

Hooking Up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today's College Campuses

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The "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s marked a sea change in public attitudes toward sexuality. Prior to this, premarital sex had been taboo. The norm was often broken, but most women who had sex before marriage did so only with the man they were going to marry. Women who had non-marital sex were so stigmatized that the discovery of a premarital pregnancy was seen as a crisis that often led to a "shotgun" marriage. The sexual revolution rendered premarital sex acceptable, at least in a relationship. Not all groups accepted the new norm, but its mainstream acceptance can be seen by how common cohabitation before marriage became; by the early 1990s, well over half of marriages were preceded by cohabitation (Bumpass and Lu 2000).

The pre-1970s sexual norms went together with a particular gender system. Women's virginity was seen as more important than men's, men were seen as the leaders in politics and the economy, and men were supposed to be the initiators in dating, proposals of marriage, and sexuality. Women's primary adult role was that of wife and mother, and men's primary role in the family was accomplished precisely by his role *outside* the family as a breadwinner. Men were seen as the heads of their family.

The "gender revolution" shook some of this up, with the most important change being the increase in women's employment and career orientation. In 1960, 41% of American women between 25 and 54 years of age were in the labor force, but this figure had climbed to 74% by 2000. Today, more

women than men are graduating from college, and while college majors are still substantially segregated by sex, more women than previously are entering traditionally male fields in management and the professions (England and Li 2006).

In the aftermath of these two "revolutions," what do dating, sexuality, and relationships look like on today's college campuses? We report here on a study we undertook to answer this question. As undergraduate readers of this article know, casual dating is no longer as common as "hooking up" among college students. So our first goal is simply to clarify the definition and characteristics of the new social form, the "hook up." Our second goal is to probe how meanings and behavior in hook ups or relationships are structured by gender.

Our Study

We collected quantitative and qualitative data on college students. In this report, we limit ourselves to heterosexual students because we are interested in how gender structures their romantic and sexual relations. The quantitative data come from an online survey of over 4,000 undergraduate students at several universities who answered fixed-response questions suitable for statistical analysis. Questions covered their experiences of and attitudes toward hooking up, dating, and relationships. Participating universities include University of Arizona, Indiana University, Stanford University, University of California at Santa Barbara, and State University of New York at Stony Brook.¹ Statistics

presented later in this paper are from the data from the online survey.

The second part of our study makes use of qualitative data gathered from in-depth face-to-face discussions with students at Stanford, where the authors work. We conducted focus groups in large Sociology classes in 2004 and 2006.² In 2004, 270 undergraduates in a class taught by the first author interviewed one fellow undergraduate student (not in the class) about experiences with relationships, hooking up, and dating. Based on what we learned from the large number of 2004 face-to-face interviews, 25 more elaborate interviews were carried out by a trained team of undergraduate and graduate student interviewers during 2006, with a random sample of Stanford seniors as the target.³ In all the qualitative interviews, interviewers worked from an interview guide delineating the topics to cover, and were trained to add probe questions so as to encourage respondents to tell relevant stories in their own words. All quotes below are from these two sets of interviews of Stanford undergraduates.

The Hook Up: A New Social Form

The hook up has replaced the casual date on college campuses today, students told us. The term “hook up” is ambiguous in definition. But, generally, students use it to refer to a situation where two people are hanging out or run into each other at an event (often a party), and they end up doing something sexual, usually after going to one person’s room. In some cases the sexual behavior is intercourse, but not in the majority of cases. (Sexual behavior that doesn’t include intercourse is not seen as “having sex,” as students typically use the term.) A hook up carries no expectation that either party has an interest in moving toward a relationship, although in some cases such an interest is present either before or after the hook up. By their senior year, while 24% of respondents have never hooked up, on average they have had 6.9 hook ups (the median is 5), and 28% have had 10 or more. Hook ups often happen after a good bit of drinking. The median number of drinks men had drunk the night of their last hook up was 6, whereas women had consumed 4.⁴

We asked respondents to the online survey to tell us about their most recent hook up, thinking that asking about a specific and fairly recent event would allow more accurate recall. While the most recent event may be atypical for any one respondent, with a large sample, as we have, what is typical should emerge from the statistics. Figure 1 shows what sexual activity occurred during respondents’ most recent hook ups. The categories are arrayed so that a hook up is categorized by the behavior the couple engaged in that entailed going “farthest,” as students generally see it. (For example, if a couple had oral sex and had intercourse, they would be categorized in the “intercourse” category.⁵) As Figure 1 shows, 31% made out and touched but didn’t have any genital contact, 16% had some hand/genital contact, 15% had oral sex, and 38% had intercourse on their most recent hook up.⁶

While a hook up implies no commitment to hook up again, we found that it was not uncommon to hook up with the same person more than once, as Figure 2 shows. When students reported about their most recent hook up, we asked them how many previous times they had hooked up with this same person. About half of hook ups were the first time with this person. Only 11% were second hook ups, 8% were third, 6% were fourth, and so on, until we come to the last category for those who had hooked up 10 or more times with this person. Fully 16% of these hook ups involved someone the student had hooked up with 10 or more times. When students hook up regularly with the same person outside of a romantic relationship, it is sometimes called “friends with benefits,” “fuck buddies,” or, simply, “a regular hook up.” Although we don’t show the statistics here, when couples have hooked up more times, they are more likely to have intercourse on the hook up.

