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Peter K. JONASON

New Mexico State University

Norman P. LI

Singapore Management University, normanli@smu.edu.sg

Margaret J. CASON

University of Texas at Austin

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The “Booty Call”: A Compromise Between Men's and Women's Ideal Mating Strategies

Peter K. Jonason^{a*}, Norman P. Li^b & Margaret J. Cason^b

a Department of Psychology, New Mexico State University ,

b Department of Psychology, University of Texas, Austin

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Abstract

Traditionally, research on romantic and sexual relationships has focused on one-night stands and monogamous pairs. However, as the result of men and women pursuing their ideal relationship types, various compromise relationships may emerge. One such compromise is explored here: the “booty call.” The results of an act-nomination and frequency study of college students provided an initial definition and exploration of this type of relationship. Booty calls tend to utilize various communication mediums to facilitate sexual contact among friends who, for men, may represent low-investment, attractive sexual partners and, for women, may represent attractive test-mates. The relationship is discussed as a compromise between men's and women's ideal mating strategies that allows men greater sexual access and women an ongoing opportunity to evaluate potential long-term mates.

In their romantic and sexual lives, members of both genders want as many benefits as they can get while incurring as few costs as possible. However, there is a discrepancy between the types of benefits sought by men and those sought by women. Men are more likely to seek access to numerous sex partners with minimal investment, whereas women place a greater emphasis on obtaining committed, long-term mates (e.g., Schmitt, 2005; Townsend & Levy, 1990). Although there is considerable overlap and within-gender variability (e.g., Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), these gender differences in ideal mating strategies are reliable and exist across cultures (Schmitt, 2002, 2005). As men and women attempt to attain their ideal relationships, a competition or “battle” between the genders occurs (e.g., Buss, 1989a; Buss & Malamuth, 1996). One possible outcome of this or any other battle is a “compromise.” Here, we investigate one potential compromise relationship—the “booty call”¹—which consists of both a low-cost sexual component suitable to men and familiarity with the possibility of further commitment that is favorable to women.

Although little research has been done on booty calls *per se*, it is clear that many causal sex encounters occur among friends who are not in a committed romantic relationship. For instance, Grello, Welsh, and Harper (2006) found that approximately two-thirds of the casual sex reported occurred among friends—they called this relationship pattern “friends with benefits.” Whereas friends

¹ The term “booty” refers to the buttocks and, in this context, it is used as a derogatory term to imply that the person is being used for sex

with benefits describes a relationship with relatively positive connotations, booty calls are a related type of relationship that takes on a more negative connotation. In general, a booty call involves the solicitation of a non-long-term partner for the explicit or implicit intent of engaging in sexual activity. In contrast to one-night stands or hookups (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000), the booty call often involves an underlying friendship, has some investment and longevity, and may be characterized by emotionally intimate acts, such as kissing (Grello et al., 2006). Booty calls have also been discussed in qualitative work on sexual health (Singer et al., 2006), a national newspaper (Marklein, 2000), as well as in an examination of sexual themes in popular culture (Ashcraft, 2003). We believe that the booty call is a type of relationship deserving of more formal study. Therefore, in contrast to a large body of sexuality research among college students that simply documents general trends (e.g., affectionate and genital sexual behavior), we examine the frequency of and underlying motivations for engaging in a specific, yet oftentimes overlooked, sexual relationship (Grello et al., 2006).

A Compromise Between Ideals in Relationships

An *apparent* dichotomy of relationship types has emerged in the literature as a result of researchers' tendency to ignore those relationships that do not fall neatly into one of two categories (Grello et al., 2006). At one extreme, researchers have focused on short-term, casual sexual relationships between relatively unacquainted individuals like the "one-night stand" (Cubbins & Tanfer, 2000; Li & Kenrick, 2006), the "hookup" (Paul et al., 2000), and the "chance encounter" (Fisher & Bryne, 1978). At the other extreme, researchers have studied long-term, committed relationships, most exemplified by marriage (Buss, 1989b; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000). These two classes of relationships represent ideal mating strategies for men versus women. Because women, like all female mammals, are physiologically required to make a substantial prenatal and postnatal investment to offspring, women may have evolved to be relatively choosier about their mates and to prefer long-term, committed relationships with men who are willing and able to invest resources (Buss, 1989b; Trivers, 1972). In contrast, men's minimum parental investment can be as low as the time and energy involved in an act of sexual intercourse. Thus, men have less to lose and, indeed, potentially more to gain reproductively from indiscriminate mating, and they may have evolved to be more eager for short-term, sexual opportunities (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In support of this, Clark and Hatfield (1989) found that when approached by a random stranger on campus that immediately makes an invitation for casual sex, 75% of men agreed, whereas 100% of women declined.

