

Preference for Opening Lines: Comparing Ratings by Men and Women¹

Chris L. Kleinke²

University of Alaska, Anchorage

Frederick B. Meeker

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Richard A. Staneski

Old Dominion University

Opening lines were conceptualized as a method for expanding one's marketplace for dating and marriage partners. In Study 1, university students and employees rated opening lines used by men for meeting women. Respondents (n = 600) in one survey rated opening lines for general situations. Respondents (n = 431) in a second survey rated opening lines for specific situations, including bars, restaurants, supermarkets, laundromats, and beaches. In Study 2, university students and employees (n = 831) rated opening lines used by women for meeting men in general situations. Factor analyses identified three categories of opening lines: cute-flippant, innocuous, and direct. Overall, respondents agreed that cute-flippant opening lines were the least desirable and that innocuous and direct opening lines were the most desirable. Within this general consensus, there was a consistent tendency for women to dislike cute-flippant opening lines more than men and to prefer innocuous opening lines more than men. These differences were related to sex role socialization. Discussion focused on reasons people persist in using cute-flippant opening lines and on an attributional analysis of responses to opening lines.

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²To whom reprint requests should be addressed at Psychology Department, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska 99508.

Psychology students are often surprised to learn how much their behaviors and lives are influenced by contingencies in the outside world. Psychologists and sociologists have known for a long time that external factors affect even such sacred events as choice of dating and marriage partners. Rubin (1973) summarized a number of studies showing how dating and marriage choices are determined by proximity, similarity, and social background. Kerckhoff (1974) described how dating and marriage choices are delimited by social networks and the sorting processes that determine a person's schools, jobs, and social affiliations. Kerckhoff refers to personnel directors and college admissions officers as informal marriage brokers because they control access to settings in which potential dating and marriage partners will be found.

The present research on opening lines grew out of an interest in how people might expand their field of eligible partners beyond the boundaries of their social networks. Our argument is that a person's marketplace for dating and marriage partners can be wherever that person happens to be at a given time. Much research has been conducted to discover how favorable impressions can be enhanced during first meetings by attending to one's nonverbal behaviors (Kleinke, 1975, 1986; Knapp, 1978), self-disclosure (Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; Kleinke, 1979), talking level (Kleinke, Kahn, & Tully, 1979), expression of similar or dissimilar beliefs (Byrne, 1971), and strategies of self-presentation and ingratiation (Jones & Wortman, 1973; Kleinke, Staneski, & Weaver, 1972; Schlenker, 1980). The practical problem when locating an attractive and appealing person in one's marketplace, is making social contact. Any number of nonverbal gestures may be useful for gaining that person's attention (Kleinke, 1975, 1986; Knapp, 1978) and communicating social availability (Cary, 1978). Ultimately, however, when we want to make a new acquaintance we have to think of something to say. The question guiding the present research was: "What do you say when you run across a person you would like to meet?"

In addition to looking for practical answers to the question of "what to say," we were interested in gaining insight into differences and similarities in men's and women's approaches toward social encounters. It has been traditionally acceptable in our society for men to approach women but not for women to approach men. To the extent that this tradition remains, one would expect more favorability toward opening lines for men meeting women than toward opening lines for women meeting men. The tradition of men approaching women also suggests that women will choose opening lines for meeting men that are innocuous and nonthreatening. On the other hand, because of societal expectations and socialization (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), men can be expected to prefer opening lines that are more assertive and direct. In any case, if men and women can understand each other's perceptions and expectations about the use of opening lines for expanding social networks, it will be easier for them to get together.

STUDY 1: OPENING LINES USED BY MEN FOR MEETING WOMEN

We conducted two surveys of opening lines used by men for meeting women. The first survey focused on opening lines that could be used in general situations. The second survey focused on opening lines for specific situations, including bars, restaurants, supermarkets, laundromats, and beaches.

