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What is Hooking Up? Examining Definitions of Hooking Up in Relation to Behavior and Normative Perceptions

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Abstract

Research has demonstrated ambiguity about the definition of hooking up among college students. The current research examined whether there were multiple hooking up definitions among college students and how different definitions might be associated with participant's own hooking up behavior and normative perceptions of peer hooking up behavior. A random sample ($N = 1,468$) of undergraduates (56.4% female) completed a Web-based survey that was comprised of measures of drinking and sexual behavior. Open-ended definitions of hooking up were content coded and analyzed using a mixture model to explore discrete definitions of hooking up among college students. Findings indicated three clusters of student definitions of hooking up. Cluster 1 had the broadest definition, referring to sex in general, not specific sexual acts, and to making out. Cluster 2 placed an emphasis on interpersonal and social aspects. Cluster 3 defined hooking up as sex with notable references to specific sexual acts. Results further indicated that hooking up behavior and normative perceptions differentiated these three groups of definitions. Clinical implications regarding the inconsistency of student definitions of hooking up and how they may impact negative consequences associated with hooking up are discussed.

Keywords

sexual behavior; casual sex; hooking up; normative perceptions; social norms; college students

INTRODUCTION

While the phenomenon of casual sex among college students has been well studied, recent years has shown an increase in publications focusing on sexual hookups on college campuses (e.g., Barriger & Vélez--Blasini, 2011; Fielder & Carey, 2010a, 2010b; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Holman & Sillars, 2011; Lewis, Granato, Blayney, Lostutter, & Kilmer, 2012; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Owen, Fincham, & More, 2011; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Stinson, 2010; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Hooking up may be a developmentally normative behavior (Stinson, 2010) that results in positive sexual experiences for individuals; however, emerging research on hooking up has demonstrated that it is prevalent and potentially problematic. For instance, hooking up rates in college have been found to be to be high, between 77% and 85% (e.g., Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Moreover, nearly half of men and one third of women report engaging in sexual intercourse during hookups (Paul et al., 2000). Additional research has shown that hooking up is sometimes associated with

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emotional, social, and physical consequences, such as experiencing a loss of respect, depression, embarrassment, difficulties in a relationship with a steady partner, unwanted pregnancy, contracting a sexually transmitted infection, and sexual regret in women (e.g., Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; 2010b; Grello et al., 2006; Lewis et al., 2012; Owen et al., 2010, 2011; Paul et al., 2000; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). In spite of this growing base of research, there is still considerable ambiguity about the definition of hooking up among college students. The current research explored whether there were multiple hooking up definitions among college students. Furthermore, this study examined how different definitions might be associated with participant's own hooking up experiences and normative perceptions of peer hooking up behavior.

How is hooking up defined?

While recent research has shown that college students who hookup can sometimes experience a variety of negative consequences (e.g., Lewis et al., 2012), research has also demonstrated the inconsistency in how hooking up is defined (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2011). Although there are various definitions used in the hooking up literature, generally researchers agree that hooking up involves casual sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to intercourse with a partner in which there is no current relationship commitment and no expected future relationship commitment. However, qualitative research has shown that key aspects of how college students define hooking up are not consistent (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2011). In particular, college students differ greatly in their use of the term when referring to the sexual behaviors that occurred during the hookup. For example, in an attempt to classify hooking up, Bogel (2008) noted that “some students...feel that ‘hooking up’ generally refers to ‘having sex’; however, many others indicated that when they say ‘hooking up’ they are referring to something less than intercourse. To some it means ‘just kissing’ or ‘making out’...’fooling around’ beyond kissing, which includes sexual touching on or underneath clothing. Still others suggested that hooking up means ‘everything but’ intercourse.” Qualitative research by Holman and Sillars (2011) has shown that about half of college students define hooking up as involving sex whereas 9% described hooking up as not involving sex.