Although many college students have at least one casual sex encounter (Feldman, Turner, & Araujo, 1999), and most people in most societies get married at least once (Fisher, 1992), focusing on the apparent "short-term" versus "long-term" dichotomy may mask what is actually an array of possible relationship types (Grello et al., 2006). Whereas prior authors have discussed how individuals make trade-offs in the characteristics they want their ideal partners to have (Li & Kenrick, 2006), few authors have examined how entire relationships themselves could be viewed as compromises. We contend that as a consequence of men and women attempting to enact their ideal mating strategies, trade-offs occur and compromises may emerge not only in the types of mates men and women actually choose, but also in the type of relationships in which men and women find themselves.

The "booty call," similar to "friends with benefits" or "sex buddies" (Grello et al., 2006; Marklein, 2000; Singer et al., 2006), may be a type of compromise relationship because it contains elements that appeal to both genders. For men who engage in this type of relationship, a booty call offers sexual access at a low, although not minimal, cost. For women, a booty call relationship offers more affection than a one-night stand (Grello et al., 2006). By being open to uncommitted sexual relationships, a woman may also be able to solicit the interest of more attractive men (Symons, 1979), who may be more likely to have good genes (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). Also, researchers have suggested that one reason why women engage in short-term mating may be to access potential long-term relationships (Greiling & Buss, 2000; Impett & Peplau, 2003; Li & Kenrick, 2006). Thus, the booty call may present the possibility of securing a long-term relationship with an attractive man.

This Research: Exploring the Booty Call

In this research, we had two overall purposes. First, we set out to obtain general descriptive measures on booty call initiation, acceptance, and rejection. Second, by examining characteristics of booty calls along these dimensions, we also sought to investigate specific aspects of booty calls that distinguish them from other relationships. If the booty call is a “compromise” relationship as we have hypothesized, then some of its elements should be similar to those of short-term relationships, whereas other elements should be similar to those of long-term relationships. In addition, some features should distinguish booty calls from either extreme.

A key feature of booty calls is that they involve sexual relations. Because men tend to desire and pursue sex significantly more often than women do (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001), we predicted that men would be more likely than women to initiate booty calls, and women would be more likely to receive booty calls (Prediction 1).

Although sexual in nature, booty calls may differ from other casual sexual relationships, including encounters with strangers or new acquaintances (Fisher & Bryne, 1978; Paul et al., 2000). A distinguishing feature of booty calls is the use of communicative technologies to initiate sexual activity—that is, whereas one-night stands and hookups usually entail meeting someone at a bar or other social gatherings, booty calls uniquely involve contact over distances. Because booty *calls* imply that phone calls are used, phone calls may be the most direct way to establish contact. Therefore, we examined the use of communicative technology in booty calls, and predicted that the most common method would be the phone (Prediction 2).

More broadly, the booty call may represent a compromise between men's relatively short-term and women's comparatively long-term ideals. From a female perspective, an existing platonic relationship that becomes sexual may have a greater chance of transitioning to a long-term relationship than a relationship that immediately begins as sexual. Indeed, most casual sexual relationships occur among friends (Grello et al., 2006), and women may sample potential long-term mates from their friends. Thus, due to the underlying sexual nature of booty calls, and past research indicating that physical attractiveness is a highly valued trait in casual sexual relationships (e.g., Grello et al., 2006; Li & Kenrick, 2006; Regan & Dreyer, 1999), we predicted that physical attractiveness would be an especially important feature in recipients of booty calls and a primary reason why both men and women would accept or reject a booty call (Prediction 3). However, women, more than men, should consider other factors such as friendship and personality to be important when accepting booty calls (Prediction 4).

Whereas women may use the booty call as a strategy to test for and obtain longer term mates, men may be engaging in booty calls primarily for low-investment sex. To get at this distinction, we examined reasons why booty calls did not progress to more committed, long-term relationships. We predicted that men, more than women, would cite that the reason a booty call relationship did not progress to a more committed relationship would be because they just wanted a sexual relationship. Conversely, women should be more likely than men to report that the booty call relationship did not progress to a more committed relationship because the *other* person did not want a long-term relationship (Prediction 5).

In summary, we set out to obtain descriptive data and investigate the booty call along key dimensions that may establish the booty call as being distinct from other casual sexual relationships and, more broadly, as a type of relationship that is a compromise between men's ideal preferences for sexual relationships and women's ideal preferences for long-term, committed relationships. Specifically, we examined five predictions in these main areas: (a) gender differences in frequency of initiating and receiving booty calls; (b) importance of physical attractiveness; (c) use of communicative technologies in booty calls; (d) gender differences in reasons for accepting and denying booty calls

and characteristics of accepted and rejected booty call partners; and (e) gender differences in why booty calls do not transition into committed, long-term relationships.

Study 1

In Study 1, we investigated Predictions 1 and 2 by asking participants to report on the frequency of booty calls they initiated and received and the modes of communication involved (e.g., phone, text messaging, e-mail, and online chat).