General Situations

Method

University students in California and Massachusetts (137 men, 163 women) listed all the opening lines they could think of that men might use to meet women. Opening lines were restricted to those that could be used in a variety of contexts and that were not specific to a particular situation. Most students listed between 5 and 10 opening lines. The 100 most often listed and most representative lines were placed on a rating form where each line could be evaluated on a 7-point scale (1, *terrible*, 2, *very poor*, 3, *poor*, 4, *average*, 5, *good*, 6, *very good*, 7, *excellent*).³ The rating form was completed by 600 (218 men, 382 women) university students and employees in California and Massachusetts. Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 35 years. Seventy-five percent were under 23 years of age and 90% were under age 27. Five percent were married. The rating form was always anonymous.

*Results*⁴

Factor Analysis. Factor analysis on the 100 opening lines identified three interpretable factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Five opening lines with highest loadings on each factor are listed in Table I. Opening lines comprising Factor 1 were labeled "cute-flippant." Opening lines comprising Fac-

³All opening lines listed by at least two people were included on the rating form. We chose an additional 23 lines listed by one person to bring the total to 100. In all other studies reported here, opening lines listed by at least two people were included on the rating form. Opening lines with the same meaning but different specifics (e.g., "Did you get that dress/blouse/skirt at Macy's/Sears/Penny's?") were combined into a general form.

⁴Data analysis was computed with SPSS (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). Factor analyses were computed with a principal components solution and varimax rotation. Separate factor analyses for men and women in Study 1 and in Study 2 indicated that factor structures for both sexes were equivalent. Factor analysis data are reported for men and women combined. Discriminant analyses were computed with a direct solution in which all factors were entered simultaneously. Statistical significance was computed with Wilks's lambda.

Table I. Opening Lines Used by Men for Meeting Women: 5 Opening Lines with Highest Loadings on Each Factor

General situations	
Cute-flippant Factor 1 (.22, .60) ^a	Isn't it cold? Let's make some body heat. (.78) ^b Your place or mine? (.71) Do you fool around? (.70) I've got an offer you can't refuse. (.69) I'm easy. Are you? (.69)
Innocuous approach Factor 2 (.11, .29)	Are you a student? (.66) Have you seen any good movies lately? (.64) Where are you from? (.64) I've seen you before. Do you live around here? (.62) Did you see (a particular movie)? (.62)
Direct approach Factor 3 (.05, .11)	I'm sort of shy, but I'd like to get to know you. (.59) You look like a warm person. (.58) Hi. I like you. (.57) Hi. You've made my day. (.56) You seem different. I like that. (.55)
Bars	
Cute-flippant Factor 1 (.21, .64)	Mind if I sit here or do you want to drown your sorrows alone? (.63) Since you're alone and I'm alone, why don't we sit together? (.58) You're probably wondering what a nice guy like me is doing in a place like this. (.58) It looks like I've located a reincarnated Helen of Troy. (.57) Can I pretend I'm with you? (.57)
Innocuous approach Factor 3 (.06, .15)	Are you having a good time? (.62) What do you think of the band? (.55) Good crowd tonight, don't you think? (.53) What are you drinking? (.52) How did you hear about this place? (.50)
Direct approach Factor 2 (.08, .22)	It's hot in here. Would you like to go outside for a while? (.74) This place is a drag. Would like to go for a walk? (.73) Do you need a ride home? (.70) I saw you on the dance floor and really liked the way you moved. (.45) Would you believe I've been watching you all night? (.43)
Restaurants	
Cute-flippant Factor 3 (.10, .18)	Do you think I deserve a break today? (.73) If this food doesn't kill us, the bill will. (.68) If you think the service is bad, wait until you taste the food. (.61) I bet the cherry jubilee isn't as sweet as you are. (.48) I just had to come over and see what you were eating. (.39)
Innocuous approach Factor 1 (.28, .61)	Have you tried the roast beef? (.76) What's good on the menu? (.72) How's the soup (salad, etc.)? (.69) Excuse me. I was considering ordering that dish you have. Do you recommend it? (.55) May I make a suggestion about what you should order? (.46)
Direct approach Factor 2 (.11, .21)	Can I buy you lunch? (.68) Would you like to have a drink after dinner? (.68) Since we're both eating alone, would you like to join me? (.55) Would you like to join me for coffee when you've finished your meal? (.54) Would you like to split a bottle of wine? (.52)
Supermarkets	
Cute-flippant	Let's share our food and cook dinner together. (.66)