Additional qualitative research conducted by Paul and Hayes (2002) examined student descriptions of their typical hookup as well as their best and worst hookup experience. For this study, students responded to a series of questions (e.g., who is involved, what sexual behaviors happened) that prompted students to describe their hooking up experiences. The authors reported high consistency in students’ definitions of typical hookups and concluded that there was a shared cultural meaning for hooking up. Furthermore, no significant sex differences were found. Although the authors did not find high variability in the typical hookup experience, they prompted students with a specific series of questions. The semi-structured interviewing format used by Paul and Hayes may have constrained the responses that students gave in important ways. Hence, it may be that student definitions of hooking up may indeed be quite variable, as prior research suggests (i.e., Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2011).

What influences one's definition of hooking up?

While some qualitative research has documented the variability of the use of the term hooking up among college students (e.g., Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2011) and quantitative research has shown how prevalent and problematic hooking up is in this population (e.g., Barriger & Vélez--Blasini, 2011; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010a, 2010b; Grello et al., 2006; Holman & Sillars, 2012; Owen et al., 2010; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Owen et al., 2011; Paul & Hayes, 2002), research has yet to combine qualitative work on defining hooking up with quantitative research on behavior and

perceptions. Specifically, how do college students determine their own definition of hooking up – i.e., from past hooking up experiences or normative perceptions of peer hooking up experiences?

The decision to engage in a health or risk behavior is often made within the context of how much others engage or do not engage in the health or risk behavior. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1969; 1977) and later extended to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), people's acquisition and maintenance of behaviors can occur, in part, through observation of others or by communication with others. Vicarious learning (e.g., seeing or hearing of someone else reinforced) or modeling of a behavior will also increase the likelihood of the behavior. Previous research has shown that descriptive normative perceptions for sexual behavior (i.e., perceived prevalence of sexual behaviors among typical students) are positively associated with the engagement of sexual behaviors among college students (e.g., Lewis, Lee, Patrick, & Fossos, 2007; Martens et al., 2006). However, studies examining descriptive normative perceptions specific to hooking up have documented inconsistent findings. Some studies have not found that descriptive normative perceptions are significant predictors of hooking up sexual behavior (Fielder & Carey, 2010b) whereas other studies have found descriptive normative perceptions to be predictive of less intimate hooking up behavior (e.g., kissing; Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2011). While research has shown how normative perceptions relate to engaging in sexual behavior (Lewis et al., 2007; Martens et al., 2006), research has yet to examine how both normative perceptions and behavior relate to one's own definition of hooking up. Understanding how college students define hooking up can not only inform the development and evaluation of preventative interventions aimed to reduce risky sexual behavior among college students, it can also help inform how we conduct research in this area. Clarifying definitions will help ensure that research on hooking up is studying the same behavioral phenomena. Furthermore, examining definitions of hooking up in relation to normative perceptions and behavior may provide important information as to how these definitions are determined, either from personal hooking up experiences or from normative perceptions.

The Present Study

The purpose of the present research was to examine student definitions of hooking up in an open-ended format to see how students generally defined the behavior(s). We wanted to explore whether there was evidence for multiple definitions of hooking up, which would imply ambiguity overall about what is meant by the term. A second aim of the present research was to examine whether differing definitions of hooking up might be related to one's own experience or perceptions of hooking up behavior among peers. Based on research that has shown variation in student definitions of hooking up, we expected multiple clusters of hooking up definitions. Finally, we expected hooking up behavior and normative perceptions to differentiate definition clusters.

METHOD

Participants

Participants ($N = 3,224$) were a random sample of undergraduate college students from a large university in the Pacific Northwest who were 18-to-25-years-old. Participant names and contact information were acquired from the University's Registrar Office for those students who were registered for Fall Quarter. This random sample of students ($N = 3,224$) was then invited via mail and e-mail to participate in a 20-minute Web-based survey. A total of 1,468 (56.5% female) students participated in the study, with most students (94.5%) completing the online survey. Recruitment rates for this study were comparable to other large scale studies in the college student population (e.g., Marlatt et al., 1998; McCabe,

Boyd, Couper, Crawford, & D'Arcy, 2002). Descriptive characteristics of study participants are presented in Table 1. Ethnicity of the sample was 61.0% Caucasian, 23.2% Asian, 9.4% multiracial, and 6.4% other. A small proportion of the sample identified as Hispanic (5.6%). Ethnicity of the study sample was comparable to the ethnicity of the undergraduate population for the campus. The mean age for participants was 19.9 years ($SD = 1.52$). The majority of students (63.1%) reported not currently being in a monogamous relationship and 94.4% identified as heterosexual. The majority of the sample was sexually experienced, with 68% of participants reporting having sex at least once in their lifetime and 58% of participants reporting having ever hooked up (according to our provided definition, see below).

