

A Study on the Sexuality Change in Experience of College Students Dating

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Abstract

The study used a qualitative research method phenomenological method to explore what changes in personal sexuality occurs in university student within experiences in dating and to explore the meaning. In-depth interviews were conducted on 2 male students and 4 female students at C city University that had dating experience. As a result of the study, if immersion and sense of unity between couples diagnosed the degree of relationship, as dating progress informants experienced the time of reflecting on them and through this could be seen that they gained power to create a more matured subjective sexuality. The significance of this study is in that it can forecast a sexuality model for individuals as well as desirable students in the society.

Keywords: Dating, Sexuality, University Student

1. Introduction

Unlike in high school, in university students where dating is socially a couple, dating is becoming an obligation. It was found that positive interaction with the first dating subject after becoming a university student had an influence on an extension of interpersonal relationships and enhancement of self-esteem¹.

In the university student stage that correspond to adolescence in the development stages of Erikson forming of intimacy with the opposite sex becomes an important developmental task and positive results of intimacy formation includes sexual empathy and stable love². Experiencing intimacy with the opposite sex through dating and becoming mature psychologically and sexually is ideal in life³.

University students that engage in dating experience sexual cavity and come into conflict between sexual desires, personal values and social norms⁴. Because the sexuality realized and created in the personal experiences in this process influences sexual activity and because it also influences marital life after marriage, it is very important⁵. Although there are many chances to be

involved in physical contact and sexual intercourse through dating during university because there are no socially agreed standards about premarital sexual cavity of university students, the reality is that the sexuality of university students in their 20s is difficult to be accepted.

Most of the studies on sexual activities in university students focus on problems that appear during dating^{6,7}, and they are mostly quantitative researches⁸. This has limitations in exploring how the university students, the subject of dating, choose their actions through the experiences in the dating process and how they interpret the meanings.

Sexuality refers to the integration of personal identity⁹ and it is an entirely sexual concept that is defined by something that is 'had' or 'developed' by individuals which is not accepted as a defined natural condition. Personal sexuality that is realized and developed by university students through diverse experiences of dating can be said to be expression of self that is not simply personal but which is located in the relation in the social and cultural context.

The study defines the comprehensive concept of sexuality as the perception of change in values about love

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of individuals, sexuality, and behavior felt by university students through dating experiences based on the Sexual Script by Weis study the changes in sexuality that university students experience and perceive during dating¹⁰. In the Sexual Script sexuality of an individual is connected with aspects of family, interpersonal relationships, and society and culture¹⁰ and the scenario continuously changes through the subject going through the assimilation process which is a basic process of scenario internalization due to things such as strengthening, modeling, repetition, and symbolic meanings¹¹. This means that the quality does not refer to simply genital and sexual behavior but all attitude, value, trust, and behavior that have special meaning that appear in all aspects of personal and societal life¹² and it matches the study results that states, primary connection of body, self-identity, and social norms¹³.

The study used a qualitative research method phenomenological method to explore what changes in personal sexuality occurs in university student within experiences in dating and to explore the meaning. The significance of this study is in that it can forecast a sexuality model for individuals as well as desirable students in the society by closely listening to the change process of sexuality pulled in the perspective of an individual that experience dating and I interpreting their experience, feeling, and meaning through their explanation.

2. Methods and Procedures

2.1 Study Subjects

Table 1. Personal characteristics of the informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Current dating status	Dating experience	Remarks
A	Female	21	No	Yes	Recent breakup
B	Female	21	Yes	Yes	-
C	Female	20	No	Yes	Recent breakup
D	Female	20	Yes	Yes	-
E	Male	21	Yes	Yes	-
F	Male	26	No	Yes	-

The interview set the intensive sampling target as people who know group culture well that enjoyed talking to

confirm and select study subjects¹⁴. The researcher explained the intentions of the study to C city University students and conducted open recruitment of students who had dating experience after entering university. Among the people who sympathize with the purpose and meaning of the study 2 male students and 4 female students who voluntarily applied for in-depth interview were selected as informants, the final study subjects.

The age range of the student informants were from 20 to 26 and all of them had at least 1 or more experiences of dating after entering university. Three informants were currently engaged in dating (refer to Table 1).

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Method

2.2.1 Data Collection

The in-depth interview was conducted through face-to-face interviews with the researcher from March 5, 2015 to April 5, 2015.

Based on the theoretical saturation that it must be done until the saturation point where there is no more new knowledge¹⁵ the progress of in-depth interview consisted of one or two interviews according to informant and on average it took about two hours. The interview was conducted through open questions about dating process and the main questions consisted of 'when is it recognized that one is dating', 'the reason for continuation of dating in the personal aspect', 'process of physical contact and meaning', 'things felt through dating and personal changes', and 'the meaning of dating that is currently perceived by the individual'.