Table I. Continued

Factor 1 (.27, .65)	Is your bread fresh? (.62) Would you like to trade shopping lists? (.62) Would you like to cook dinner together sometime? (.62) Are you a good cook? (.60)
Innocuous approach Factor 2 (.11, .24)	Aren't these prices terrible? (.67) What do you think of the prices? (.61) I can remember when a loaf of bread was only 30¢. (.58) Don't you hate standing in lines? (.52) Don't you wish you had a calculator? (.44)
Direct approach Factor 3 (.07, .11)	What is the best brand of laundry detergent? (.60) Can I help you to the car with those bags? (.56) Excuse me. Which steak looks better to you? (.55) Can you help me decide here? I'm a terrible shopper. (.53) You're buying some interesting things. You must be a gourmet. (.52)
Laundromats	
Cute-flippant Factor 2 (.15, .31)	Would you like to sit with me and watch the dryer spin? (.72) If washing clothes is such a problem I don't see why we bother wearing them. (.65) I'll wash your clothes if you wash mine. (.64) You look like you're having fun. Would you like to do my laundry too? (.63)
Innocuous approach Factor 1 (.27, .60)	I wash my clothes once a month whether they need it or not. (.59) Do you know how long these machines take? (.77) Would it be better to have these dry-cleaned? (.76) How much soap powder do you think I should use? (.75) Were you going to use this machine? (.65) Could you show me how to work this machine? (.60)
Direct approach Factor 3 (.06, .09)	Let me help you fold your clothes. (.63) Do you live alone or are you doing laundry for two? (.57) Want to share a dryer? (.52) It's nice to see a person so neat with her clothes. I wish I were that way. (.51) Did you get that (blouse, skirt, etc.) from Macy's? (.50)
Beaches	
Cute-flippant Factor 1 (.29, .68)	Want to stroke with me? (.69) Let me see your strapmarks. (.69) Will you save me if I drown? (.61) You have the most beautiful tan body I've ever seen. Rather than drool all over you let's quench my thirst over a drink at the bar. (.58)
Innocuous approach Factor 2 (.11, .23)	This sand looks nice. Can I lie down beside you? (.58) The water is beautiful today, isn't it? (.71) How's the water today? (.69) Could you watch my things for a minute? (.55) What radio station is that? (.52) This is a good day for rays. (.49)
Direct approach Factor 3 (.06, .09)	Do you want me to put some suntan lotion on your back? (.75) Do you want to go for a walk? (.71) Could you put this suntan lotion on my back? (.64) That's a nice bathing suit. (.55) I see you brought some crackers. I have some wine. Want to share? (.50)

^aExplained variance (before, after) varimax rotation.

^bFactor loading.

tor 2 were labeled "innocuous approach." Opening lines comprising Factor 3 were labeled "direct approach."

Most Preferred and Least Preferred Opening Lines. The five most preferred opening lines are listed in Table II and the five least preferred opening lines are listed in Table III. The most preferred lines were those that represented an innocuous or direct approach. The least preferred lines were cute-flippant.

Differences Between Men and Women. A discriminant analysis comparing factor scores of men and women on Factors 1, 2, and 3 was significant ($\chi^2(3) = 100, p < .0001$). Standardized discriminant function coefficients were .844 (cute-flippant), $-.645$ (innocuous approach), $-.009$ (direct approach).⁵ *F* tests comparing men and women on each factor are reported in Table IV. Women were significantly more unfavorable than men toward cute-flippant lines and significantly more favorable than men toward innocuous lines. Women did not differ in ratings of direct lines.

