kiss a woman in public is likely to activate his desire to ensure his acts are consistent with his self-concept (see Kiesler, Pallak, & Kanouse, 1968); one solution being to see himself in a serious relationship.

Although we have made progress toward documenting the nature of the booty-call relationship and differentiating it from serious relationships and one-night stands, there are various limitations. First, as mentioned earlier, we collected data in two, between-subject phases because few individuals had all three relationships within a reasonable amount of time that they could accurately report the frequency of committing the sexual acts we asked. An alternative procedure could have been to ask participants to report on their last serious relationship, booty-call relationship, and one-night stand. Although this procedure may have proven useful to gain within-subjects data, we should be cautious of data that asks individuals to report from many years in the past because of the susceptibility of memory. Nevertheless, because of our self-selective sampling

method, our cross-relationship comparisons may be limited to being between people who have booty-call relationships and those who are less likely to have such relationships, rather than generalizing to how any given individual might view each type of relationship. Ideally, a within-subjects study would be used, where the same participants are asked to detail the nature of their three types of relationships. A within-subjects study would also control for individual differences that may predict reasons to engage in each relationship type, like sociosexuality. Having said that, we reported no differences across relationship type in sociosexuality, so this concern may be muted. However, what future work should do is ask participants the name of their partner and then make it so the questions are answered in reference to that person, not in general.

Second, our study was descriptive in nature and, therefore, we used *t* tests. This may have inflated our Type I error. However, we would argue that the descriptive nature of the study permits an inflation of Type I error to ensure reasonable power. Similarly, the descriptive nature and limited theoretical framework to account for variation in behavior in the context of booty-call relationships, gives our predictions the air of *post hoc*. We hope that, soon, researchers will have amassed enough descriptive data on the full range of human sexuality to create an all-encompassing paradigm.

Third, our study was limited to one less-researched sexual act and utilized an author-generated list of acts. There is likely a much wider range of acts that can be used to define relationships, and future work should replicate our results with a larger range of acts. The fact that we utilized author-generated scales may relate to the less than ideal rates of internal consistency for the sexual acts index. In all three cases, the alphas for the sexual acts scale were on the moderate-to-low side. These alphas are likely related to the fact that scales composed of a small number of items take a penalty in terms of internal consistency because of the positive relationship between number of items in a scale and alpha (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Indeed, the larger emotional acts scale reinforces our point. Moreover, alphas over .50 are reasonable in basic research (Schmitt, 1996), despite traditional guidelines (Nunnally, 1978); therefore, we are confident in our results. However, future work might find out the variety of acts committed in an act-frequency-nomination study (e.g., Jonason et al., 2009) and then subject these items to factor analyses. This should improve scale alphas and remove some experimenter bias. In addition, future work should address other less-understood sexual acts that may also not fit well into the apparent dichotomy, such as "swinging" (Jenks, 1999).

Fourth, this study is limited in that it only used single-point estimates of each relationship type. Future research should attempt to conduct a long-term, daily diary study where data is gathered that can track the

course of the types of acts and feelings that characterize booty-call relationships over time. If one can overcome the difficulty of getting access to those who have just started these relationships, this type of study would prove informative. We would expect, as time passes, the variety of sexual acts incorporated in booty-call relationships should expand. We would also expect both partners to develop more feelings over time, most notably in women. Indeed, such a study would provide insight into the workings of these relationships, why they occur, and why they terminate or progress to relationships of a more serious nature.

A necessary future direction is to further elucidate the model set forth by Jonason et al. (2009) to booty-call relationships and relationships in general. They suggest that relationships are not preexisting entities but, instead, are the result of negotiations—often implicit—that partners go through in defining the parameters of the relationships. Most individuals likely assume that relationships are standard, but the reality is that every relationship is different. They are different because of this negotiation process. We suspect factors, like mate value (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993), to be of particular importance in these negotiations. If we think of relationships as the result of the “battle of the sexes,” then what the individual brings to the negotiating table will dictate their bargaining power. Alternatively, future work should examine (a) whether booty-call type relationships progress to long-term ones (b) and at least three specific reasons individuals may engage in these relationship: trial run, placeholder, and seeking stable social or emotional support.

In conclusion, we have examined a relationship that is garnering interest in the media and among some researchers. In so doing, we have tried to address the dearth of sexuality research between the two extremes of one-night stands and serious committed relationships. We have demonstrated how booty-call relationships are composed of emotional and sexual aspects by assessing the acts individuals commit and the association between these acts and sociosexuality across different relationship contexts. In sum, we have highlighted one more color to the rainbow of human sexuality that has, until now, been rather bichromatic.

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