

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical-Community Psychology

Sara Gonzalez-Rivas

M.A. in Psychology, May, 2013, University of Missouri-St. Louis
B.A. in Psychology, May, 2009, Rice University

Women's Sexual Initiation: The Impact of Gender Roles and Relationship Type

Date: July 14th, 2017
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Place: 339 Stadler Hall

Abstract

Sexual script theory is the theoretical foundation for understanding how sexual interactions are navigated, including sexual initiation. Sexual initiation occurs when an individual conveys interest in sexual activity when sexual behaviors are not yet in progress. Past research has demonstrated that women initiate sex less frequently than men in other-sex relationships, perhaps due to traditional sexual scripts. The current research literature lacks data on sexual initiation among women in same-sex relationships. This study investigated the impact of perceived gender roles on women's sexual initiation, the role of partner sex on women's initiation behaviors, if perceived gender roles account for initiation behaviors over and above the impact of sexual desire, and the associated wellness benefits of sexual initiation. Women's sexual initiation behaviors in their current relationship were investigated in two ways, through retrospective reports (N = 351; 242 with male partners and 109 with female partners) and a two-week daily diary (N = 60; 29 with male partners and 31 with female partners). Results indicated that nonsexual and sexual gender role beliefs had no impact on sexual initiation for women across relationship types. Women reported fairly balanced sexual initiation with their partners, with women in same-sex relationships reporting higher rates of initiation. Women in other-sex relationships used a higher proportion of direct initiation strategies than women in same-sex relationships. Comparisons between the subsample that participated in both portions of the study indicated reporting consistency across methodology. The results are discussed in terms of furthering understanding of how women's sexual initiation looks across relationship types and the impact on current sexual scripts.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Zoë Peterson, Ph.D. (Chair)
Ann Steffen, Ph.D.
Matthew Taylor, Ph.D.
Susan Kashubeck-West, Ph.D.