Method

Participants

Sixty-one undergraduates (69% women), who received extra credit in exchange for their participation from a University of Texas psychology course, completed a survey designed to assess numerous aspects of booty calls. Mean age of the participants was 19.6 years ($SD = 0.15$).

Measures and procedures

Participants were administered a survey entitled “Mating in the Modern Day.” To provide a uniform definition, instructions stated that, “For this survey, assume that a booty call is a communication initiated toward a non-long-term relationship partner with the urgent intent either stated or implied, of having sexual activity and/or intercourse.” Specifically, participants reported both the number of booty calls that they themselves initiated and the number of booty calls that were directed toward them by others in the past week and month. Of these, participants reported the number of booty calls initiated by self and by others in the past week and month that promptly resulted in sexual intercourse, noncoital sexual activity, or no sexual activity or intercourse. Participants also reported how likely they would be to initiate or receive a booty call using a phone, e-mail, online chat, and text message on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*). The participants completed the measure alone in a lab room while the door was closed.

In preparation for Study 2, we also asked participants to describe the reasons why they have initiated booty calls, features of the individuals they have called, reasons why they have turned down booty calls, features of the individuals who they have turned down, and why their booty call relationships did not transition to a more committed, long-term relationship. Participants were provided one half of a page of an 8.5” × 11” piece of paper for each question. These answers were utilized in Study 2.

Results

Receiving or initiating a booty call

In the total sample, women received more booty calls than men did in the past month ($M_{\text{Female}} = 1.26$; $M_{\text{Male}} = 0.26$), $t(59) = 2.03$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.64$. There was no gender difference in the number of booty calls received in the past week, which likely reflects few having occurred over a given week. No gender differences were found in amounts of booty calls that resulted in no sexual contact of any kind. No other differences were found.

Thirty-eight (64% of the total sample) of the participants (74% women) reported that they had a booty call that resulted in some sexual activity (coital and noncoital). Within this subset, women reported receiving more total booty calls than men

($M_{\text{Female}} = 1.86$; $M_{\text{Male}} = 0.40$), $t(36) = 2.42$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.77$. More specifically, women reported receiving more booty calls in the past year

($M_{\text{Female}} = 6.18$; $M_{\text{Male}} = 1.20$), $t(36) = 2.75$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.12$. Thus, results support our predictions that women would report receiving more booty calls than men. However, there was no significant gender difference in the number of booty calls initiated by the participants who reported that they had had at least one booty call that resulted in sexual contact, although men did report marginally more than women ($p = .07$).

Methods of communication

As predicted, phone calls were more common than all other methods to initiate a booty call ($M_{\text{Phone}} = 5.27$; $M_{\text{all others}} = 3.88$), $t(51) = 3.74$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.38$, including e-mail ($M_{\text{Phone}} = 5.27$; $M_{\text{E-mail}} = 2.00$), $t(52) = 7.34$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.92$. When comparing other individual mediums (text and chatting online), excluding the ones already discussed, no significant differences were found.

Phone calls were also more common than all three other methods for those who reported at least one booty call that resulted in sexual (coital and noncoital) contact ($M_{\text{Phone}} = 5.38$; $M_{\text{other methods}} = 4.36$), $t(31) = 2.16$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.30$. When comparing individual modes of communication for those who reported at least one booty call, people once again reported using the phone more than e-mail for booty calls ($M_{\text{Phone}} = 5.38$; $M_{\text{E-mail}} = 1.88$), $t(32) = 6.73$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.06$. When comparing other individual mediums (text and chatting online), no significant differences were found. In addition, men were more likely than women to use the phone to initiate a booty call ($M_{\text{Male}} = 6.75$; $M_{\text{Female}} = 3.89$), $t(33) = -2.64$, $p < .05$, $d = -0.88$.

Discussion

In this study, women reported that they received more booty call requests than men, which is consistent with previous findings that men desire and pursue sex more often than women do (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2001). Contrary to our prediction, however, men did not report initiating more requests than women.

The results also support our predictions on the use of communication technology: Booty calls are typically arranged through phone calls, sent by both men and women (although more so by men), and received by both men and women (although more so by women). These results differentiate booty calls from other sexual relationships whereby acquaintances make arrangements in person.

Study 2

A Compromise Between Ideals in Relationships

In Study 1, we looked at reported initiation and reception of booty calls and found a gender difference. The telephone was also established as an important means of communication, distinguishing booty calls from one-night stands. In Study 2, we addressed Predictions 3–5 by investigating why booty calls are accepted and rejected and why these relationships do not transition to relationships of a more long-term nature.

We employed an act–frequency approach (Buss & Craik, 1983), using responses from Study 1 on reasons why participants accepted or rejected a booty call, characteristics of accepted and rejected booty call partners, and reasons why booty call relationships did not transition to a relationship of a more committed nature. These responses were rated by participants in Study 2.