Procedures

All procedures were approved by the university's institutional review board. Furthermore, a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality was obtained for this research. After providing consent online, students completed a 20-minute Web-based screening survey for a larger study on sexual behavior and alcohol use. Upon completion of the survey, participants were mailed a \$10 check.

Measures

Hooking Up Open-Ended Definitions—Participants were asked to define the term 'hooking up' in their own words by responding to the following instructions: We are interested in what [university name] students think about hooking up. Please tell us in your own words what hooking up means to you. Under the instructions, participants were presented a space to type in their definitions.

Hooking Up Frequency—After students provided their own definition of hooking up, the common definition used in hooking up research was provided for them for all remaining hooking up items. Hooking up was defined as an "event where you were physically intimate (any of the following: kissing, touching, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex) with someone whom you were not dating or in a romantic relationship with at the time and in which you understood there was no mutual expectation of a romantic commitment." To assess hooking up frequency, participants were asked, "How many times have you hooked up with someone in the past three months?"

Normative Perceptions of Hooking Up Frequency—Normative perceptions of hooking up frequency for same-sex student peers were assessed by the following question, "How many times has the typical male/female [university name] student hooked up with someone in the past three months?"

Number of Hookup Partners—Participants were asked to report how many hookup partners they had in the past three months with the following question, "How many partners have you hooked up with in the past three months?"

Perception of Number of Hookup Partners—Normative perceptions of number of hookup partners for same-sex students were assessed with the following item, "How many partners has the typical male/female [university name] student hooked up with in the past three months?"

Typical Hookup Behaviors—Participants reported their typical hooking up behaviors. Participants were asked, "In general, when you and a partner hookup, do you: kiss, touching each other's bodies, have oral sex, have vaginal sex, have anal sex." Response options were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

Perception of Typical Hookup Behaviors—Participants reported their normative perceptions for the typical same-sex student's typical hooking up behaviors. Participants were asked, “In general, when the typical [university name] male/female student and a partner hookup, do they: kiss, touching each other's bodies, have oral sex, have vaginal sex, have anal sex.” Response options were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

Coding of Open-ended Hooking up Definitions

We employed a quasi-statistical coding mechanism (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). The goal in coding the open-ended definitions was to identify distinct content via a set of binary codes (i.e., present, not present). Codes were not mutually exclusive, and in theory, any given definition could have all codes present in its content or none. A tentative list of codes was developed by the first, second, and fifth authors based on our research questions and hypotheses. The third and fourth authors then coded the first 10% of the responses using this codebook. Based on these initial reviews and on a discussion process between the first author and the two coders, we developed a final coding book by condensing similar or redundant codes and using a system of open codes that incorporated new themes as they emerged from the test. The two coders then coded the remaining responses. Each discrepancy between the two coders was discussed among the team until each discrepancy was adjudicated. A third coder then coded 25% of the responses with the final codebook. The inter-rater reliability of the coding system for the first two coders and the third coder was assessed using Cohen's kappa scores (Cohen, 1960). Descriptions and kappas for each theme are presented in Table 2. The average kappa score was 0.87, which Landis and Koch (1977) describe as an outstanding level of inter-rater reliability. As a rule of thumb values of Kappa from 0.41 to 0.60 are considered moderate, 0.61 to 0.80 substantial, and 0.81 outstanding (Landis & Koch, 1977). Finally, every discrepancy among the coding team was adjudicated, resulting in a final data set.