The hook up is clearly a product of the increased permissiveness that came with the sexual revolution. Its mainstream adoption among college students shows a change to norms that permit some amount of sexual behavior that is casual. The sexual behavior in hook ups is not seen to have affection, an exclusive romantic relationship, or even an interest in such a relationship as a prerequisite. Although the idea that hooking up is acceptable is

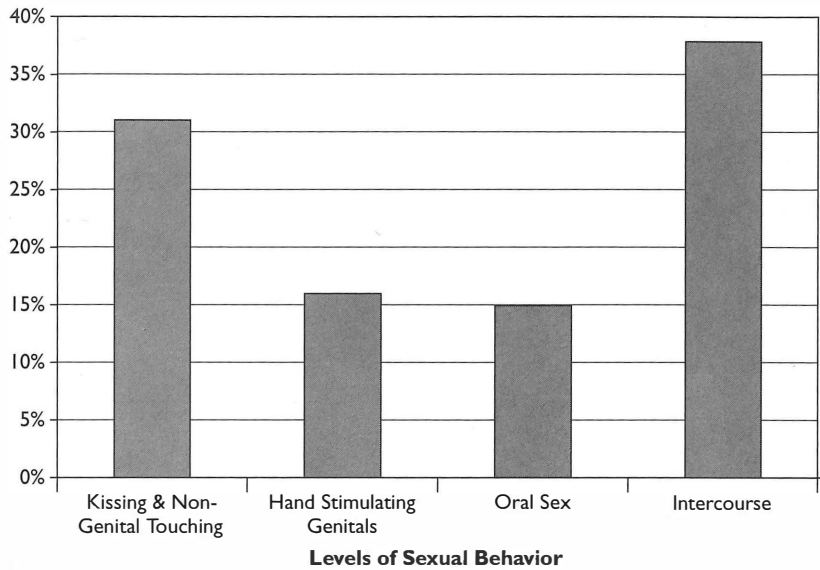


Figure 1. Percent of Hook Ups Involving Levels of Sexual Behavior.

Note: Categories to the right may also include behaviors in those to the left, but not vice versa.
N = 2,904 undergraduates, reporting on their most recent hook up.

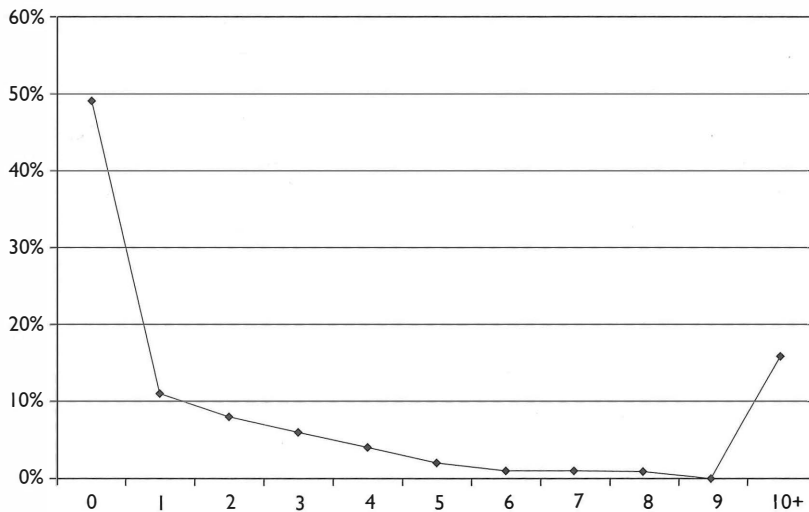


Figure 2. The Number of Previous Hook Ups a Student Reported with His or Her Most Recent Hook Up Partner.

Note: N = 2,510 undergraduates, reporting on their most recent hook up.

quite pervasive, students are divided on whether it is okay to have intercourse (which is what they mean when they talk about “having sex”) on a casual hook up. Some see oral sex as the typical limit for casual hook ups, with intercourse signifying a pretty big step. As one male respondent put it, “She was very happy to hook up, but actually having sex was gonna really mean something to her.” Another male said, “There are all these little lines . . . gradations, then there’s a *big* line between oral sex and intercourse.” Widespread acceptance of hooking up can coexist with a large minority of both men and women who disapprove of casual sex in part because the term “hook up,” while always entailing some casual sexual behavior, is ambiguous enough that it does not necessarily entail “sex” in the sense of intercourse.

Gender and the Hook Up

Hook ups are “gendered” in three important ways. First, men initiate more of the interaction, especially the sexual action. Second, men have orgasms more frequently than women. Men’s sexual pleasure seems to be prioritized. Third, a sexual double standard persists in which women are more at risk than men of getting a bad reputation for hooking up with multiple partners.

Initiation

Most hook ups start at parties or hanging out in (often coed) dorms. To get things started, one of the two partners has to initiate talking or dancing. Our survey asked who did this: him, her, or both equally. In about half the cases, initiation of talking or dancing was deemed equal. But where one of the two was reported to have initiated talking or dancing it was more likely the man. When we asked who initiated the sexual interaction, things were much more gendered. Less than a third thought both had initiated equally, and a preponderance of cases were seen as initiated by men.⁷ Hook ups were almost twice as likely to happen in the man’s room as the woman’s.⁸ This suggests that men have initiated the move from the party or public area of the dorm into the room in order to facilitate sexual activity.⁹ These patterns of male initiation may mean that men are more eager for hook ups than

women. Or they might mean that both men and women feel accountable to norms of how gender is to be displayed that dictate male, not female, initiation.¹⁰ In the “old days,” men asked women on dates and initiated most sexual behavior. One might have thought that the gender revolution would de-gender scripts of initiation on dates or in sexual behavior. But this transformation hasn’t happened; initiation is nowhere near equal.

