

Study examines beliefs about who should pay for dates

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Chapman University's David Frederick will present new research at the 108th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association that examines men's and women's beliefs about who should pay for dates during courtship, and how couples actually go about splitting expenses. The paper, "Who Pays for Dates? Following versus Challenging Conventional Gender Norms," contains survey data from more than 17,000 participants; a quarter of whom also provided written commentaries to explain their beliefs and actions regarding paying for dates.

"The motivation for the study was to understand why some gendered practices are more resistant to change than others; for example, the acceptance of [women](#) in the workplace versus holding onto traditional notions of chivalry," said Frederick, who co-authored the study with Janet Lever, of California State University, Los Angeles, and Rosanna Hertz, of Wellesley College.

Conventional notions of chivalry dictate that on a "date," the man pays, whereas egalitarian ideals suggest gender should not determine who pays for the entertainment expenses. This research examines the extent to which people embrace or reject these competing notions after nearly 50 years of [feminism](#). It is known that most marriages (8 in 10) today are based on sharing the breadwinner's burden, so one question was whether that role is shared prior to marriage and, if so, how early in the [dating](#) process.

Consistent with conventional norms, most men (84 percent) and women (58 percent) reported that men pay for most expenses, even after dating for a while. Over half (57 percent) of women claim they offer to help pay, but many women (39 percent) confessed they hope men would reject their offers to pay, and 44 percent of women were bothered when men expected women to help pay. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of men believed that women should contribute to dating expenses, and many feel strongly about that: Nearly half of men (44 percent) said they would stop dating a woman who never pays. A large majority of men (76 percent), however, reported feeling guilty accepting women's money.

In terms of behavior, even if men are paying a larger proportion of expenses, 4 in 10 men and women agreed that dating expenses were at least partially shared within the first month, and roughly three-fourths (74 percent of men, 83 percent of women) reported some sharing of expenses by six months. These data illustrate which people are resisting or conforming to conventional [gender norms](#) in one telling aspect of dating that historically was related to the male's displaying benevolent sexism and dominance as a breadwinner. Whereas young men and women in their 20s were the most likely to endorse egalitarian practices, this is a mass culture phenomenon—the same basic patterns were seen regardless of daters' ages, income, or education. Although there is evidence of resistance to change, the data suggest that the deep-rooted [courtship](#) ritual around who pays is also changing along with the transformation of the relative material and social power of women and [men](#).

Provided by American Sociological Association

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