Age and Locality. There was no relationship between ratings of opening lines and respondents' ages or state in which they lived.

Specific Situations

Method

University students in California and Massachusetts (114 men, 136 women) listed all the opening lines they could think of that men might use to meet women in five specific situations: bars, restaurants, supermarkets, laundromats, and beaches. Most students listed between 5 and 10 opening lines for each situation. The most often listed opening lines were placed on the same 7-point rating scale described above. There were 42 opening lines for bars, 20 for restaurants, 27 for supermarkets, 27 for laundromats, and 32 for beaches. The rating form was completed by 431 (163 men, 268 women) university students and employees in California and Massachusetts. Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 37 years. Seventy-five percent were under 24 years of age and 90% were under age 28. Four percent were married.

Results

Factor Analysis. Factor analyses were conducted separately on opening lines for each situation. In each factor analysis, three interpretable fac-

⁵Because men = 1 and women = 0 in this and all other discriminant analyses, a positive discriminant-function coefficient indicates preference by men and a negative discriminant function coefficient indicates preference by women.

Table II. Opening Lines Used by Men for Meeting Women: 5 Most Preferred Opening Lines in Each Situation

	% respondents rating line as good to excellent	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Type of line ^a
General situations			
Hi.	60.0	5.09 (1.50)	IA (.41)
Hi. My name is	59.1	4.86 (1.35)	IA (.46)
I feel a little embarrassed about this, but I'd like to meet you	56.4	4.66 (1.57)	DA (.48)
That's a very pretty (sweater, dress, etc.) you have on.	51.8	4.47 (1.17)	DA (.39)
You have really nice (hair, eyes, etc.).	50.4	4.44 (1.32)	DA (.55)
Bars			
Do you want to dance?	63.6	4.95 (1.15)	IA (.42)
It took a lot of nerve to approach you, so can I at least ask what your name is?	52.2	4.40 (1.59)	CF (.31)
What do you think of the band?	49.9	4.51 (1.04)	IA (.55)
Can I have a drink with you	46.9	4.47 (1.23)	IA (.38)
Can I buy you a drink?	45.9	4.47 (1.27)	IA (.37)
Restaurants			
I haven't been here before. What's good on the menu?	58.2	4.75 (1.11)	IA (.70)
Would you like to have a drink after dinner?	55.0	4.59 (1.27)	DA (.68)
Can I buy you lunch?	51.7	4.53 (1.32)	DA (.68)
Would you like to join me for coffee when you've finished your meal?	51.3	4.53 (1.31)	DA (.54)
Since we're both eating alone, would you like to join me?	50.6	4.49 (1.27)	DA (.55)
Supermarkets			
Can I help you to the car with those bags?	60.8	4.79 (1.30)	DA (.56)
Excuse me. Which steak looks better to you?	40.1	4.28 (1.18)	DA (.55)
Can you help me decide here? I'm a terrible shopper.	39.7	4.04 (1.33)	DA (.53)
How do you tell a good melon?	36.9	4.10 (1.34)	DA (.48)
You're buying some interesting things. You must be a gourmet.	36.7	4.07 (1.27)	DA (.52)
Laundromats			
Want to go have a beer or cup of coffee while we're waiting?	56.6	4.49 (1.41)	DA (.34)
Could you show me how to work this machine?	40.4	4.25 (1.25)	IA (.60)

Table II. Continued

It's nice to see a person so neat with her clothes. I wish I were that way.	37.8	4.03	
Do you have change for a dollar?	33.4	4.31	DA (.50)
		(1.18)	IA (.54)
Would you watch my clothes for a minute?	33.4	4.16	
		(1.17)	IA (.45)
Beaches			
Want to play frisbee?	67.7	4.93	
		(1.07)	IA (.45) ^b
Can I bring you anything from the store?	55.7	4.61	
		(1.20)	IA (.40) ^c
The water is beautiful today, isn't it?	49.9	4.58	
		(1.19)	IA (.71)
How's the water today?	49.2	4.62	
		(0.98)	IA (.69)
That's a nice bathing suit.	45.9	4.35	
		(1.29)	DA (.55)

^aCute-flippant (CF), innocuous approach (IA), direct approach (DA). Factor loadings in parentheses.