The Orgasm Gap

Since hook ups are defined by some sexual activity occurring, with no necessary implication of any future, we might expect people to judge them by the sexual pleasure they provide. Orgasm is one good barometer of sexual pleasure (although we recognize that sexual behavior can be pleasurable without orgasm). Our survey asked students whether they had an orgasm on the most recent hook up and whether they thought their partner did. Figure 3 shows men’s and women’s reports of their own orgasm on their most recent hook up, depending on what sexual behavior occurred. (Here we omit hook ups that involved no more than kissing and nongenital touching, since virtually none of them led to orgasm.) What is notable is how much more often men have orgasms on hook ups than women. When men received oral sex and did not engage in intercourse, they had an orgasm 57% of the time, but women only experienced orgasm a quarter of the time they received oral sex and did not engage in intercourse. Men who engaged in intercourse but who did not receive oral sex had an orgasm 70%; however, intercourse without receiving oral sex led to orgasm for women only 34% of the time. Even when women received oral sex *and* had intercourse, they had orgasms just under half the time on these hook ups, while men had orgasms about 85% of the time in this situation.

Of all hook ups (regardless of what sexual activity took place) 44% of men experienced an orgasm while only 19% of women did. One factor contributing to this overall orgasm gap is that couples are more likely to engage in behavior that prioritizes male pleasure and orgasm. One key example of this is nonreciprocal oral sex. Figure 4 shows that in hook ups where there was some oral sex but no

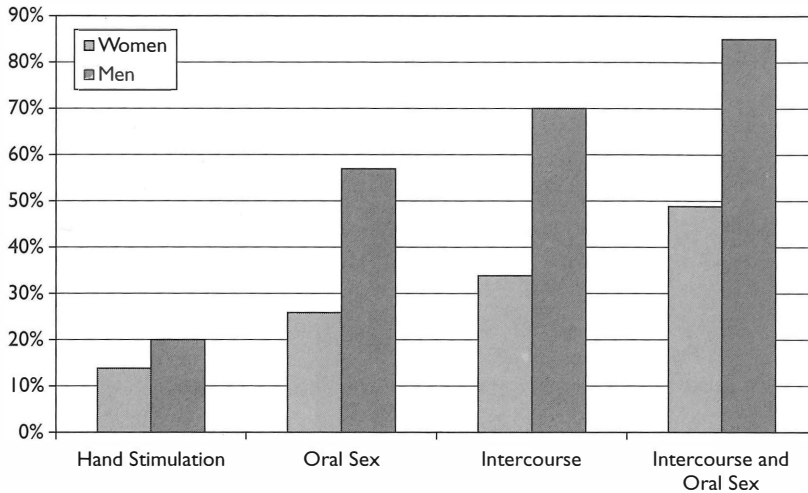


Figure 3. Men's and Women's Report of Whether They Had an Orgasm in Hook Ups Involving Various Sexual Behaviors.

Note: Statistics include only men's report of men's orgasm and women's report of women's orgasm. Women's orgasm for hook ups involving oral sex include only those where she received oral sex, whether he did or not. Men's orgasm for hook ups involving oral sex include only those where he received oral sex, whether she did or not. Hand stimulation (of genitals) was treated analogously. Each category excludes any case where the couple also engaged in behaviors in the categories to the right. $N = 2,693$ undergraduates, reporting on their most recent hook up.

intercourse, the oral sex was reciprocal less than 40% of the time. In 45% of the cases, men were the only ones to receive oral sex, whereas it was only 16% of the cases where only women received it. Thus, when oral sex is not reciprocal, men are on the receiving end three times as often as women. Even when men do give women oral sex, they are either unable to or do not make it a priority to bring the woman to orgasm (refer back to Figure 3).

Moreover, men often believe their partner had an orgasm when she really didn't, if we believe that each sex accurately reports their own orgasm. Figure 5 compares women's and men's reports of the *woman's* orgasm on the most recent hook up. It shows, for example, that when women receive cunnilingus, they report an orgasm about a quarter of the time, but men who performed cunnilingus on their partners report the woman to have had an orgasm almost 60% of the time—a huge disparity. A large disparity exists between men and women's

reports of women's orgasm from intercourse as well. For example, when the couple had intercourse (but the women did not receive oral sex), women reported orgasm 34% of the time, but 58% of men reported the woman to have had an orgasm in this situation. Although the figure doesn't show these statistics, women's reports of men's orgasms lines up quite well with men's own reports. Of course, male orgasm, usually accompanied with ejaculation, is fairly easy to identify.

Why are men so misinformed about their female partner's orgasms on hook ups? Being drunk and lack of communication may contribute to misperception. Another factor is that women sometimes fake orgasms. One woman reported doing this "to make that person feel good, to make them feel like they've done their job." She also said that sometimes it was "just really to end it," continuing, "a lot of people say they've faked it just because they're like bored with it."