Data Analyses

There were two phases to the data analyses. First, we were interested to know whether the qualitative coding described above might indicate the presence of discrete, underlying definitions of hooking up. That is, given the open-ended responses and coding, do definitions cluster into two or more groups? To examine this, we used a finite mixture model (McLachlan & Peel, 2000). Mixture models are one approach to clustering data and assume that the observed data may be a mixture of several latent classes. The coding data can be represented as a matrix of binary data, in which columns define codes (coded as 0 or 1) and the rows define individuals. The binomial mixture model examined whether there were common patterns across rows (i.e., people) in the coding of hooking-up narratives. One of the challenges of any clustering procedure is deciding how many clusters to retain. In the present analyses, the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Raftery, 1995) was used, which penalizes models by their complexity and is a common criterion for choosing the number of latent groups in mixture models. In the second phase of analysis, the clusters were treated as a between-subject grouping variable in a series of models for either hooking up behavior or perceptions of hooking up behavior. All analyses were done using R v2.13.0 (R Development Core Team, 2011) and made use of the flexmix package (Gruen & Leisch, 2007) for mixture models.

RESULTS

Mixture Model

A series of binomial mixture models were fit to the hooking up definition coding data, for latent classes of one (i.e., no latent classes) through five. For each potential class five

separate models were run varying starting parameters, and the average BIC was used in determining the appropriate model. Across the five models the BIC statistics were 11483.8, 11147.0, 10996.2, 11009.6, and 11037.0. The model assuming three latent definitions of hooking up had the lowest BIC – almost 500 BIC points below the model assuming no latent classes, and 13 points below the model assuming four latent classes. Although there are no hard and fast rules with model selection via BIC, models differing by more than 10 BIC points provide “very strong” evidence for the model with the lower BIC (p. 22, Raftery, 1995).

Means of coding items for each of the three latent classes of hooking up definitions are shown in Figure 1 and reveal several patterns of the three latent definitions. All three latent definitions have a majority of respondents referring to sex at least generally (e.g., the proportion of individuals including reference to sex not otherwise specified [NOS]). However, the third cluster ($n = 58$) was the only group that included notable references to specific sexual acts, including digital sex (i.e., hand job, fingering), oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex. Moreover, this group appears to include little else beyond sex in their definition of hooking up. The second cluster ($n = 571$) includes an emphasis on interpersonal and social aspects, seen in references to motivations, meeting someone, lack of commitment and emotional involvement, as well as alcohol and parties. The final cluster (cluster 1; $n = 696$) appears to be the most general, referring primarily to sex NOS and to making out and kissing, and this group is the most likely to mention that hooking up is a confusing term (though only mentioned by 8.6% of individuals in this group). Finally, although not a focus of the present study, consistent with previous research (Owen et al., 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002), there were few differences between males' and females' definitions of hooking up.

The next set of analyses examined how cluster membership was associated with participant's behavior with hooking up and normative perceptions of hooking up. Table 3 reports means and standard deviations of various hooking up behaviors by cluster membership, and reports an omnibus test of differences using the Kruskal-Wallis test, given the non-normal distributions of the outcomes. As seen in the table, for all outcomes except anal sex, there are significant differences in hooking up behavior based on hooking up definition groups. Participants in cluster 2, which included a focus on social or interpersonal aspects of hooking-up, reported fewer hooking up behaviors. In fact, nonparametric pairwise comparisons revealed that clusters 1 and 3 reported significantly more hooking up behaviors relative to cluster 2 on all outcomes except anal sex. Finally, pairwise comparisons also revealed that participants in cluster 3, which had the greatest focus on sexual behaviors, reported more digital and oral sex in their hooking up encounters relative to either cluster 1 or 2.

Table 4 reports a similar set of analyses for perceptions of hooking up behavior. Although not as striking as the analyses of behavior, the pattern of results with normative perceptions are quite similar to what was seen with behavior. There are significant, omnibus differences on all outcomes except number of partners. In examining nonparametric pairwise comparisons, participants in cluster 3 generally perceive greater levels of hooking up behavior relative to participants in cluster 2, with the exception of vaginal and anal sex. Interestingly, for vaginal and anal sex, participants in cluster 2 perceive significantly more than participants in cluster 1.

