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Male Dating Initiation at BYU

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LDS Pathways to Marriage
Male Dating Initiation at BYU
School of Family Life

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ABSTRACT

Through qualitative dating analysis, we interviewed 12 males from BYU and found several patterns regarding dating initiation. First, there was perceived male responsibility to initiate the date. Second, there were expectations that females should be straightforward with their interest. Third, males expressed concern about their readiness for marriage and the pressures for marriage. Fourth, dating is viewed as a game with rules that vary depending on the participant.

METHODS

The data used for these analyses were collected via the LDS Pathways to Marriage project. The study was designed to evaluate marital pathways among young LDS singles and the extent to which these pathways resemble American vs. LDS values. Participants were 24 Young Single Adults attending BYU. 12 females, 12 males. All participants were Caucasian, Avg. age was 21 years, std. dev. 2.2 years.

RESULTS

Dating Initiation for Males
1. Perceived Male Responsibility to Initiate the Date & Pay for the Activities
   • It is acknowledged that females may initiate a date on exception, but the primary responsibility is the males.
   • Payment is viewed as a basic kindness for males to extend when attending a date. Ben said, "But one of the things she complained about is that I didn't pay even when I was like, 'I offered to pay you know.' So now, just so they can't have anything against me. I just pay for them. And if they still don't like me, I mean, they can't say anything because I was just a complete gentleman the whole time. Even if it doesn't work out."  
   • Male dating initiation is viewed as the standard expectation. Ben said, "I think it's good for guys to ask girls out." and Andy said, "Well, I have to take the first step!"
2. Straight Forward Communication for Females
   • Males desire females to be straightforward when forming a relationship. Ben said, "I think if they [females] said it [their emotions toward the males] I think I'd be alright with them telling me. I think that'd be good." Andy said that being, "Very straightforward" was also an important quality to seek out when selecting a future spouse.
   • When discussing the expectation of being straightforward, failing to do so can lead to frustration for males. Jared said, "Trying to figure out what the other person's thinking is frustrating. Because sometimes you think you're having a good time and they appear like they're having a good time, but inside they're like 'oh this is horrible.' Then you call them up for the next date and they either completely ignore you or they always make up excuses. To me, if you don't want to go on a date, just be honest. That's the part that people, just aren't honest enough about what they're thinking. And I just, to me I think that's ridiculous. No one's going to get hurt over being honest."

REFERENCES


CONCLUSIONS

Dating initiation is paramount in dating. Gender roles are what drive the culture of dating. Most males interviewed at BYU still believe in traditional gender roles where the males should be initiating the dating. Males often are unsure on how proceed in initiating relationships without straightforward communication from females. Males also expressed concern about the timing for marriage and the pressures here to get married. Because the communication lacks candor at the dating initiation stage, many feel that the first three dates become a type of "dating game." Although all of our participants agreed the game exists, they each defined the "rules of the game" differently.