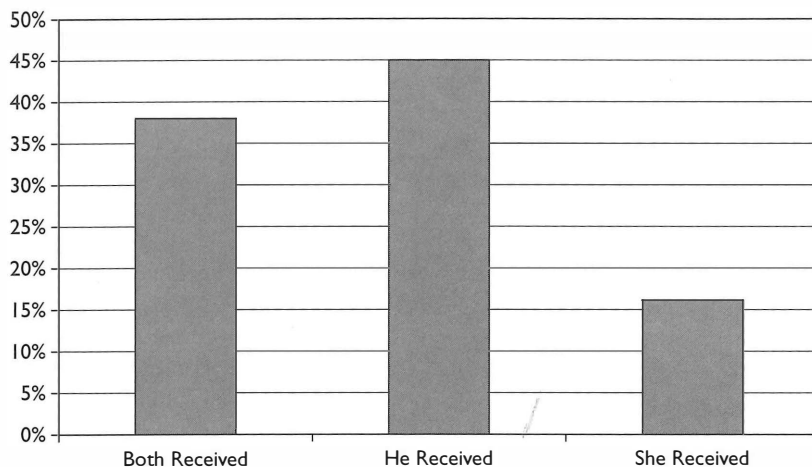


Figure 4. Who Received Oral Sex in Hook Ups Where Oral Sex Occurred But Intercourse Did Not.

Note: N = 443 undergraduates, all of whom engaged in some form of oral sex (giving or receiving) in their most recent hook up but did not engage in intercourse. "He received" means that only he received oral sex; "she received" means that only she received oral sex.

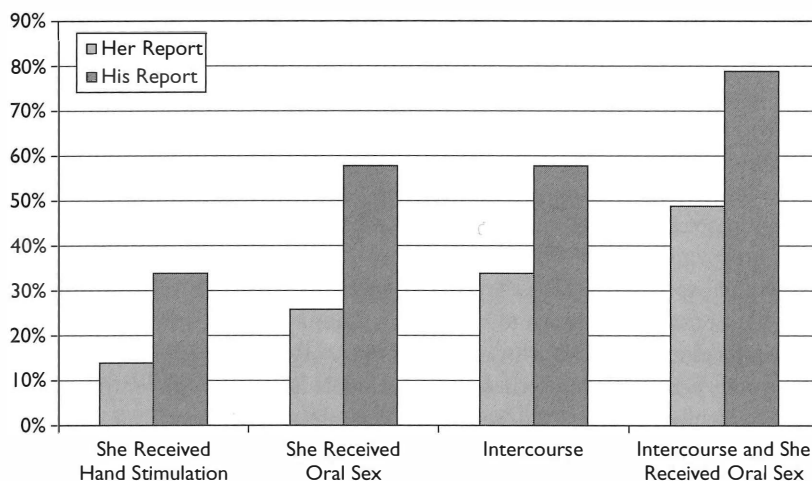


Figure 5. Men's and Women's Perceptions of the *Woman's* Orgasm in Hook Ups Involving Various Sexual Behaviors.

Note: All categories to the right of "She Received Hand Stimulation" may also include her receiving hand stimulation. Oral sex and intercourse, however, occur only in each category as labeled. Statistics for hook ups involving oral sex or hand stimulation for her (she received) include such cases whether or not these occurrences entailed oral sex or hand stimulation for him. N = 2,630 undergraduates, reporting on their most recent hook up.

Despite the orgasm gap, if we ask students how much they enjoyed the hook up overall, and how much they enjoyed the sexual part of it, men and women give very similar and largely positive responses. Women's lesser rate of orgasm doesn't translate into lower reported satisfaction on average. Perhaps women are evaluating hook ups on a standard of what seems possible to them in their social world. Social psychologists often find that groups that recurrently have lower rewards (for example, pay from jobs) focus on within-group rather than between-group comparisons, which leads them to develop a lesser sense of entitlement. Expecting less, they tend not to be disappointed when they get less (Major 1987).

But not all women accept nonreciprocal oral sex and the orgasm gap as "natural." Some try to assert their wants and are critical of men's lack of concern for their orgasm. One woman said, "When I... meet somebody and I'm gonna have a random hook up... from what I have seen, they're not even trying to, you know, make a mutual thing." She went on to say that in cases like this, she doesn't even bother to fake orgasm. Referring to nonreciprocal oral sex, another complained, "He did that thing where... they put their hand on the top of your head... and I hate that!... Especially 'cause there was no effort made to, like, return that favor." One woman who is assertive about her sexual wants said, "(I)n my first relationship... it was very one way... and that just didn't do much for me in terms of making me feel good about myself... so... I hate it when a guy is like take your head and try and push it down, because I then just switch it around to make them go down first usually. And some guys say no and then I just say no if they say no."

Some men conceded that if they see a hook up as a one time thing, they aren't concerned about women's orgasm. One said, "I mean like if you're just like hooking up with someone, I guess it's more of a selfish thing..." Another said, "If it's just a random hook up... Say, they meet a girl at a party and it's a one night thing, I don't think it's gonna matter to them as much." Other men said they tried but were often unsure what worked and whether the woman had had an orgasm.

The Sexual Double Standard

Decades ago, the double standard took the form of an expectation of virginity before marriage for women but not men. One might have thought that the emphasis on equal opportunity of the gender revolution would have killed the double standard. While the expectation that women be virgins before marriage is now a thing of the past in most social groups,¹¹ women are still held to a stricter standard than men when it comes to sex. But today, the difference is in how men versus women who hook up a lot are viewed. In focus groups, students told us that women who hook up with too many people, or have casual sex readily, are called "sluts" by both men and women. While some men who hook up a lot are called "man whores," such men also encounter accolades from other men for "scoring" more. Women are held to a stricter standard, but it is fairly vague exactly what that standard is.