^bThis line also loaded as DA (.44).

^cThis line also loaded as DA (.39).

tors with eigenvalues greater than one were identified. Opening lines with highest loadings on these factors could be consistently classified as cute-flippant, innocuous approach, and direct approach (see Table I).

Most Preferred and Least Preferred Opening Lines. The 5 most preferred opening lines for each situation are listed in Table II and the 5 least preferred opening lines for each situation are listed in Table III. The most preferred opening lines used an innocuous or direct approach. The least preferred lines were cute-flippant.

Differences Between Men and Women. Discriminant analyses were computed for each situation comparing factor scores of men and women on the respective three factors. For bars, $\chi^2(3) = 117$, $p < .0001$; standardized discriminant function coefficients = $-.117$ (cute-flippant), $.689$ (innocuous), $-.844$ (direct). For restaurants, $\chi^2(3) = 10.1$, $p < .018$; $-.332$ (cute-flippant), $.960$ (innocuous), $-.113$ (direct). For supermarkets, $\chi^2(3) = 17.1$, $p < .0007$; $.865$ (cute-flippant), $-.511$ (innocuous), $-.122$ (direct). For laundromats, $\chi^2(3) = 23.6$, $p < .0001$; $-.627$ (cute-flippant), $.425$ (innocuous), $-.561$ (direct). For beaches, $\chi^2(3) = 37.2$, $p < .0001$; $.597$ (cute-flippant), $-.648$ (innocuous), $.501$ (direct). *F* tests comparing men and women on each factor are reported in Table IV. Women were significantly

Table III. Opening Lines Used by Men for Meeting Women: 5 Least Preferred Opening Lines in Each Situation

	% respondents rating line as poor to terrible	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Type of line ^a
General situations			
Is that really your hair?	89.0	1.93 (1.22)	CF (.40)
You remind me of a woman I used to date.	86.8	2.13 (1.17)	CF (.39)
Your place or mine?	85.2	2.25 (1.35)	CF (.71)
I'm easy. Are you?	83.7	2.09 (1.49)	CF (.69)
Isn't it cold? Let's make some body heat.	81.4	2.31 (1.48)	CF (.69)
Bars			
(Looking at woman's jewelry) Wow, its looks like you just robbed Woolworth's.	89.6	1.75 (1.35)	CF (.40)
Bet I can outdrink you.	89.3	1.94 (1.34)	CF (.34)
I play the field and I think I just hit a home run with you.	84.7	2.11 (1.34)	CF (.53)
Look, I'll get to the point. Do you want to get picked up?	82.6	2.10 (1.74)	DA (.34)
You're probably wondering what a nice guy like me is doing in a place like this.	79.8	2.44 (1.43)	CF (.58)
Restaurants			
Do you think I deserve a break today?	72.2	2.76 (1.45)	CF (.73)
I bet the cherry jubilee isn't as sweet as you are.	71.7	2.77 (1.57)	CF (.48)
If this food doesn't kill us, the bill will.	68.7	2.83 (1.51)	CF (.68)
I just had to come over and see what you were eating.	68.3	3.06 (1.26)	CF (.39)
If you think the service is bad, wait until you taste the food	63.8	3.09 (1.40)	CF (.61)
Supermarkets			
Do you really eat that junk?	89.6	1.98 (1.28)	CF (.59)
You shouldn't buy that. It's full of cholesterol	79.1	2.47 (1.36)	CF (.51)
Is your bread fresh?	70.9	2.74 (1.33)	CF (.62)
Would you like to trade shopping lists?	68.2	2.96 (1.53)	CF (.62)
Let's share our food and cook dinner together	64.5	2.98 (1.58)	CF (.66)