DISCUSSION

The present study makes three main contributions to the literature. First, to our knowledge, this study is the first to synthesize qualitative research addressing varying student-driven definitions of hooking up with quantitative data regarding investigator defined student

hooking up behaviors and normative perceptions. Thus, the present study begins to address the question of which students use various hooking up definitions, given that multiple definitions of hooking up are in use within college populations (Bogle, 2008; Holman & Sillars, 2011). Second, by examining student-driven definitions of hooking up the present study highlights the diversity of student sexual experiences. The results indicted three groups of students who had different definitions of hooking up. Third, this study helps in teasing apart the nature of how students determine their definitions of hooking up as findings from the present study suggested that different definitions were associated with different hooking up experiences and normative perceptions.

Varying Definitions

As is consistent with the qualitative literature, we found that students varied widely in the ways in which they defined hooking up (Bogle, 2008; Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Findings indicated that the one consistency across the three groups was that all three latent definitions have a majority of respondents referring to sex, at least generally. Thus, most students consider the term hooking up to be associated with sex. More specifically, cluster 1 had the most general definition, referring primarily to sex, not specific sexual acts, and to making out. Findings indicated that cluster 2 placed an emphasis on interpersonal and social aspects whereas cluster 3 defined hooking up primarily as sex, including notable references to specific sexual acts. Thus, findings suggest that while there is clear variety in how students define hooking up, the majority of students do not report finding the term confusing or indicating that hooking up is ambiguous.

Hooking Up is about Sex

Within the research literature, a common definition of hooking up is that hooking up is about sexual activity involving no romantic commitment between the individuals (Fielder & Carey, 2010a, 2010b; Paul & Hayes, 2002). It is interesting to note that, of the various groups, the group that defined hooking up based on specific sexual activities was the smallest (cluster 3). This suggests that for the majority of students the actual sexual behavioral expectations (i.e., digital, oral, vaginal, and anal) regarding what happens during a hookup may not be clear. Furthermore, students with this definition of hooking up (cluster 3) reported significantly more hooking up behaviors on all outcomes except anal sex. In general, individuals who referenced specific sexual acts in their description of hooking up were also those individuals who were likely to have engaged in those specific activities during their own hookups. Thus, individuals who define hooking up in behavioral and sexual ways also hookup more frequently.

In addition to finding significant differences in hooking up behavior by definition clusters, the present study also demonstrated differences in normative perceptions by definition clusters. Although not as striking as the analyses of behavior, the pattern of results with normative perceptions are quite similar to what was seen with behavior. Generally, participants in cluster 3 perceived greater levels of hooking up behavior relative to participants in cluster 2, with the exception of vaginal and anal sex. However, it is interesting to note that, for vaginal and anal sex, participants in cluster 2 perceive significantly more than participants in cluster 1. This finding may be due to clusters 1 and 3 drawing from more resources than cluster 2 (i.e., both experience and perceptions). Whereas cluster 2 has had less hooking up experience and less sexual experience when hooking up thus students in cluster 2 have less personal resources and are drawing more so from normative perceptions than experiences. Thus, in line with social learning theory (Bandura, 1969; 1977) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), the acquisition of one's definition of hooking up can not only occur through personal experience but can also occur through observation of others or by communication with others.

Hooking Up is about Who and Where

Cluster 2 defined hooking up based on the lack of a commitment and emotional involvement, meeting someone new, and the inclusion of alcohol or social situations, such as bars and parties. This definition is certainly consistent with predictors of hooking up behavior. Alcohol use has been demonstrated as a strong predictor of hooking up (Grello et al., 2006; Owen et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000). However, research has also found inconsistencies when examining the role of alcohol in hooking up. For example, Lewis and colleagues (2012) found that typical alcohol consumption was associated with having oral and vaginal sex during the most recent hookup such that students who reported higher typical weekly drinking were more likely to have oral or vaginal sex during their most recent hookup. However, they also found that drinking in conjunction to the hookup was not a significant predictor of either oral or vaginal sex. The findings of Lewis et al. (2012) suggest that the association between alcohol and hooking up sexual behavior may exist because of other factors. For example, this relationship may exist because both behaviors have common underlying risk factors (e.g., sensation seeking, expectancies).