As an illustration of the double standard, Figure 6 shows that when students in our online survey were asked if they had ever respected someone less because that person hooked up with the respondent, 34% of men but only 22% of women answered yes. When asked if they ever hooked up with someone who they think respected them less because of the hook up, 55% of women but only 21% of men said yes. Thus, men disrespect their partners for hooking up with them more than women do, and women seem to know this (and even exaggerate it).¹²

One male respondent illustrates the double standard when he says "I definitely see some girls out there just wanting to hook up... Sometimes they're called 'slutty'... I guess it's... less stigmatic for a guy to go out and be, like, 'I'm gonna go get some ass' than for a girl..." He dissociates himself from the double standard but attributes it to his friends when he says, "I mean not myself... women are sexual creatures too; they can do what they want. But... they... see this girl and go... there's no way I can date her, but... she's hot for a hook up." Indeed, in focus groups students said that men would sometimes decide that a woman was relationship material because she wouldn't hook up with them the first time they were together. This presents women who want relationships with a real dilemma: the main

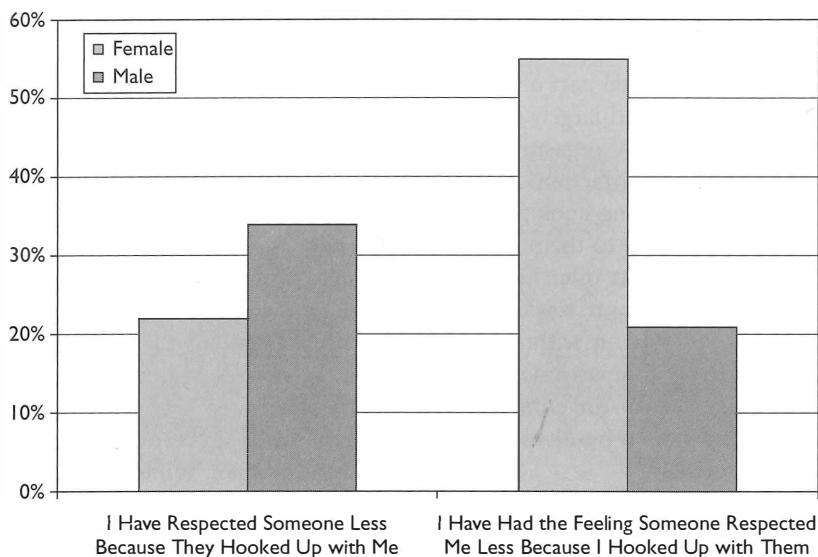


Figure 6. Percentage of Students Who, After a Hook Up, Have Ever Respected Someone Less or Felt a Partner Respected Them Less, by Gender.

Note: N = 2,931 and 2,928 undergraduates, respectively.

path into relationships today is through hook ups, but through hooking up they also risk men's thinking that they aren't relationship material.

Gender, Dating, and Exclusive Relationships

By their senior year, 71% of students report that they've been in a relationship that lasted at least six months while in college. Hook ups have not replaced relationships, but they have altered the pathway into relationships and may have largely replaced casual dating. One woman bemoaned this, saying, "(S)ometimes I wish that this environment here were... more conducive to just like casual dating, because... it's difficult to go on actual dates without... already being in a relationship..." A male student said, "So there's no such thing as casually going out to... gauge the other person... I mean you can hang out.... But we're only dating once we've decided we like each other... and want to be in a relationship."

Thirty to forty years ago a common college pattern involved casually dating a number of people. Dating did not necessarily imply an interest in a relationship

with the person. But sometimes a succession of dates led to a relationship simultaneous with a progression of sexual activity.¹³ Today, college students generally use the term "dating" to refer to a couple who has already decided they are in an exclusive relationship. (This is also called "going out," or being "official" or "exclusive.") "Dating" is different than going on a "date." Dates may be between people who are not already in a relationship. While less common than decades back, dates are sometimes present in the sequence leading to relationships. Indeed, because casual dating has become less common, dates may be more indicative of relational intent today than decades ago. Among respondents in our online survey, by their senior year, students had been on an average of 4.4 dates (the median is 3).¹⁴ This is less than the number of times seniors had hooked up (a mean of 6.9 and median of 5), but shows that dates are not completely dead. What has changed is the typical sequence. Dates often come after a hook up, and thus after some sexual behavior. They often have the function of expressing an interest in a possible relationship. When reporting on those with just the person with whom they had their most recent relationship of at least six months, 4% had at least one

hook up but no dates, 26% had at least one date but no hook ups, while the majority, 67%, had at least one of each before it became a relationship. In cases where there were both dates and hook ups, our qualitative data suggest that the hook ups usually came first.

Many hook ups never lead to either another hook up or a relationship, and some lead only to more hook ups with the same person. But, as we've just seen, some lead to a relationship ("dating") via the pathway of one or more dates. Who initiates these dates? The gender revolution seems to have changed attitudes but not behavior in this area. When asked about their attitudes, students approve heartily of women asking men on dates (well over 90% of both men and women agreed that it is okay). Yet it rarely happens; as Figure 7 shows, asked about their most recent date with someone with whom they weren't already in a relationship, 87% claimed that the man had asked the woman out on this date. Focus groups suggested that asking a woman on a date is a way that men signal their interest in a possible relationship.

Who pays on these dates? Asked about their most recent date with someone with whom they were not already in a relationship, two-thirds said

the man paid, and less than 5% said the woman did. The remainder was evenly split between reporting that no money was spent and that they split the cost. Indeed, in qualitative interviews, when women report some event that might have been considered a date or not, they sometimes use the fact that he paid as evidence that it was a real date. One woman described such a situation this way: "It also kind of threw me that he like insisted on paying because I didn't really think of it as like a date...I thought we were just hanging out...I think I sort of knew that maybe he was thinking it was a date, but I definitely offered to pay for my meal... And he was like, 'No, no, no.'"