Table III. Continued

Laundromats			
A man shouldn't have to wash his own clothes.	83.5	2.27 (1.47)	DA (.34)
Those are some nice undies you have there.	81.7	2.15 (1.63)	CF (.58)
I'll wash your clothes if you wash mine.	76.3	2.55 (1.57)	CF (.64)
I wash my clothes once a month whether they need it or not.	73.1	2.55 (1.69)	CF (.59)
Would you like to sit with me and watch the dryer spin?	68.2	2.82 (1.66)	CF (.72)
Beaches			
Did you notice me throwing that football? Good arm, huh?	88.2	1.99 (1.23)	CF (.57)
Let me see your strapmarks.	86.8	2.12 (1.44)	CF (.69)
Want to stroke with me?	77.7	2.45 (1.59)	CF (.60)
(In the water) Help, I'm drowning!	74.7	2.52 (1.55)	CF (.50)
You have the most beautiful tan body I've ever seen. Rather than drool all over you let's quench my thirst over a drink at the bar.	74.5	2.54 (1.69)	CF (.58)

^aCute-flippant (CF), innocuous approach (IA), direct approach (DA). Factor loadings in parentheses.

more unfavorable than men toward cute-flippant opening lines for supermarkets, laundromats, and beaches. Women were also significantly more unfavorable than men toward direct lines for bars, laundromats, and beaches. Women had significantly more preference for innocuous lines in all situations.

Age and Locality. There was no relationship between ratings of opening lines and respondents' ages or state in which they lived.

STUDY 2: OPENING LINES USED BY WOMEN FOR MEETING MEN

Method

University students in California and Massachusetts (93 men, 112 women) listed all the opening lines they could think of that women might use for meeting men. Opening lines were restricted to those that could be used in a variety of contexts. Most students listed between 5 and 10 opening lines. The 59 most often listed opening lines were placed on the same 7-point

Table IV. Opening Lines Used by Men for Meeting Women: Differences in Ratings by Men and Women

	<i>M</i> ^a Men	<i>M</i> Women	<i>F</i> ^b	<i>p</i>	Significant preference by men or women
Cute-flippant					
General situations	3.03	2.59	64.4	.0001	Men
Bars	2.90	2.68	2.39	n.s.	
Restaurants	2.94	2.88	.91	n.s.	
Supermarkets	3.18	2.93	12.4	.0005	Men
Laundromats	3.09	2.62	13.6	.0003	Men
Beaches	3.17	2.84	15.4	.0001	Men
Direct approach					
General situations	3.86	3.93	.15	n.s.	
Bars	3.34	2.77	72.0	.0001	Men
Restaurants	4.47	4.41	.01	n.s.	
Laundromats	3.59	3.29	8.90	.003	Men
Beaches	4.17	3.88	9.75	.002	Men
Innocuous approach					
General situations	3.88	4.08	32.5	.0001	Women
Bars	4.08	4.33	38.6	.0001	Women
Restaurants	3.83	4.01	8.97	.003	Women
Supermarkets	3.59	3.72	4.44	.036	Women
Laundromats	3.96	4.01	3.38	.067	Women
Beaches	4.06	4.15	13.1	.0003	Women

^aCombined mean scores for rating form items comprising each factor.

^bUnivariate *F* tests from discriminant analysis. For General situations, *df* = 1, 598. For all other situations, *df* = 1, 429.

rating scale used in Study 1. The rating scale was completed by 831 (429 men, 402 women) university students and employees in California and Massachusetts. Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 40 years. Seventy-five percent were under 22 years of age and 90% were under age 26. Four percent were married.

Results

Factor Analysis. Factor analysis identified three interpretable factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Opening lines could be classified into the same categories found in Study 1: cute-flippant, innocuous approach, and direct approach. Five opening lines with highest loadings on each factor are listed in Table V.