Get the entire process of the interview was recorded with prior consent and the researcher recorded on the field note depression and feeling about the informant, nonverbal expressions by the participant, and thoughts the researchers had during the interview. To protect the ethical aspects of the informants, research participation agreement about research purpose and procedures confidentiality about interview content was written before the primary interview in the researcher and the informant each kept a copy.

2.2.2 Analysis Method

The study used a phenomenological research method to receive as it is the experiences of the research participants and explored how sexuality changed in those processes. Among phenomenological data analysis method, the

study used the analysis method of^{f16} which utilizes the research participants' statements of their own experiences in their own language to derive the core subject by integrating meaningful statements and theme clusters.

Look at the research stages, in the first stage detailed interview content was read repeatedly and lines were drawn in parts that were thought to be meaningful. In the second stage meaningful statements related to sexuality change was selected and recorded than identical or similar statements from other participants' data was confirmed and recorded. The third stage to find and explain the essential meaning within meaningful statements the raw data was repeatedly read and confirmed. In the fourth stage the derived meanings were classified into clusters and categorized. In the fifth stage the theme clusters were integrated and categorized. In the sixth stage to confirm the validity the analysis results were reviewed by two experts in the field confirmed from the participants if it matched the contents they had stated.

3. Results

3.1 Study Results

3.1.1 Realizing that they are Dating

The situations where the informants, in the process of two people meeting, perceived that they were dating really felt they were lovers included 'comfortably sharing daily lives', 'when realizing each other is precious', 'and then the other takes my side'. Informants said that they perceived that they were close lovers when they did all daily lives together primarily and when they were comfortable to be together while not having to think of something new to do or take care of the other.

There were many things such as the 100 day date and 200 day date but I feel that when I watch television together with her, when we go to school together, when she tells me 'that's not something good' and when we are together I feel that she is my girlfriend. When we just hang out and talk... I feel that she is my girlfriend (Informant E).

Becoming lovers and sharing daily living is not simply doing activities together but realizing the preciousness of each other through sharing time together and feeling that time is precious, and it can be seen that through this they are creating intimate bonds of sympathy with each other.

It was fantastic. And be comfortable motion made my heart flutter. ... Although he could not meet during school time we met after examination period, met on Sundays, met briefly when going to the terminal, and just having coffee for 30 minutes was great. I know he is precious. He knows as well that's why every moment was important (Informant C).

Also the informants said that when the friend of the opposite sex took their sides or when they felt that they were being cared for in everyday life they felt happiness and that that moment was very precious. The feeling of being accepted unconditionally by the partner was making the informants feel that they were more valuable and decent.

When I started really believing in him I talked all about my family circumstances. Then he said things like 'it must have been very difficult. That is great,' 'who in this age would be like you' and when he said things like that umm.... well... When we were dating, how do you say, I felt like the prettiest person (Informant B).

3.1.2 Fundamental Factors of Dating Maintenance

In reality, the situations where dating relation full apart might differ by couple but the fundamental factor that was the important reason why dating was maintained and what could be the start of conflict and the reason behind the relationship falling apart stated by the majority of the informants was 'trust between the two people'. Dating is a process of building trust and good communication and caring and respecting each other were important factors of building trust.

I believe its trust. Being able to know by trust without talking..... Whether we connect and whether I am respected and cared for... I think this is the reason behind why the relationship is maintained (Informant C).

Being able to talk about things that I can even talk with my friends, talking with my girlfriend about things that stressed me rather than friends... I think that's what is good. I talked about something like this with my friends at first I trusted them but in the end something that occurred and I felt a sense of betrayal. Talking about these things with my girlfriend and when I feel that we, I feel closer (Informant E).

3.1.3 Things Realized After Experiencing Dating

Things that the informants realized after dating was that the principals of dating were themselves and that they need to engage in love that expresses them as is to engage

in true love. It can be said that this is a process of the informants becoming more mature towards subjective sexuality and that it is a result of exploring the true self through dating experience. In the end the informants were talking about the power to reflect on themselves through dating or through the dating process and that they needed the strength to engage in dating that is right for them.

I was quite different from myself a year ago. At the time regardless of what I wanted I tried to suit the other person but now because I learned that 'one must clearly say what one doesn't want and people must accommodate each other' now my thoughts are completely changed and my behavior has changed as well. So now whether I am with friends or with guys I am very different from before. Before I lacked backbone but now I have my own thoughts and act my thoughts. And I do what I want (Informant A).

I think that I need to have experience in dating and strength to think for myself. When I am not confident when dating I just accommodate the other and depend on them but I don't think that's right. I need strength to easily let go (Informant B).

Also the informants were learning in detail not the vagueness of unconditional love but perceiving that they must care for each other if they love each other.