Ambiguity of the Term Hooking Up

As can be seen from the present findings, the precise elements that define a hookup differ, in some cases quite radically, depending on the eye of the beholder. Based on these varying definitions, it is possible that for college students this can lead to mismatched expectations regarding sexual activity and commitment which in turn could lead to negative outcomes. Although it has been pointed out that the ambiguity of the phrase may have helped to fuel the term's popularity, in that it leaves options open to interpretation, for students, the ambiguity also may increase the risk of negative emotional outcomes or of sexual experiences that go beyond one partner's intentions or level of comfort (Flack et al., 2007; Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, & Backstrom, 2009; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Given that in the present study we found three distinct clusters with varying definitions of hooking up and that only a small proportion of students who themselves see the term as confusing, this suggests that there is a strong degree of potential for misunderstandings or inconsistencies across partners in their own goals for hooking up. Furthermore, these inconsistencies may also increase risk of emotional consequences about what happened during the hookup. Finally, negative emotions may arise from inconsistencies of hooking up definitions based on what type of commitment or emotional involvement is to be expected following a hookup. While the introduction of different terms indicating distinct types of hooking up experiences is unlikely, it may be useful to inform students of the various definitions of hooking up and how these differing definitions may contribute to the risk of negative outcomes.

This same lack of precision in terminology can also lead to problems in interpreting research findings. Not all research studies use the same definition or behavioral description for hooking up (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Lewis et al., 2012; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Paul & Hayes, 2002), which can create problems at several levels. Given our findings, there are a substantial group of students who define hooking up as making out or kissing. Findings regarding prevalence of hooking up and risky sexual behavior may mistakenly inflate risk rates of more high risk sexual behaviors like oral, anal, or vaginal sex by collapsing in those students who are engaging predominantly in touching or kissing. Moreover, some of these behaviors are more strongly associated with higher risk outcomes of sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancies. Imprecision in terminology will make it more difficult for researchers to identify appropriately both antecedents and precipitants of higher risk sexual behaviors when these terms are used more vaguely. Because students are using different definitions, research on hooking up may fail to identify students who are more at risk, given that these students were the smallest group but were also engaging in the riskiest behavior (e.g., Cluster 3).

Limitations

Several limitations to the present study are notable. The cross-sectional nature of the present study limits our ability to make casual inferences between definition clusters and hooking up behaviors and normative perceptions. Thus, future research should examine these relationships over time to clarify causal sequence. Moreover, all data were assessed via self-report with a Web-based survey which may be influenced by socially desirable responses, though assessment of sexual behavior via the web has been found to be an effective means of data collection among college students (e.g., McMorris et al., 2009). Additionally, the sample was limited to primarily heterosexual college students thus it is not clear how results may have differed in a more representative sample that included a greater proportion of gay, lesbian, and bisexual young adults as well as both college and noncollege young adults.

Conclusions

The results from the present study increase our understanding of how college students define hooking up. Furthermore, findings indication that definition cluster affiliations were able to distinguish both actual and perceived behavior, more so for actual behavior. Thus, findings suggest that student hooking up definitions are based on both actual and perceived behavior, but more so from one's own hooking up experiences. Further research on hooking up is needed to further examine how these varying definitions of hooking up may contribute to negative emotional and behavioral consequences following hooking up.

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Hooking Up Themes by Cluster

Figure 1.

Proportion of student endorsement of hooking up coding themes by cluster.