Most Preferred and Least Preferred Opening Lines. The 5 most preferred and 5 least preferred opening lines are listed in Table VI. Greatest preference was given to opening lines that represented an innocuous or direct approach. Respondents expressed least preference for opening lines that were cute-flippant.

Table V. Opening Lines Used by Women for Meeting Men: 5 Opening Lines with Highest Loadings on Each Factor

Cute-flippant, Factor 1 (.21, .59) ^a
Your place or mine? (.76) ^b
Hey baby, you've got a gorgeous chassis. Mind if I look under the hood? (.76)
Hi big boy. Why don't you come over and see me some time? (.76)
I'm easy. Are you? (.73)
I've got an offer you can't refuse. (.72)
Innocuous approach, Factor 2 (.11, .30)
Could you tell me what time it is? (.66)
May I borrow your pen? (.63)
Can you give me directions to (anywhere)? (.61)
Do you work at ? (.55)
You look really familiar. (.53)
Direct approach, Factor 3 (.05, .11)
I don't have anybody to introduce me, but I'd really like to get to know you. (.71)
I'd like to meet you and I don't know how to do it except to say "hi." (.68)
Hi. I'm kind of shy but I'd like to get to know you. (.66)
I just had to say "hi." I didn't want to go on not knowing you. (.58)
You seem different. I like that. (.44)

^aExplained variance (before, after) varimax rotation.

^bFactor loading.

Differences Between Men and Women. A discriminant analysis comparing factor scores of men and women on Factors 1, 2, and 3 was significant ($\chi^2(3) = 196, p < .0001$). Standardized discriminant function coefficients were .618 (cute-flippant), $-.218$ (innocuous) .537 (direct). *F* tests comparing men and women on each factor are shown in Table VII. Men were significantly more favorable than women toward cute-flippant and direct opening lines, and they were significantly less favorable than women toward innocuous lines.

Age and Locality. There was no relationship between ratings of opening lines and respondents' ages or state in which they lived.

DISCUSSION

We recently surveyed 200 college students and found greater than 90% agreement that is equally appropriate for women to approach men as it is for men to approach women (Kleinke & Meeker, Note 2). The present research is consistent with this survey because opening lines for women were evaluated as favorably as opening lines for men. Men and women agreed that cute-flippant opening lines are least desirable, and that innocuous and direct opening lines are most desirable. Within this general consensus, there was a con-

Table VI. Opening Lines Used by Women for Meeting Men: 5 Most Preferred and Least Preferred Opening Lines

Most preferred opening lines	% respondents rating line as good to excellent	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Type of line ^a
Since we're both sitting alone, would you care to join me?	71.6	5.06 (1.23)	DA (.58)
Hi.	58.9	4.83 (1.45)	IA (.40)
I'm having trouble getting my car started. Will You give me a hand?	57.1	4.68 (1.23)	IA (.53)
I don't have anybody to introduce me, but I'd really like to get to know you.	54.6	4.49 (1.46)	DA (.71)
Can you give me directions to (anywhere)?	47.8	4.44 (1.29)	IA (.36)

Least preferred opening lines	% respondents rating line as poor to terrible	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Type of line
Didn't we meet in a previous life	81.3	2.27 (1.44)	CF (.55)
It's been a long time since I had a boyfriend.	81.6	2.28 (1.28)	CF (.56)
Hey baby, you've got a gorgeous chasis. Mind if I look under the hood	79.5	2.32 (1.59)	CF (.76)
I'm easy. Are you?	79.2	2.33 (1.81)	CF (.73)
What's your sign?	78.8	2.38 (1.34)	CF (.42)

^aCute-flippant (CF), innocuous approach (IA), direct approach (DA). Factor loadings in parentheses.

sistent tendency for women to dislike cute-flippant opening lines more than men and to prefer innocuous opening lines more than men. Men tended to favor direct opening lines that were the most assertive. These findings support expectations from research on sex role socialization that men prefer a more direct and aggressive approach toward social encounters while women

Table VII. Opening Lines Used by Women for Meeting Men: Differences in Ratings by Men and Women

	<i>M</i> ^a Men	<i>M</i> Women	<i>F</i> ^b	<i>p</i>	Significant preference by men or women
Cute-flippant	3.21	2.35	171.0	.0001	Men
Innocuous approach	4.21	4.40	3.66	.05	Women
Direct approach	4.69	3.87	143.0	.0001	Men

^aCombined mean scores for rating form items comprising each factor.

