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**Sexual Decision Making in the Context of Hookup Culture:**

**A Mixed-Method Examination**

A Dissertation Presented

by

**Rachel Kalish**

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**Sociology**

Stony Brook University

**May 2014**

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Abstract of the Dissertation

**Sexual Decision Making in the Context of Hookup Culture: A Mixed-Method Examination**

by

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**Sociology**

Stony Brook University

**2014**

This dissertation is a multi-method study of college students' sexual decision-making. It relies on interviews and focus groups to examine how college students make decisions within the context of the "hook-up culture" (Heldman and Wade 2010) prominent on American campuses. Patterns in the qualitative data are examined quantitatively using the Online College Social Life Survey.

To understand how students make decisions in hookup culture, I examine their views of relationships, how they enact relationships, and the effects of hooking up on relationships. I find that students envision relationships in their future, and choose not to expend time on them during their early undergraduate studies. Counter to common stereotypes, both male and female students express experience with and desire for relationships, which often form after a period of hooking up, not traditional dating, yet high-status students are more likely to experience dates and relationships. Hooking up also impacts relationships, as students rely on gendered stereotypes to evaluate their peers' behaviors and motivations; females think that males want sex, and males expect females to want a relationship, which complicates things for students whose desires are counter to these stereotypes.

I next examine decisions about choice of partner and sexual activity. Gender expectations shape these choices for undergraduates. Men make decisions based on the accolades they expect from peers, while women make decisions to shield them from being labeled a slut, evidence of the double standard. To men, a "good" partner is one who is highly desired by others; women consider a "good" partner someone who is trusting and non-coercive. These gendered stereotypes also factor into sexual behaviors, where women engage in sex acts to cement the bond with her partner, as evidence of the relational imperative. Young men are also affected, and engage in sex acts when they do not want to, but do so to mitigate against any threat to his masculinity. As a result of gender role expectations, much of the sex on college

campuses may not be fully desired by the parties, but it is an agentic choice because of the social outcome it produces.

## **Dedication Page**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, William and Evelyn Kalish and Mitzi and Mack Rapp, who taught me how important it is to “have fun and learn something.”

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This dissertation is a report of a multi-method study of American college students' sexual decision-making. The study relied on in-depth interviews and focus groups to examine how college students choose partners, navigate safe sex practices, and make decisions about sexual behaviors, all within the context of the "hook-up culture" (Heldman and Wade 2010) so prominent on American campuses. Additionally, patterns emerging from qualitative data were examined quantitatively using the existent Online College Social Life Survey. This first chapter presents the background of the study, describes the significance of the study, presents an overview of the methods used and specifies the research questions and hypotheses. The next section of this chapter continues with an examination of factors leading to the rise of hookup culture, and then looks specifically at the literature on hooking up. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the organization and content of the remaining chapters.

### **Background of the Study**

This dissertation examines sexual decision-making within the context of hookup culture. Hooking up, or non-committed sexual activity, has been a topic of empirical examination since the turn of the millennium (Paul, McManus and Hayes 2000). Additionally, it has also been the subject of widespread attention by journalists and the lay public (see Stepp 2007). Much of this coverage discusses the negative ramifications of hooking up, and posits that the practice is irresponsible, unsafe, and damaging to America's youth. In light of such characterizations, there is a need for unbiased examinations of hooking up. Furthermore, many authors discuss the outcomes of hooking up, and such outcomes are often viewed negatively (Arnold 2010). Therefore,

this study is a relevant addition to the literature because it examines how students make decisions, rather than the outcomes of those decisions, although an expectation of a potential outcome certainly factors into decision-making, which is why the hookup culture is a factor in the analysis.

### Problem Statement

The problem examined in this dissertation is the sexual decision-making of American College students. Within the context of large scale social belief that college students are seeking hedonistic, intoxicated sexual encounters, often referred to as hooking up, it is important to examine how these assumptions figure into college students' sexual decisions. Other factors in this decision-making are the peer group, and the social expectations of masculinity and femininity, which combine to create a platform upon which sexual decisions are evaluated. Therefore, sexual decision-making is important to study since it not only affects intimate behaviors, but due to the role of the peer group, these decisions become public as well.