Relationships are often made "official" or exclusive via "the talk"—where one of the two people seek to define the relationship more clearly. This may happen after a few hook ups followed by hanging out or some dates. Some students call this a "DTR" or "define the relationship" talk. Others just call it "the talk." In the old days, it would be the man who would ask a woman to "go steady" or "be pinned" or who would propose marriage. We sought to ascertain who initiates the talk to define things as a relationship on today's campuses. In focus groups and in-depth interviews, the consensus was that these

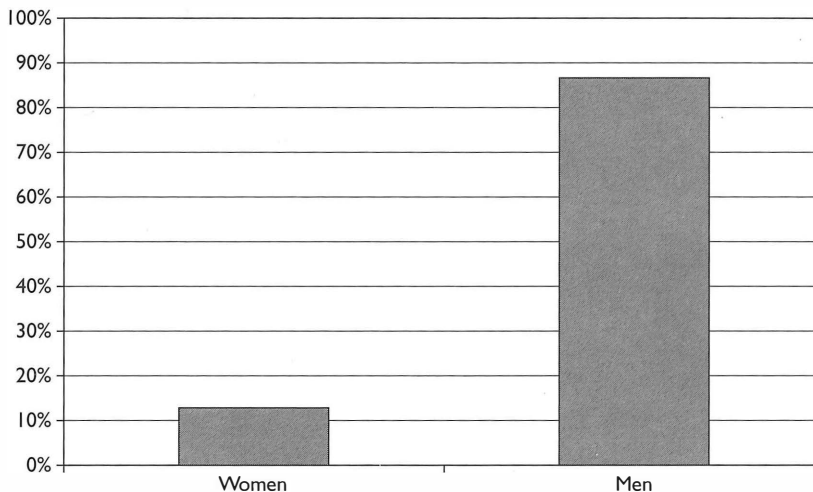


Figure 7. Who Asked Whom Out on Student's Most Recent Date.

Note: N = 2,870 undergraduates, reporting on their most recent date with someone with whom they were not already in an exclusive relationship.

talks are more often initiated by the woman who wants to know where she stands with the guy after several hook ups. As one female interviewee said, "I feel like it's...the stereotypical girl thing to do, like...the guy feels like the girl is boxing him into a relationship." To confirm this statistically, we asked students in the survey how it became "clear that this person was your boy/girlfriend." About half of men and women say that the man initiated it, while about a fifth say that the woman did. Most of the rest say they "just knew." Thus, at least in the cases where a relationship ensued, it was typically not the woman initiating the talk. Of course, this is not inconsistent with the possibility that women initiate more talks overall, but get shut down by men who don't want relationships. To find out about those DTRs that didn't lead to relationships, we also asked how many times the student ever initiated a talk to try to define a relationship as exclusive but had the partner respond that s/he didn't want a relationship. The distribution of male and female responses was very similar, with "never" the most frequent category. This suggests that, counter to the stereotype students themselves seem to have, women do *not* initiate such talks more than men. At this point in our research, we aren't sure what to make of this

discrepancy between the generalizations students make in focus groups, and what they report about their own experiences in the survey.

Whether or not women initiate more talks to define relationships, the larger question is whether women are more interested in relationships than men. Our attitudinal data suggest that they are, while men express a more recreational view of sex, although the two sexes overlap substantially. As Figure 8 shows, asked if they had been interested in a relationship with the person they hooked up with *before* the hook up, 47% of women but only 35% of men said they had at least some interest. Asked about their feelings of interest in a relationship right after the hook up, almost half the women but only 36% of the men had at least some interest in a relationship with this person. We think this indicates more interest in relationships among women. But there are other possible interpretations. It is possible that women's responses are different than men's because social pressures lead the two genders in the opposite direction of reporting bias. That is, women may feel they are supposed to limit hook ups to those in whom they have a relational interest, while men feel they are supposed to be ready for sex all the time. Alternatively, women may want

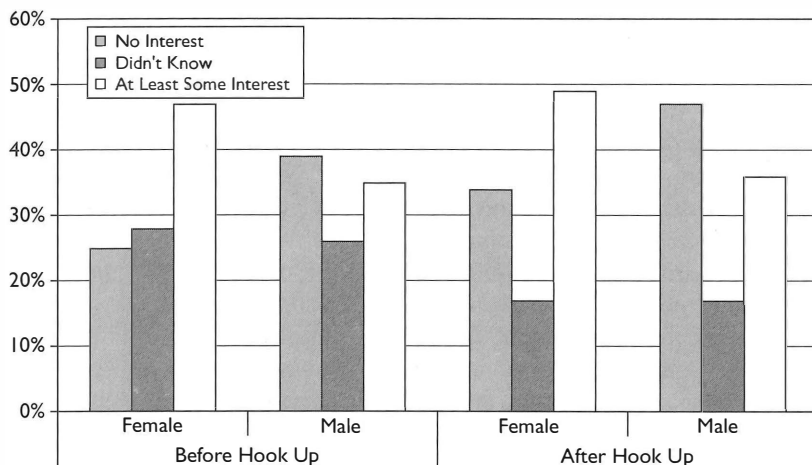


Figure 8. Women's and Men's Interest in a Relationship with This Partner Before and After Their Most Recent Hook Up.

Note: N = 2,144 and 2,903 undergraduates, respectively, reporting on their interest before and after their most recent hook up.