Method

Participants

A sample of 75 participants from New Mexico State University were asked if they had at least one booty call that resulted in sexual activity (coital and noncoital) in the past. Those who reported they had ($N = 42$; 50% women; $M_{\text{Age}} = 21$, $SD_{\text{Age}} = 3.07$) participated in this study in exchange for course credit in their psychology class. Those who reported that they had not, participated in another study. One hundred percent of the men reported that they were attracted to women only. Ninety-eight percent of the women reported attraction only to men. Two percent of the women reported attraction to both men and women.

Measures and procedures

Participants were provided with the same definition for a booty call as in Study 1. Participants were asked to think about booty calls that they currently have or have had, and to rate the extent to which each of the reasons for accepting booty calls (obtained in Study 1) accurately described why they

accepted such booty calls on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Participants were also asked to think about booty calls that they have turned down and to rate the extent to which each of the reasons for rejecting booty calls (obtained in Study 1) described why they turned down a booty call on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). These items can be found in Tables 1–4. The participants completed the measure alone in a lab room while the door was closed.

Table 1. <i>Indexes for Assessing Accepted Booty Calls</i>	
Variable	α
Prior commitments	0.81
1. I did not have prior commitments	
2. I was not in a relationship	
3. I was not seeing anyone	
4. I was not busy	
5. I had no deadlines	
Seeking sexual contact	0.87
1. I was interested in sex	
2. I was seeking sex with no strings attached	
3. I wanted pleasure	
4. I was feeling frisky	
5. I was horny	
Escaping or for emotional connection	0.82
1. I was feeling lonely	
2. I was rebounding from a break-up	
3. I wanted to feel independent	
4. I was bored	
5. I was seeking comfort	
6. I wanted to feel powerful	
7. I wanted to escape	
8. I was tired	
9. I was upset	
Prior friendship	0.75
1. I knew them well	
2. I liked/had feelings for them	
Personality compatibility	0.91
1. The person was respectful	
2. I liked their personality	
3. The person made me feel comfortable	
4. The person was trustworthy	
5. The person was emotionally compatible with me	
6. We shared interests	
7. He/she makes me laugh	
8. The person was attentive	
9. The person was sweet	
10. The person was intelligent	
11. The person was fun	
Physical attractiveness	0.65
1. The person's physical attractiveness	
2. The person's weight	
3. The person's height	
4. The person's body	
5. The person's complexion	
Availability	0.72
1. The person's interest in me	
2. The person's willingness	
3. The person's availability	
Existence of a prior relationship	0.61
1. The person was an exboyfriend/girlfriend	
2. The person was a friend	
3. Prior sexual contact with that person	
<i>Note.</i> Participants indicated how much they felt these items mattered in the acceptance of a booty call on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (<i>not at all</i>) to 7 (<i>a lot</i>).	

Table 2. *Indexes for Assessing Rejected Booty Calls*

Variable	α
Prior commitments	0.83
1. They had prior commitments	
2. They were in a relationship	
3. They were seeing someone	
4. They were too busy	
5. They had deadlines	
Not wanting sex	0.75
1. They were not interested in sex	
2. They did not want to have sex with no strings attached	
3. They were not looking for physical pleasure	
4. They were not feeling frisky	
5. They were not feeling horny	
Not wanting to feel a sense of escape	0.81
1. They did not feel lonely	
2. They were not rebounding	
3. They did not want to feel independent	
4. They were not bored enough	
5. They were not in need of comforting	
6. They did not want to feel powerful	
7. They did not want to escape	
8. They were not upset	
Cockiness or arrogance	0.90
1. The person's confidence	
2. The person was a jerk	
3. The person was cocky	
4. The person was a pervert	
5. The person was full of themselves	
Physical attractiveness	0.66
1. The person's attractiveness	
2. The person's weight	
3. The person's height	
4. The person's body	
5. The person's complexion	
Prior relationship	0.65
1. The person was an exboyfriend/girlfriend	
2. The person was a friend	
3. Had prior sexual contact with the person	
Availability	0.69
1. The person's availability	
2. The person's level of interest	
3. The person's willingness	
Personality compatibility	0.90
1. The person was respectful	
2. Their personality	
3. How comfortable the person made me feel	
4. The person's trustworthiness	
5. The person's compatibility with me	
6. How many interests we shared	
7. The person's sense of humor	
8. The person's attentiveness	
9. The person's sweetness	
10. How caring the person was	
11. The person's intelligence	
<i>Note.</i> Participants indicated how much they felt these items mattered in the rejection of a booty call on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (<i>not at all</i>) to 7 (<i>a lot</i>).	

