

Elizabeth Reicks

My name is Elizabeth Reicks and I am a senior in the Psychology program here at UB and for my senior project I decided to pursue an investigation on romanticism to see which of the two genders is more romantic.

One of my personal goals in pursuing this research was to debunk stereotypes that women are obsessed with romantic relationships and that men don't care about love. It is a common idea that men jump from woman to woman without any romantic thoughts or feelings for any woman, and that women are always longing for prince charming to sweep them off their feet. If my research indicates that women are not the more romantic gender it will help shake the false stereotypes about men and women and how they behave and feel in their romantic relationships.

Literature Review:

There has been extensive research on the differences in romantic beliefs between men and women.

Sprecher & Toro-Morn (2002) found that American men are more likely to idealize their romantic partner and the romantic relationship than are American women. Their results also showed that Chinese men scored higher on the Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) than did Chinese women.

Galperin (2010) pursued a study to test the evolutionary theory that suggests that men may have evolved to fall in love faster than women because women tend to be skeptical of a man's commitment to them. This skepticism in women may be elicited by the notion that men mate widely and women mate wisely which is one of the concepts in David Buss's theory of mating strategies. He found that men are more prone to falling in love if they overestimate women's sexual interest and if they highly value physical attractiveness in potential partners.

In 1989, Sprecher and Metts referenced Eagly's (1987) book that stated research has found that men, more than women, are likely to believe in love at first sight, in love as the basis for marriage and for overcoming obstacles, and to believe their romantic relationship will be perfect. When developing the romantic beliefs scale Sprecher & Metts (1989) hypothesized that men will score higher on the Romantic Beliefs Scale because throughout history, men have consistently scored higher on romanticism. Their results found that men were generally more romantic than women.

Hypothesis:

Based on this research I hypothesized that men were going to score higher on romanticism. I also wanted to examine the differences in romantic behaviors. Because research indicates that men are more romantic than women I also hypothesized that men were going to engage in more romantic behaviors as well.

Method

Participants:

My participants were selected randomly from Facebook, the undergraduate liberal arts programs at the University of Baltimore, and the law offices of Greenberg & Bederman in Silver Spring, Maryland. The resulting sample included 117 participants, 51 men and 66 women.

Measures:

To measure romantic beliefs, I used the Romantic Beliefs (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). The Romantic Beliefs Scale is a 15 item scale that measures romantic idealism through four factors that represent the components of romantic idealization which are "Love Finds a Way," "One and Only," "Idealization," and "Love at First Sight." This scale asks participants on a 5-point response scale how much they agree or disagree with specific romantic ideals (e.g. "There will only be one real love for me," "If I love someone, I know I can make the relationship work, despite any obstacles.")

Cronbach's alpha for the total scale is 0.81 and it varies from .057 to 0.80 for the four subscales. Reliabilities for the total test and its subscales are all strong and convey that the Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) is a very reliable test. The Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) is significantly correlated with other romanticism scales such as the Spaulding (1970) Romantic Love Complex and the Weis et al. (1986) Sex-Love-Marriage scale.

I measured Romantic Behaviors by asking participants to complete on a scale of 1 to 5 how often they have engaged in specific romantic behaviors in their romantic relationship (e.g. "How often do you buy gifts for your romantic partner?," "How often do you make time to spend alone with your romantic partner?") Participants responded to 6 of these items.

Procedure and design:

To complete my survey, participants were sent an email with instructions and a link to complete the survey. When the participants completed the survey the results were stored in the survey database and participants were encouraged to then forward the email to their email contact list.

I executed a between-subjects design that examined the differences between men and women in their level of romanticism and their frequency of engaging in romantic behaviors.

Results:

My research showed no significant differences between men and women in their romantic beliefs or behaviors.

I conducted an independent samples t-test with an alpha level set at .05. The results showed me that the means for both genders was not different for either of my scales meaning that my results were not significant and my hypothesis was not supported.

For the Romantic Beliefs Scale my t value of -6.47 at 115 degrees of freedom is .52 which means that there is a 52% probability that these results occurred by chance.

For the Behaviors Scale my t value of -.503 at 114 degrees of freedom is .62 which means that there is a 62% probability that these results occurred by chance.

Because my results can be described by chance alone this means that there is no significant relationship between the variables I was measuring. My p value is very large which tells me I have little evidence against the null hypothesis.

These results show that my predictor variable is not a good predictor of my dependent variables and that level of romanticism is not dependent on gender. They also tell me that there is no difference in the means of the groups I examined for either variable causing me to fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion:

There is a fairly simple explanation as to why my study did not find a significant difference in romanticism levels between the genders.

Newer studies are finding less and less difference in romanticism levels between men and women.

In 2010, Galperin found that only some measures in his study indicated that men are generally more likely to fall in love than are women.

In Sprecher and Toro-Morn's (2002) study, men and women did not differ on the total score of the romantic beliefs scale. They also found that both genders are moderately romantic overall

In developing the Romantic Beliefs Scale, Sprecher & Metts (1989) explained that the difference between gender in romanticism is often explained by the functionalist perspective. The functionalist perspective argues that men can literally afford to be romantic because they have more economic freedom to select a partner on the basis of love, while women have been placed in a position where they have been more or less coerced into selecting a mate based on his resources and income level.

Sprecher & Metts (1989) went on to explain that because women and men are becoming more equal as time goes on and are slowly reaching similar income levels and autonomy, that the differences in romanticism due to gender should disappear overtime. My results support the functionalist perspective because there was no difference in romanticism level between the genders. This is good news! Men actually ARE romantic and women are gaining more power and autonomy in society.

Instead of focusing on gender, future research should investigate the effect of different factors on romanticism such as parental divorce, relationship dissolution, and relationship beliefs.

In 1999, Sprecher & Metts studied how romantic beliefs are related to the stability of a romantic relationship. They found that participants' scores on the romanticism scale tended to decrease over time, except for couples who got engaged during the study; their romanticism scores neither increased nor decreased during the study. However, couples who broke up during the study experienced a substantial decrease in their endorsement of romantic beliefs from before to after the breakup

Sprecher, S., Cate, R., & Levin, L. (1998) found that women with divorced parents, relative to women to women with intact families were less likely to have a secure attachment style and were more

likely to have an avoidant attachment style. Women from divorced families were also less idealistic in their romantic beliefs than were women from intact families.

Knee (1998) found that individuals who believe in fate or destiny were more likely to end a romantic relationship when they felt things were not working out, and those who believed in relationship growth were more likely to work on the relationship and utilize relationship-enhancing strategies.

These factors may play a bigger role in a person's romanticism and how often they choose to engage in romantic behaviors than does gender. Although my hypothesis was not supported, other good information came from my study. It is encouraging to know that counter to common belief that men are not romantic, men are actually just as romantic as women are. It is also wonderful to know that a powerful shift for women has taken place allowing women the resources to pick a partner on the basis of love rather than on the basis of financial support.