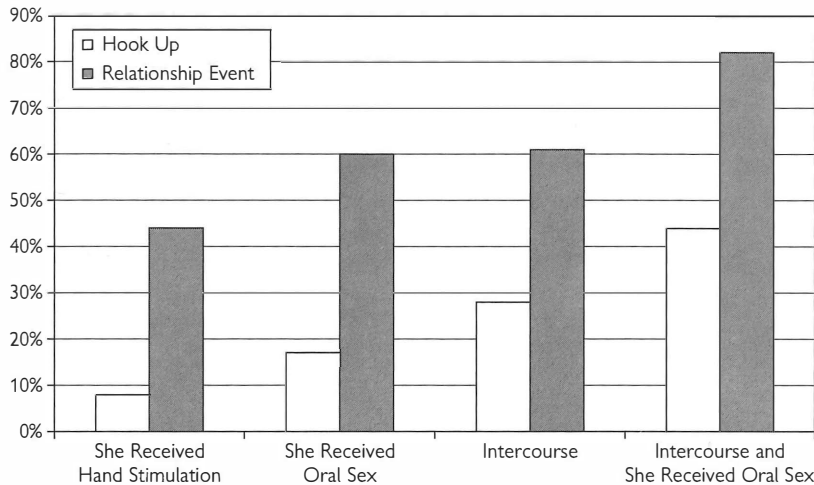


Figure 9. Women's Report of Own Orgasm in Last Hook Up That Was a First Hook Up with a Particular Partner and Last Relationship Sexual Event.

Note: $N = 1,865$ and $N = 1,276$ female undergraduates, respectively, reporting (white bar) on their sexual behavior and orgasm on their most recent hook up (only includes those that were first-time hook ups with that partner) and reporting (gray bar) on their sexual behavior and orgasm the last time they did anything sexual with a person with whom they had been in a relationship for at least six months.

relationships not because they like them more, but because they believe more strongly that sex should be relational, or because they know they will be judged more harshly than men for nonrelational sex. Indeed, given the statement, "I would not have sex with someone unless I was in love with them," 49% of women agreed but only 34% of men.¹⁵

One advantage of relationships for women is that most women have a better chance of orgasm when having sex with a regular partner. In our survey, we asked those in a relationship about the last time they did something sexual with their partner, so we could compare what happens in those situations to what happens on first-time hook ups. Figure 9 shows that women are much more likely to orgasm with a regular relationship partner than when hooking up with someone for the first time. ("For the first time" here refers to the first time with this partner.) First-time hook ups in which women received oral sex but did not have intercourse led to orgasm for women only 17% of the time, but,

within a relationship, oral sex without intercourse led to orgasm 60% of the time. When couples had intercourse, women had orgasm about 28% of the time in first-time hook ups but over 60% of the time in relationships. Although we don't show these statistics in the figure, the analogous percents for men are 52% and 89%; so relationships are also better for men than first-time hook ups with a given partner, although the gain is not quite as great as for women.

If the higher rates of orgasm in a relationship come mainly from communication and "practice" with this particular partner, then we might expect this advantage to be present in "friends with benefits" or "regular hook up" situations as well, even where there is not a professed romantic relationship. We don't show statistics on this in the figure, but there is evidence of this. Where couples had intercourse, women's orgasm rates were 28% in first-time hook ups and 60% in a relationship as shown in Figure 9; in hook ups where they had

previously hooked up at least ten times with this person, women's rate was 54%, not quite as good as the 60% in relationships but much better than in first-time hook ups. Perhaps the genuine caring in relationships explains their added advantage for orgasms.¹⁶ Of course, relationships may have disadvantages as well as advantages. Both men and women lose autonomy while gaining intimacy, and women may be expected to redefine themselves more than men.¹⁷

Talking about why she has orgasm more easily in a relationship, one woman said, "I'm more comfortable with the person." The same male student we quoted above about men not caring about the woman's orgasm in one-time hook ups said this: "If you're with somebody for . . . more than just that one night, I think . . . it is important for guys. . . . And I think if you're in a long-term relationship, like I know I feel personally responsible."

Two Partial Revolutions and Today's College Scene

What is happening on college campuses today reflects the two large-scale social changes that some have dubbed revolutions: the sexual revolution and the gender revolution. But it simultaneously reveals many aspects of the gender system left relatively untouched by these revolutions. The sexual revolution was pushed along by the availability of the birth control pill starting in the 1960s, and by the legalization of abortion with a Supreme Court decision in 1973. Both made it more possible to have sex without fear of having an unwanted birth. Unquestionably, norms about premarital sex have become more permissive, and the new social form of the hook up is one result. We have shown that hooking up is now quite mainstream among college students, however vague the norms surrounding it are.

The gender revolution also contributed to sexual permissiveness. As more women decided to train for careers, this pushed up age at marriage, which made sex before marriage more likely. More directly, the feminist idea that women should be free to pursue careers—even in traditionally male fields—may have spilled over into the idea

that women as well as men had a right to sexual freedom. Clearly women have won the right to be nonvirgins at marriage in most social groups. But beyond this gain, what is striking to us is how little gender revolution we see in sexual and romantic affairs. The double standard has not changed to a single "equal opportunity" standard for men and women. Rather, the standard, vague though it is, has shifted to a less restrictive line for each sex but remained dual; women who hook up a lot or have sex too easily are more at risk of a bad reputation than are men. One might have thought that the gender revolution would lead to women asking men out on dates. Instead, the casual date not preceded by a hook up has almost died. In both hook ups and the dates that sometimes come after them, men are initiating much of the action. The gender initiating the action seems to be getting more of the sexual rewards, particularly in hook ups, where women give men oral sex more than vice versa, and even when women receive oral sex or have intercourse, they have orgasms much less often than men. Equal opportunity for women appears to have gone farther in the educational and career world than in the college sexual scene.

