The Promise and Peril of “Hook Up Culture”

Lisa Wade, PhD
Occidental College
Sociological Images

Featuring leaf art by Jenny Lee Fowler
College?
Questions

• Are you hooking up?
Questions

• Are you hooking up?
• And if you are, so what?
THEN
THEN

Kissing, groping, naked groping, intercourse, oral sex
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Kissing, groping, naked groping, **oral sex**, intercourse
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Kissing, groping, naked groping, intercourse, oral sex

NOW
Kissing, groping, oral sex, naked groping, intercourse
England et al. 2008
Rates of Hooking Up

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• ~15% of will hook up 10 times or more.
College?

(Perhaps unfortunately) not.
Dissatisfaction
Pleasure
Meaningful
Empowerment
“…a lot of boys… feel that it is necessary to drink hardcore and when they are drunk they try to push you into engaging in sex…”
“Even nice guys feel pressured into having sex and thus pressure women into having sex with them...”
“...so I was making out with Mark while Mitch was touching me, in order to distract them so they wouldn’t touch her when she was feeling so vulnerable. I wasn’t attracted to Mitch, but was too wasted to say no when he pulled off my pants... I couldn’t keep both guys busy for long, though, but because Mark and April had hooked up before, I let him kiss and touch her. Mitch had pulled me onto the floor and he was fucking me at this point.”
“…the night overall wasn’t bad.”
Pleasure
“I was just a warm body being used to make a guy have an orgasm.”
“I felt like a sex toy with three holes and two hands.”
“My sexuality was filled with anxiety and my need to please the guy instead of worrying about my own pleasure.”
“...even if I was in charge I did not make sure I was being pleased.”
“...the guy kind of expects to get off, while the girl doesn’t expect anything...”
England et al. 2008

Orgasm Rate in Hookups
Includes all hookups (irrespective of "how far" they went)

- Male: 44%
- Female: 19%
Meaningful
“At first I felt free and life seemed to be so great. When my experiences became more intimate, however, I found that I actually had a lower sex drive than I did in high school. Even oral sex seemed to just not be right deep down inside, even though on the surface it was extremely pleasurable.”
“…some sort of sentiment would be nice… like, you make me feel optimistic or you make me feel alive or you make me feel safe. Or you inspire me.”
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FRIENDS
with benefits!
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with benefits!
“…a sober hook up indicates one that is more serious, which either no one is interested in or no one is brave enough to admit they want.”
“Even if both partners feel attracted to each other, not physically but emotionally, they do not tell each other that.”
“None of the guys here want to be my friend… just a girl that they can have a one-night stand with… After they do that, they don’t care… [They] could care less about what I do with my life or if I ever see them again. Many times afterward the guy will not say hello or even acknowledge my presence.”
“You could have labeled it friends with benefits...
“You could have labeled it with benefits...
...without the friendship maybe?”
• 11% of students loved hooking up
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• 38% “opted out” of sex altogether
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• 50% were ambivalent about it
• 38% “opted out” of sex altogether
• <1% were in relationships
Cultural Dominance
“...for me, this casual sex has been life-changing. It’s amazing to finally have that desire. I’ve wanted for five years now to desire to have sex, to enjoy sex... Now I can finally have those things and it is truly liberating.”
“...every experience that I have had with these guys has taught me more about who I am and what type of role sex has in my life. I am no longer afraid to give into my desires, but I am also aware of what I feel is right and wrong.”
“I wouldn’t mind having a boyfriend again, but it’s a lot of work. Right now with [my major] and everything... I wouldn’t have time even to see him.”
“…the definitive of sexual relations between college students.”
hooking up
“I see many of my friends sleep with one guy and then another without having any emotions attached and… I honestly admire them because I just cannot do that.”
hooking up relationships
Pluralistic ignorance: a condition in which a large proportion of a population misunderstands reality.
hooking up
relationships
same sex exploration
hooking up
relationships
same sex exploration
abstinence
“It is much harder to stick to my high morals of remaining pure here… I find myself in conflict with myself… Always having to internally fight the desire to do sexual things with girls is not easy… The carefree atmosphere really has hit me… I feel more free and unbounded, but at the same time, guilt beyond imagination.”
hooking up
relationships
same sex exploration
abstinence
feminist sex
hooking up relationships same sex exploration abstinence feminist sex other?
hooking up relationships same sex exploration abstinence feminist sex other?
Hook up or shut up.
Is this sexual liberation?
Is this sexual liberation

Of course not.
hooking up
relationships
same sex exploration
abstinence
feminist sex
other?
Ignite

For the King

Pan-Orthodox Organization

Latter-Day Saint Student Assoc.

Muslim Association and Allies

Ignite
Education Society
Delta Iota Chi
Lute Nation
Harmony
I <3 FEMINISM

Feminist Student Union
Sexual Assault Prevention
Education Team

Men as Partners Promoting Equality

STOP RAPE
History Club
Anthropology Club
Chinese Cultural Club
International Student Club
Hawaii Club
The Mark
The Mooring Mast
Alpha Psi Omega
Marketing Club
Anime Club
PLU Democrats
Food Club
YOU
Questions?

Lisa Wade, PhD
www.lisa-wade.com
@lisadwade

• Credits
  – Quantitative data from Paula England’s multi-college study
  – Caroline Heldman, PhD
  – Leaf silhouettes by Jenny Lee Fowler
  – Other artwork and photography by:
    • Deeker
    • The Double Rainbow Guy
    • Tiziano Vecellio
    • Thelma Stanford
    • Rainn