Table 3. Mean Ratings Ordered for How Important the Reason is for Accepting a Booty Call Along with Gender Difference Tests

Variable	Total		Men		Women		t(40)	d
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Physical attractiveness	5.52	1.08	5.69	0.86	5.44	1.22	0.74	0.23
2. Good timing	5.40	1.65	5.45	1.79	5.43	1.600	0.40	0.01
3. Accepted for sexual contact	5.19	1.50	5.75	1.21	4.74	1.57	2.30*	0.73
4. Accept for availability	5.17	1.09	5.18	1.15	5.25	0.99	-0.12	-0.04
5. Prior relationship	4.86	1.36	4.67	1.13	5.24	1.30	-1.52	-0.48
6. Whether he/she was promiscuous	4.86	2.00	4.70	1.81	5.00	2.27	-0.47	-1.03
7. Friends	4.83	1.66	4.10	1.80	5.62	1.13	-3.26**	-0.32
8. The person did not want more than just sex from me	4.79	1.88	4.10	1.89	5.57	1.69	-0.67	-0.21
9. Whether he/she does not only call for sex	4.64	1.74	4.35	1.84	5.18	1.40	-1.66	-0.53
10. Whether he/she played mind games	4.48	1.95	4.50	1.70	4.36	2.24	0.22	0.07
11. If the other person was drunk	4.26	2.24	3.70	2.13	2.60	1.76	0.80	0.25
12. I had not had sexual intercourse for a while	4.21	1.90	4.30	1.81	4.33	1.98	-0.06	-0.02
13. I would not have had to lower my standards	4.00	2.07	4.00	2.13	4.14	2.06	-0.22	-0.07
14. I did not fear getting caught	3.95	2.24	3.55	2.26	4.43	2.18	-1.27	-0.40
15. The person's ethnicity and/or race	3.74	2.24	4.10	2.36	3.29	2.10	1.17	0.37
16. Not having prior commitments	3.67	1.66	3.95	1.76	3.42	1.57	1.02	0.32
17. I did not fear getting a sexually transmitted disease	3.51	2.33	3.85	2.48	3.29	2.26	0.76	0.24
18. I would not feel trashy	3.51	2.20	3.70	2.39	3.38	2.06	0.46	0.15
19. I was rebounding from a past relationship	3.26	2.20	3.05	1.82	3.62	2.56	-0.82	-0.26
20. For escape	3.19	1.28	3.49	1.22	3.01	1.34	1.21	0.38
21. The person's age	2.70	1.97	4.30	2.30	3.86	2.08	2.47*	0.78
22. Personality/compatibility	0.49	0.10	0.46	0.10	0.53	0.08	-2.34*	0.74

Note. Items here are both single-item and multi-item scales. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 4. Mean Ratings Ordered for How Important the Reason Is for Rejecting a Booty Call Along with Gender Difference Tests

Variable	Total		Men		Women		t(40)	d
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Physical attractiveness	5.13	1.35	5.24	0.99	5.00	1.66	0.55	1.17
2. Bad timing	4.81	2.48	5.10	2.20	4.50	2.77	0.77	0.24
3. Whether he/she played mind games	4.79	2.21	4.20	2.46	5.29	1.90	-1.59	-0.50
4. Personality/compatibility	4.78	1.18	4.37	1.11	5.16	1.16	-2.25*	-0.71
5. Availability	4.75	1.46	4.72	1.50	4.78	1.49	-0.13	0.04
6. Whether he/she was promiscuous	4.64	2.33	3.30	2.25	5.81	1.66	-4.08**	-1.29
7. Whether he/she was not interested in a relationship	4.50	2.02	4.10	2.13	4.81	1.91	-1.23	-0.29
8. Whether he/she only call for sex	4.46	2.07	3.85	2.30	5.05	1.69	-1.91	-0.60
9. Arrogance	4.46	1.73	3.66	1.50	5.14	1.66	-3.00**	-0.95
10. I feared getting a sexually transmitted disease	4.44	2.55	4.35	2.50	4.70	2.59	-0.42	-0.13
11. I would have had to lower my standards	3.98	2.53	3.45	2.39	4.45	2.67	-1.23	-0.39
12. Prior commitments	3.94	1.90	3.56	1.70	4.30	2.08	-1.25	-0.40
13. Prior relationships	3.81	1.66	3.47	1.44	4.06	1.83	-1.16	-0.37
14. I would have felt trashy	3.72	2.59	1.90	1.52	5.32	2.32	-5.66**	-1.79
15. Not wanting sex	3.70	1.66	3.16	1.34	4.27	1.76	-2.28*	-0.72
16. Whether it would be awkward in the morning	3.62	1.92	3.20	2.02	4.00	1.87	-1.32	-0.42
17. The person's ethnicity and/or race	3.53	2.31	3.80	2.57	3.23	2.14	0.79	0.25
18. The person's age	3.43	2.11	3.15	2.06	3.57	2.16	-0.64	-0.20
19. The person worked with me	3.33	2.16	2.55	1.76	4.00	2.32	-2.24*	-0.71
20. I had sexual intercourse recently	3.02	2.42	2.65	1.95	3.41	2.81	-0.01	-0.00
21. No need to escape	2.95	1.36	3.00	1.14	2.95	1.56	0.11	0.03
22. I feared getting caught	2.72	2.31	2.75	2.27	2.77	2.43	-0.03	-0.01
23. I/the other person was not drunk enough	2.23	1.69	2.75	2.27	2.77	2.43	-0.03	-0.56

Note. Items here are both single-item and multi-item scales. *p < .05. **p < .01.