Notes

1. In almost all cases, respondents were recruited through classes. The numbers of respondents at the universities were: U. Arizona 309, Indiana U. 1,616, Stanford U. 925, U. California Santa Barbara 745, and SUNY-Stony Brook 628. We also collected a small number of responses from students at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington (27) and Ithaca College (69). These are included in the results reported here. Overall, we had 2,779 women and 1,550 men, a total of 4,329 respondents. Our sample is not a probability sample from any of the participating colleges, so cannot be said to be strictly representative of college students at these institutions.
2. What we learned in the focus groups informs our discussion. We took notes in these groups, but did not record them. Therefore, we use no direct quotes from these sessions.
3. We started from a random sample of 118 seniors provided by the Registrar. Data collection is

- ongoing, but this preliminary analysis uses the 25 interviews that have been conducted and transcribed to date. Given the low response rate so far, and the fact that the other larger group of 270 interviews conducted in 2004 obtained respondents through a convenience sample (students chose an acquaintance to interview), the qualitative data should not be considered representative. The data should, however, reveal most of the range of behaviors and meanings present in the undergraduate culture.
4. The mean number of drinks on the most recent hook up was 6.7 for men and 3.9 for women. Extreme outliers affect means more than medians.
 5. Classifying hand stimulation of genitals as "going less far" than oral sex is somewhat arbitrary, but we did so because we believe students see oral sex as "going farther," and also because the data show that, as practiced by college students, hand stimulation of genitals leads to orgasm less often than oral sex. Our rankings imply no value judgment about which practices are better; we are trying to rank order practices as students see them in terms of which are seen as "going farther."
 6. There were a few cases where the couple had anal sex but not vaginal intercourse; we classified these as intercourse. While about a quarter of women say they have ever had anal sex, a very small percent engage in this on any one occasion, which is why we did not include the practice in our classification.
 7. While both men and women are more apt to report male than female initiation, the disparity is actually much greater in women's reports. This suggests that some events that women see as male initiation are seen by men as female initiation, or that women are more reluctant to report initiating because it is more stigmatized for them.
 8. Twenty-four percent of men reported hooking up in the woman's room, while 44% said it was in their own room. Similarly, 25% of women said it was in their own room, while 42% said it was in the guy's room. The remainder of cases were in some other room.
 9. Students also told us that male roommates are more accepting of hook ups occurring in the room, and even feel under pressure to help their roommates "score" by allowing them to use the room. In all-male focus group discussions, men were candid about the challenge of coming up with a pretext for getting the young woman to his room. Sometimes suggesting that they watch a movie on a DVD serves this function.
 10. For a discussion of the theoretical perspective called "doing gender" that posits such gender display, see West and Fenstermaker 1993. The idea is that people are accountable to norms and conform their behavior to them even if they have not deeply internalized the belief that this is how it should be.
 11. This standard is still emphasized among Mexican immigrants to the U.S., according to González-López (2005). Although most of the women she interviewed were not virgins when they married, the norm was that women should be, while men were expected to have their first sexual experience with a sex worker. Since the 1980s, fundamentalist Christian groups have encouraged youth to take a pledge to remain virgins till marriage, as discussed by Bearman and Brückner (2001). While endorsing many other forms of gender differentiation and male leadership, fundamentalist Christians generally encourage a single standard of virginity before marriage for both men and women.
 12. Responses to another question showed a fascinating pattern in which each sex appears to have a double standard favoring their own sex, but men having a much harsher double standard against women than women have against men. Our survey asked students if they agree or disagree with the statement: "If women hook up or have sex with lots of people, I respect them less." They were given the same item about men. While 58% of female respondents agreed that they respected women less if they hook up or have sex with lots of people, they agreed by a somewhat wider margin (69%) that they respect men less who do this. Among men, however, only 41% agreed when asked about men but 67% agreed concerning women. Despite women's answer on the survey suggesting that they hold men a more exacting standard than women, focus groups said that women talk a lot amongst themselves about whether other women are "slutty."
 13. For a history of courtship and dating in America, see Bailey 1988.

14. This excludes fraternity or sorority events, which some students don't view as "real dates." Including those, the mean number of dates is 6 and the median is 4.
15. This is consistent with national survey data on adults that shows a higher percent of men than women to have a "recreational" (as opposed to "relational") orientation to sex (Michael et al. 1995).
16. Where couples had intercourse (but he didn't receive oral sex), male orgasm rates were also higher in hook ups with partners with whom they had hooked up at least ten times than in first-time hook ups with this partner (83% versus 52%), but even higher in relationships (89%).
17. Writing about the late 1980s, Holland and Eisenhart (1990) argue that the culture elevating "romance" seduces college women into relationships that pull them away from solidarity with other women, seriousness about their education, and career plans. Hamilton and Armstrong's (2007) more recent interviews of college women at a large state university show that many of them give up time with friends when they are in relationships. They also find working class women particularly likely to drop out of the university because of boyfriends back home. Other authors, such as Glenn and Marquardt (2001), argue that the college hook up culture is bad for women because it discourages relationships and the movement toward marriage, things that many of their female respondents said they wanted.

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