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics of Study Participants

Variable	Number (%)
Gender	
Female	811 (56.5%)
Male	625 (43.5%)
Race/ethnicity	
Caucasian	864 (61.0%)
Asian	329 (23.2%)
Multiracial	133 (9.4%)
Other	90 (6.4%)
Current Monogamous Sexual Relationship Status	
Not in a relationship	877 (63.1%)
In a relationship	553 (38.7%)
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	1,354 (94.4%)
Homosexual	28 (1.9%)
Bisexual	34 (2.4%)
Questioning	19 (1.3%)

Note. $N = 1,468$

Table 2

Theme Code, Kappa, and Quotation Examples

Code	Kappa	Quotes
<i>Vaginal sex</i> Referenced the term vaginal sex or a description of the act of vaginal sex.	0.96	Hooking up means sexual activity. Kissing (or making-out) is not hooking up. Any type of oral, vaginal or anal sex is considered hooking up. One night stand involving any form of sex (oral, vaginal, anal, etc). Hooking up does not have one specific meaning. It can mean anything from just making out to having vaginal or anal sex.
<i>Oral sex</i> Referenced the act of oral sex or a description of the act of oral sex	0.99	More than kissing, less than sex. Oral sex is hooking up. Hooking up means kissing, making out and oral sex. Does not include having sex. Hooking up means anything BUT sex. Some people use to for just making out, but usually it's used for oral sex.
<i>Anal sex</i> Referenced the term anal sex or a description of the act of anal sex.	1.00	Hooking up means having some sort of intercourse, whether it's oral anal or vaginal. Having oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse, usually spur of the moment with a new partner. Hooking up means any sexual act with a partner of either gender. Making out, oral sex, intercourse, manual stimulation and anal sex would all apply.
<i>Digital sex</i> Referenced the act of digital sex or a description of the act of digital sex.	0.96	Making out anything more than making out i.e. a blowjob, fingering, eating out, anal/vaginal sex, a hand job, or breast sex. sex, oral sex, anal sex, hand jobs, all the below-the-waist stuff I think hooking up means like meeting, flirting, exchanging a blow jobs or masturbating each other. I never have intercourse or swallow cum while I am hooking up. It may lead to a relationship and it may not.
<i>Sexual behavior, unspecified</i> Referenced sex, not specific to vaginal, oral, anal, or digital.	0.73	Sex. Having sex, usually casual sex. people rarely say they hooked up with their boyfriend or girlfriend Getting together to get it on. A term used to refer to cheap, meaningless no-strings-attached sex. Hooking up does not consider any possible consequences between parties involved for their unsuspecting significant others
<i>Making out/kissing</i> Referenced making out and/or kissing	0.99	To me, hooking up means making out. No foreplay such as handjobs, blowjobs, etc. are involved. Hooking up means heavy kissing Kissing someone you just met after a couple hours or so. Not knowing the person very well and making out with him or her.
<i>Known partner</i> Referenced familiarity with the partner by nature, quality, or length of the relationship.	0.80	Hooking up to me basically means casual sex with another student or person you either meet or have already known. Making out or other sexual interactions (not necessarily sex). If can either be a friend or a new acquaintance. Not a regular occurrence with that person. Fun, easy, carefree. Hooking up to me is a casual partner setting. You don't hook up with your girlfriend or boyfriend but would 'hook up' with someone you either met at a party or have known for a little while. Hooking up to me is also associated with a one night stand.
<i>No commitment</i> Referenced that no commitment was to be expected following the hookup.	0.89	I think it probably means getting into a romantic situation, most likely not long term, with fair chance of adult situations. Hooking up means meeting people for the purpose of having sex, generally not having any sort of relationship afterwards. Meeting someone new, or someone you already know and proceeding to having sexual intercourse without any intention of keeping a relationship type commitment.
<i>No emotional involvement</i> Referenced that no emotional involvement was involved during or after the hookup.	0.92	When sober, I think it's a terrible idea. It means finding a casual partner, making out, then going your separate ways as though nothing as has ever happened. Hooking up means having relations with someone just for the sake of fulfilling a physical desire. It's more animalistic than meaningful. Hooking up is usually a one-time thing. It could be regular, but carries no emotional attachment and is not in any way a relationship. It's purely physical, and usually you do not know the person at all, or may have just met them.
<i>Motivation</i> Referenced any motivation for the hookup. Motivation was broadly defined, including hooking up as a means to release sexual frustration and hooking up to have fun.	0.82	Having short relationships based on sex. A relationship that is not intended to be long by either partner, but its purpose is for sexual satisfaction, impressing friends/peers, and reassurance of oneself as a 'normal/acceptable' person. Hooking up is another term for a casual relationship. Both partners are looking for nothing more than a physical release of sexual frustration with nothing attached. It's very similar to a one night stand but with somebody that you're very familiar with. Meeting someone else and getting to know them with the sole (and openly recognized) purpose of pursuing a relationship with them. The end result is usually intended to be sex, rather than finding a potential mate.
<i>Meeting someone/dating</i>	0.88	Meeting with a friend or someone that you know rather well to party, have a few drinks, and socialize.