In addition, we used the responses from Study 1 about why booty call relationships did not transition to more committed, long-term relationships. On a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), participants rated the extent to which each item was a reason their booty call relationships did not progress into long-term relationships. The items were as follows: (a) “I was looking for just sex,” (b) “I was not looking for a long-term relationship,” (c) “I felt I had better options,” (d) “I was not into the same things as the other person,” (e) “I was hurt from a past relationship,” and (f) “I was dating more than one person at that time.” Each of the six items was also asked with reference to the other person (e.g., “The other person was looking for just sex”).

Results

Accepting and rejecting booty call partners

Ratings of reasons why booty calls were accepted and reasons why booty calls were rejected were separately sorted by two individuals into face-valid categories (Bulmer, 1979).² The items that composed these scales are reported in Tables 1 and 2, along with estimates of internal consistency. There were some items that did not fit into scales but were also analyzed and can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

As predicted, the top reason that both genders reported for accepting and rejecting a booty call was the physical attractiveness of the other person. The second-most important reason for acceptance and rejection was the timing of the booty call request. Friendship was an important factor in accepting, but not in rejecting, a booty call. Tables 3 and 4 show the reasons, in descending order, along with tests for gender differences.

Those who pursued booty calls that were accepted for reasons relating to sexual desire reported more booty calls, $r(41) = .54, p < .01$, which points to the sexual nature of these relationships. No other correlations were found between reasons to accept or reject booty calls and reported frequency of booty calls.

A number of gender differences emerged for reasons to accept or reject booty calls, as shown in Table 3. Consistent with predictions that men value booty calls primarily for sexual access, men were more likely than women to accept a booty call because of a desire for sexual contact. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Buss, 1989b), age was an important determinant in men's acceptance of booty calls. Women were more likely than men to accept a booty call because of a past friendship and compatibility or personality. Men were not more likely to reject any booty call requests for any reason than women, which is consistent with men's general willingness to engage in casual sex behaviors compared to women (Clark & Hatfield, 1989). Women, on the other hand, rejected booty calls more often than men because they would have felt trashy and did not want sex, the other person was arrogant or incompatible, the other person was promiscuous, the other person only calls for sex, and the other person was a co-worker.

Why booty calls do not transition to long-term relationships: Evidence for a compromise

The most likely reasons for why a booty call relationship did not transition to a long-term relationship centered on the sexual nature of the booty call relationship. The top three reasons, in descending order, were that the other person was just looking for sex, the other person did not want a long-term relationship, and the participant him- or herself was just looking for sex. The reasons are listed in Table 5, in descending order, along with tests for gender differences.

² Although an exploratory factor analysis would be the preferred method, the relatively small sample size prohibited such a procedure.

Table 5. Mean Ratings of Reasons for Why a Booty Call Relationships Did Not Become a Long-Term Relationship Along with Gender Difference Tests

Variable	Total	Men	Women					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t(40)	d
1. The other person was just looking for fun/sex	5.41	1.70	4.36	2.22	5.80	1.40	1.11	0.35
2. The other person was not looking for a long-term relationship	5.16	1.75	4.70	1.89	5.77	1.27	-2.17*	-0.69
3. I was just looking for fun/sex	5.11	1.97	5.64	1.59	5.05	1.85	2.48*	0.78
4. I feel I had better options for a long-term mate than this person	5.02	1.98	3.60	2.09	4.09	1.95	0.17	0.05
5. I was not looking for a long-term relationship	4.89	2.09	5.10	2.00	4.82	2.13	0.44	0.14
6. The other person was dating more than one person now	3.75	2.29	3.40	2.30	3.95	2.30	-0.78	-0.25
7. The other person thought we are not into the same things	3.70	2.02	3.75	1.92	3.86	2.12	-0.18	-0.06
8. I was hurt from a past relationship	3.34	2.30	3.30	2.00	2.90	2.45	0.58	0.18
9. The other thought we had irreconcilable differences	3.32	2.13	3.35	1.95	3.32	2.34	0.05	0.02
10. The other was hurt from a past relationship	3.27	2.25	3.60	2.23	2.95	2.24	0.38	0.12
11. We were not into the same things	3.23	1.90	3.45	1.47	3.18	2.26	0.45	0.14
12. I was dating more than one person	3.23	2.49	3.05	2.33	3.14	2.64	-0.11	-0.03
13. We had irreconcilable differences	3.14	1.80	3.45	1.67	3.00	1.93	0.81	0.26

Note. These are single-item measures.*p < .05

Men were more likely than women to report that the booty call relationship did not transition to a long-term relationship because the men were just looking for sex. Conversely, women were more likely than men to report that it did not transition because the other person did not want a long-term relationship. This pattern suggests that, although men tend to view booty calls as mostly sexual, women may see booty calls as having the potential to become more committed, long-term relationships.