^bUnivariate *F* tests from discriminate analysis with *df* = 1, 829.

are inclined toward approaches that are nonthreatening and benign (Macoby & Jacklin, 1974). The lesson from our results is that men are best advised to avoid "coming on too strongly" when using opening lines for meeting women. Women face a special challenge because a man appears to require a direct approach to "get the message" that a woman is interested in meeting him. However, women who are direct tread a fine line because they may be falsely viewed as seductive or promiscuous (Abbey, 1982). The present research suggests no basis for recommending opening lines that are cute-flippant.

Why, then, do many men (and some women) persist in using cute-flippant opening lines? There are three good reasons: fear of rejection, intermittent reinforcement, and lack of social skills. People can protect themselves from rejection with cute-flippant opening lines by denying their loneliness and desire for a relationship (Greene, 1980). Unfortunately, while guarding their egos, they are likely to lose the person they wish to meet. In this light, it is useful to consider that an innocuous approach can protect against rejection because the line user can pretend the innocuous statement was meant literally rather than as a communication of social attraction. The advantage of innocuous opening lines is that they offer a less threatening context for the recipient's response. Cute-flippant opening lines are also reinforced by popular books and magazines that stimulate our fantasies with stories overplaying the number of "successful pickups" that actually occur in real life. Although these fantasies exist more in people's words than in their actions, they may be experienced on rare occasions. We found a small minority of women who gave favorable evaluations to men's cute-flippant opening lines. For example, "Your place or mine?" was rated as "very good" by 11 women and as "excellent" by 1 woman. "I'm easy. Are you?" was rated as "very good" by 17 women and as "excellent" by 2 women.⁶ Unfortunately, we have not determined any method for identifying those women who apparently provide the intermittent reinforcement perpetuating the myth that men in general can be successful with the "macho" approach.⁷ Pending identification of women who prefer cute-flippant opening lines, we recommend their use only for men who are gamblers.

The present data on opening lines have a useful application in social skills training (Bellack & Hersen, 1979; Curran, 1977). People can be taught to appreciate the value of opening lines for expanding their social networks. They can practice using and responding to opening lines, and they can learn

⁶A larger minority of men were favorable toward women's cute-flippant opening lines. "I'm easy. Are you?" was rated as "excellent" by 47 men. "Hey baby, you've got a gorgeous chasis. Mind if I look under the hood?" was rated as "excellent" by 22 men.

⁷The macho scale might prove useful for this purpose (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

strategies for coping with rejection (Kleinke, Note 1). They can also learn to incorporate opening lines into their repertoire of skills for presenting themselves successfully and making a good first impression (Kleinke, 1975, 1986; Schlenker, 1980).

On a more theoretical level, it will be interesting to learn how perceptions of people who use various types of opening lines are influenced by personal characteristics such as physical attractiveness and dress, and nonverbal behaviors such as physical closeness, posture, and eye contact (Kleinke, 1975, 1986; Knapp, 1978). Perceptions of someone who uses an opening line will also be moderated by the response of the recipient. Staneski, Kleinke, and Meeker (1977) found, for example, that evaluations of job interviewees differed according to how they were treated by the interviewer. It is likely that a person using a cute-flippant opening line will be evaluated more favorably when the opening line results in a positive rather than a negative response. Responses to opening lines can also be studied within the framework of research on perceptions of success and failure (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971). Finally, it will be important to learn more about the kinds of people who are "open" to the use of opening lines for expanding their social networks. We invite you to participate in field research on this question.

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