I realized that simply liking or loving was not enough. In loving.... one must care for the other and refine the other, but I just loved. Because I only loved I didn't care for.... I felt that 'simply love does not cut it' (Informant A).

3.1.4 Personal Meaning of Physical Contact

When the informants engage in physical contact with their partners it signifies that trust was built in the relations with their partners, and it could be seen that when physical contact continued in that state trust between the two people increased. In the physical contact stage of dating informants put meaning on trusts about the other rather than period or type of contact and he stated that in this process emotional exchange increased and they felt they are becoming closer.

I however think that it's not 'when exactly or how should we do it' but I think it's different from person to person. I engage in physical contact when I start to trust the person I am becoming comfortable with and becoming closer with (Informant B).

When this person hugs me or kisses me or something like that, then I really feel something and I think that's when I feel trust (Informant A).

Also the informants were feeling that as physical contact progressed with their partner they were perceived as 'a significant being to the other' and talked about physical contact as a natural expression of intimacy. Especially informant D perceived kissing is a process where strong emotions of love could be confirmed above other forms of physical contact. Informant E stated that through physical contact with the partner it is confirmed that they connect with each other and that there was a feeling of knowing everything about the other which gave feelings of further intimacy.

Physical contact with him. Is something only I can... That I am special to him.... Especially because kissing is something you do only with the person you love.... Rapport is it? That is well... Should I say a stronger image? The feeling that I am beloved (Informant D).

In all physical contact I start to feel that I know everything about the partner and I feel like now I will know you can without talking. I feel that this person will have the same thoughts of me... (Informant E).

Female university student informant A, among physical contact based on trust, who had experience of breaking up with a partner that she had sexual intercourse with, said that she felt a bit of chaos in the beginning in the patriarchal social atmosphere that it was a chance to become more mature as an adult and that she did not have regrets on her own choices.

At first I felt for some reason that this was like sin but because I was doing this with a person that I liked, it felt good rather than feeling like it was sin. Because he likes me, because he loved me I was going out with him and that was good. Also um... It was great that now I had experienced this and although I am still quite young itself good in the feeling that I felt like I somewhat became a woman (Informant A).

3.1.5 Dating to Me, A University Student

The informants stated that dating during the university years with good but that it was a choice and assignment where the method of meeting can be different by situation. On the other hand, informant F said that because there are many chances for university students to engage in dating if dating is seen as obligatory from the surroundings, it was a burden and also an annoyance.

I feel that in a way dating during university is an assignment. At least once. Course I'm not saying 'people who don't are fools', or 'you must do it' but I think it's good to (Informant A).

After my experiences in the military I think that I must be more careful and think in detail if it is really good or not when dating. I think the right expression is, a decent person in anyone's eyes... I think it is the process of finding a decent friend. Dating.... I feel sorry for people who mindlessly date... But if you don't engage in dating other people look at you funny. That's also annoying... (Informant F).

In the end university students were newly composing their own sexuality through diverse dating experiences and they were going through the process of becoming more mature where they could re-explore themselves.

It is different what you learn when you're dating and when you're not dating... I think while dating my boyfriend I am becoming mature together with him (Informant B).

3.2 Discussion About Results

University students become lovers with new people of the opposite sex through the experience of dating and by hearing all their daily lives and supporting and being supported, they feel unity. The biggest strength that maintains dating was 'trust between the two people' and had deep relation with personal meaning giving about physical contact stages and love. Through physical contact started with the first kiss a new stage of relationship is started and the students experienced meeting their sexual self. If immersion and sense of unity between couples diagnosed the degree of relationship, as dating progress informants experienced the time of reflecting on themselves and through this they gained power to create a more matured subjective sexuality.

4. Conclusion

As it can be seen in the study results, university students are choosing diverse dating that is fit for them and are experiencing trial and error but in places like University counseling rooms in Korea they mostly provide general and universal dating education and the reality is that dating guide suggestion fit for individuals and couples is difficult.

Dating experiences a process of re-exploring one and because it is a process of learning love and sexual activity there needs to be approached that accepts the individuality and uniqueness of subject in dating education that is a major concern for university students that just entered adulthood. Through this process the students can gain their own subjective sexuality. This has close relation with establishing individual identity and it is possible when they can admit by themselves that they are 'their own person' and it has both the meaning of change and maturity. Until now, in studies dealing with dating in university students it was difficult to find the perspective of seeing the dating experiences university students as processes of growth, maturity, and process of self-image exploration it lacked chances to see sexuality in university students in their own perspectives.

Emphasizing and revealing what the students think are meaningful in their perspective based on dating experiences of individual students is an important stage of understanding the reality of their sexuality properly and exploring the direction to increase the quality of life underlying within. The importance of the students themselves becoming the subject of experience and realizing the meaning of life, changing and developing their own existence shows necessity of seeing individual experiences and interpretations as is.

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