Discussion

Results indicated that for both genders, physical attractiveness is a key trait in the acceptance and rejection of booty calls. However, the genders differed in that men tended to value items related to sexual access more than women did, whereas women were more likely than men to accept a booty call because of a past friendship, compatibility, and personality. Furthermore, whereas men emphasized that booty call relationships did not transition to long-term relationships because they only wanted sex, women emphasized that such transitions did not occur because the other person did not want a long-term relationship. Thus, results supported our predictions that, although booty calls are largely a sexual relationship, men may focus on the sexual nature, whereas women may emphasize long-term relationship aspects. The findings also suggest that whether booty calls actually progress to long-term relationships may depend more on men's, rather than women's, desire to allow such a progression.

General Discussion

In two studies, we found support for our predictions. First, women reported receiving more booty calls (although men did not report initiating more). Second, various communication methods are used

to establish booty calls, with the telephone being the most popular method. Third, with regards to accepting versus rejecting booty call partners, physical attractiveness was considered the most important criteria by both genders. Fourth, whereas men tended to cite other reasons related to sexual access, women tended to cite reasons related to friendship, compatibility, and personality. Fifth, for booty calls that do not progress into long-term relationships, both genders attribute the lack of progression to the man's not wanting a long-term relationship.

Taken together, our results suggest that, although booty calls are mostly a sexual relationship whereby physical attractiveness is important, there are elements in which booty calls differ from other casual sexual relationships, such as one-night stands or hookups. In addition, whereas men tend to favor the sexual aspects of booty calls, women tend to favor other, more long-term oriented considerations. These findings are consistent with our overall hypothesis that the booty call may represent a compromise between the short-term, sexual nature of men's ideal relationships and the long-term, commitment ideally favored by women.

The Booty Call As a Compromise of Mating Strategies

Men tend to favor multiple, low-investment sexual opportunities, whereas women prefer long-term, committed relationships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Townsend, 1995). However, as the genders strive for their ideals, each side may need to compromise to get at least some of the benefits they are seeking. The booty call may be one such compromise. For men, booty calls may allow ongoing sexual access to one or more mates. Although there is some investment associated with booty call partners, the amount is considerably lower than what might be needed to sustain a long-term, committed relationship. For women, a booty call relationship offers more affection than a one-night stand (Grello et al., 2006), as well as the possibility of securing a long-term relationship with an attractive man.

Two specific results suggest that women may utilize booty calls as a method for obtaining a long-term mate (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Li & Kenrick, 2006). First, women reported that booty call relationships did not transition to long-term relationships because the *other* person did not want a long-term relationship (see Table 5). Second, personality incompatibility was an important factor in rejecting booty calls (see Table 4). In fact, personality was a much more important reason for rejecting a booty call partner than for accepting one. These results may reflect an asymmetry between the benefit of a good personality and the cost of a bad one for such relationships. For instance, economically oriented mate preference research has shown that for certain key traits, people want to avoid having a mate who is below average on these traits, but do not especially value having a mate who is above average (Kenrick, Sundie, Nicastle, & Stone, 2001; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002). Such threshold effects may be especially relevant when considering a long-term mate as opposed to a short-term one (Li & Kenrick, 2006). Taken together and in the context of other previous research (e.g., Grello et al., 2006; Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, & West, 1995), these findings are consistent with the possibility that some women may engage in booty call relationships to test potential long-term mates.

Toward a New Understanding of Sexual and Romantic Relationships

The booty call relationship resists easy categorization into the apparent short- versus long-term dichotomy. Similar to other researchers (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007), who have proposed a multidimensional structure for sociosexuality, we contend that relationships may be characterized as having separate long- and short-term components, the combination of which correspond to unique strategies of human sexuality. Tentatively, we present Figure 1, which depicts this two-dimensional view and where some relationship types may fall in the quadrants. Each type of relationship is a reflection of different levels of interest in each mating strategy. Future work should attempt to verify this two-dimensional view.

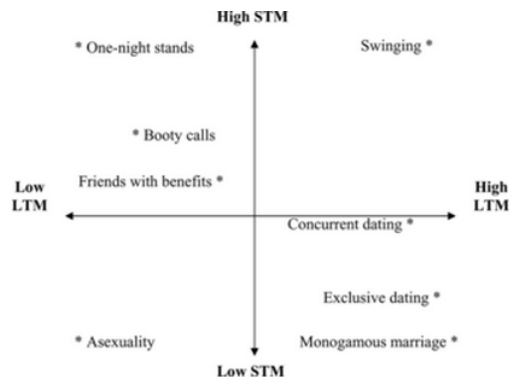


Figure 1 A two-dimensional view of romantic and sexual relationships. *Note.* STM = short-term mating; LTM = long-term mating

Communication Technology

One of the key features that distinguish booty calls from one-night stands is the use of communication technologies to arrange sexual encounters, most notably the phone. One-night stands are traditionally conceived as chance encounters, whereas the booty call has some degree of forethought and planning. In addition, we found that men were more likely to use the telephone to initiate booty calls than women, despite the availability of technologies like mobile phones to both genders. These gender differences suggest that different motivations might underlie men and women's differing usage of communicative technologies (Gefen & Staub, 1997; Gemmill & Peterson, 2006). Men's greater underlying motivations to pursue sexual relationships may be a contributing factor.