Code	Kappa	Quotes
Referenced meeting someone or dating.		Meeting someone for either sex, date, or other activity common between members of the opposite gender. Meeting someone generally at a public place such as a restaurant, class, party, and then engaging in intimate behavior.
<i>Alcohol</i> Referenced drinking, alcohol, or alcohol's effects.	1.00	Having sex with someone who you recently or just met and don't know very well but have sex with anyways either because you are drunk or just because it's the 'thing to do'. Hooking up, to me, means that people are casually engaging in sex while not in a committed relationship somebody and having sex with them that night. Usually 'hooking up' happens at parties when two people have drank and both want to have sex with somebody.
<i>Bar/party</i> Referenced social setting, such as bar or party.	0.93	Hooking up is used to refer to meeting someone at a party or bar and then later going to have some type of sex with them. Having sex with somebody you don't know very well, one time, after meeting at a social event. Making out or possibly having sex. Usually at a bar or at a party.
<i>Consequences</i> Referenced any negative feelings or consequences that may result from the hookup.	0.66	It simply means to have sex with a person usually a 'one night stand' and sometimes people regret doing it the more they think about their actions. It is an insincere form of getting close to and individual, often times as a means to take advantage of them. Hooking up is not acceptable on my account because you would be meeting up with people that you never met up with before, not knowing if if they have any STD's or what not.
<i>Confusion of term</i> Referenced any confusion or ambiguity over the term hooking up.	0.55	it can be anything from kissing someone for a long time to heavy petting to having full on sexual intercourse. It's a very 'fuzzy' term that varies from person to person. It's meant to be ambiguous so that you can imply you either just made out or went all the way to sexual intercourse. Everyone has their own definition. Its pretty confusing, some people say it means making out or having sex so I don't know

Table 3

Hooking Up Behaviors

Variable	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3		Chi-Sq
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Times ^a	4.19	11.67	1.01	5.42	4.97	14.68	80.39**
Partners ^b	1.16	2.23	0.52	2.08	1.57	2.56	70.09**
Kiss ^c	2.63	1.82	1.62	1.87	2.95	1.72	99.9**
Digital ^c	2.39	1.74	1.56	1.82	2.86	1.69	74.36**
Oral ^c	1.02	1.14	0.71	1.12	1.43	1.31	43.87**
Vaginal ^c	0.96	1.26	0.68	1.19	1.31	1.6	29.08**
Anal ^c	0.1	0.44	0.12	0.48	0.1	0.31	2.04

Note.

***p* < .01. Absolute range, 0-99.

^b Absolute range, 0-43.

^c Absolute range, 1-5.

Table 4

Hooking Up Normative Perceptions

Variable	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3		Chi-Sq
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Times ^a	5.46	7.23	3.94	5.51	5.86	6.39	24.11**
Partners ^b	3.15	4.33	3.01	4.79	3.29	3.45	4.04
Kiss ^c	3.75	0.61	3.51	0.81	3.81	0.54	42.32**
Digital ^c	3.54	0.71	3.44	0.82	3.67	0.63	6.38*
Oral ^c	2.13	0.77	2.20	0.87	2.45	0.80	10.04**
Vaginal ^c	2.12	0.83	2.34	0.96	2.05	0.80	21.54**
Anal ^c	0.92	0.86	1.12	0.83	0.95	0.66	22.69**

Note.

*

 $p < .05$.

**

 $p < .01$. Absolute range, 0-99.^b

Absolute range, 0-60.

^c

Absolute range, 1-5.