The use of communication technologies in the pursuit of sexual relationships is a relatively modern phenomenon. We would speculate that as our society becomes more technologically savvy, individuals may rely increasingly more on communicative technologies to arrange all forms of sexual contact. The day of the matchmaker has likely ended (Jonason, Izzo, & Webster, 2007), and do-it-yourself communication technologies will likely take over. We believe that as computer-based technologies become more user friendly, they may eventually be preferred over the phone; and, as more people buy mobile phones with e-mail capacity, thus having immediate access to their e-mail, it is likely that a more detached and less intimate communicative pattern will emerge in reference to sex in particular. The popularity of text messaging is suggestive of this trend. Instead of having a direct conversation and actually having to get rejected or to reject someone who calls for a booty call, individuals can opt to protect their self-esteem and the self-esteem of others by using text-based communication. In addition, we speculate that the use of text-based communication may allow individuals to send out multiple booty call requests at once, thus increasing their odds of successfully finding one.

Limitations

Although we have identified and tested specific predictions, the nature of the study was introductory and relatively descriptive and, thus, one must be cautious in interpreting the data along any theoretical lines. Although we believe that an evolutionarily informed approach that takes into account modern environments is an insightful paradigm for understanding sexual psychology, other perspectives may also be useful in understanding booty calls, such as social norms or pressures to engage in such acts (e.g., Caruthers, 2006). What is fair to say is that the booty call may be a modern-day by-product of not only the conflict between the genders created by different evolved psychologies, but also the availability of modern communication technologies with which to develop and solicit repeated sexual relations.

We mentioned in the introduction that booty calls involve more emotional commitments than one-night stands. However, the data here are unable to specifically address this issue. Although we found that prior relationships and friendships were important factors in the acceptance or rejection of booty calls, we did not do a comparative study. However, Grello et al. (2006) showed that friends who have sex tend to use more emotional sex acts (e.g., kissing) than one-night stands. In addition, we did not assess the particular sexual activities that booty call participants were engaging in. We encourage future work to address these limitations.

A methodological concern is that we may have inflated Type I error by employing numerous t tests. However, in light of the exploratory goals of this study, the higher incidence of Type I error rates may be compensated by having increased statistical power and lower Type II errors (Gerring, 2001). Also, although we presented results of numerous tests in our tables, we only examined those that were directly pertinent to our predictions. Future researchers are encouraged to use more stringent tests to confirm these findings.

Another limitation pertains to the relatively small sample sizes. Although each sample was relatively small, our approach of examining this phenomenon at two universities (New Mexico State University and University of Texas at Austin) should mediate those concerns to some extent. Both schools evidenced similar patterns, and results elsewhere suggest that booty calls are rather widespread (Caruthers, 2006; Grello et al., 2006; Singer et al., 2006). Nevertheless, future research should attempt to further explore booty calls in larger samples.

Also, there are surely a number of individual differences and features of the social environment that may be associated with higher or lower levels of willingness to accept or reject booty calls. For instance, fears of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or even STD prevalence in one's mating pool may lead to a general decrease in willingness to accept booty calls. However, because each part of the study was taken from different schools, which ostensibly translate into mating pools, the results within each school should be uniformly affected by STD prevalence. Aside from evolutionary reasons, other factors could also contribute to a greater female reluctance toward sexual relationships, including fear of reputational damage or concerns of actual pregnancy or safety.

Last, some of our findings could have been driven by our definition of a booty call. We provided a definition to ensure uniformity in what our participants thought a booty call was. However, the definition was relatively sexual in nature and may have prompted participants to report a high priority on the physical attractiveness of those who they have booty calls with. This raises the interesting question of how individuals interpret the meaning of a booty call. Prior research suggests that men and women may have different interpretations and descriptions of the same sexual act (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999).

Conclusion

In conclusion, whereas work by Grello et al. (2006) and others have examined numerous aspects of the college student's sexual experience, we add to that a description and theoretical rationale for the booty call—a relationship in which one in two college students may be engaging. More broadly, interesting insights into human mating dynamics may be discovered through the exploration of relationships such as the booty call that do not fit well into the apparent long-term and short-term dichotomies. Considering these relationships may lead researchers, as it has led us, to a different understanding of romantic and sexual relationships, as well as a better understanding of the proverbial battle of the genders.

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