### Significance of the Study

As the sexuality of young adults has been the subject of public concern for some time (Levine 2003; Elliott 2013), any examination of sexual decision making is considered to be socially valued. The subject of college student sexuality is intrinsically important, as it can relate to health outcomes, safe sex practices, and can also impact policy decisions about co-educational dormitories and campus alcohol policies. Additionally, learning why students behave the way they do sexually can be especially useful in awareness campaigns intended to reduce the occurrence of sexual assault on college campuses.

## Overview of Methodology

This dissertation uses multiple methodologies to examine sexual decision-making. The majority of the dissertation relies on a qualitative analysis, utilizing in-depth interviews with 49 undergraduates. Data from four focus groups also informs the qualitative analysis. In the qualitative analysis, data were transcribed and examined for recurrent themes. These themes became the center of the analysis, and were investigated in more detail.

Additionally, the themes found in the qualitative data were also examined quantitatively. The existent Online College Social Life Survey is the largest existent data set of college student social life. It has over 24,000 cases, and the data were collected from 22 colleges and universities across the United States. The survey data is intended to enrich the qualitative data and offer a larger picture of these patterns in sexual decision-making. While the survey offers a glimpse into such patterns over the entire dataset, the qualitative data provides more detail in terms of why these decisions are made, and offers a richer description of the decision-making process. It is for this reason that the qualitative analysis is used for the majority of the discussion in the following chapters.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question #1: What are students' views of relationships?

Hypothesis #1: Students are likely to see relationships as a part of their future, and not necessarily something to do while in college. Due to that, they may see relationships as time consuming, or as a distraction from schoolwork or other attractions of collegiate life (Bogle 2007; 2008a).

Research Question #2: Who has relationships? Who goes on dates?

Hypothesis #2a: Students who are closer to completing their undergraduate studies may be more likely to seek relationships, as relationships are often considered to be something that is necessary after the college days are over (Arnold 2010).

Hypothesis #2b: Students seeking relationships, as well as those closer to graduating will be more likely to go on dates in an effort to establish a relationship.

Research Question #3: How do students establish relationships?

Hypothesis #3: Students are not likely to engage in traditional dates as a means to establish relationships. Instead, they will meet potential partners through group-hang outs (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a) and also start relationships through hooking up (England and Thomas 2007; England et al. 2008). Additionally, there may be a “talk” to establish exclusivity after a couple has been spending time together.

Research Question #4: How are relationships viewed in relation to hookups?

Hypothesis #4: According to the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009), female students are more likely to view relationships as preferable to hookups, whereas in accordance with traditional views of masculinity for college age males (Kimmel 2008), male students are more likely to prefer hooking up to committed relationships. Students of both sexes may be likely to see relationships as time consuming.

Research Question #5: How does hooking up affect relationships?

Hypothesis #5: Due to the relational imperative, discussed above, students may rely on stereotypes to gauge a potential partner’s motivation, so women may think men only want sex, and men may think women want relationships.

Research Question #6: How do students make sexual decisions in hookups?

Hypothesis #6: Hookups are thought to be immediate pleasure seeking behaviors, so students are likely to engage in behaviors they expect to be pleasurable. However, the double standard complicates this for young women (Ronen 2010).

Research Question #7: How do students choose partners?

Hypothesis #7: Male students are more likely to choose a partner who is highly attractive, or sought after by many others. Females are likely to select a partner with whom they trust and feel comfortable, and possibly want a relationship (Grello et al. 2006).

Research Question #8: What makes someone a “good” or “bad” hookup partner?

Hypothesis #8: The double standard implies that females may be seen as a bad hookup partner if she is thought to be too promiscuous (Paul 2006; Reid et al. 2011), and females may view a male as a bad hookup partner if he is coercive (Heldman and Wade 2010) or sexually inexperienced (Kimmel 2008).

Research Question #9: How do sexual decisions differ by gender?

Hypothesis #9: In accordance with traditional views of heterosexuality, males are likely to try to get as far as they can sexually, where females are more likely to be a gatekeeper and attempt to curtail the sexual activity (Ronen 2010; Reid et al. 2011).

Research Questions #1-5 are addressed in Chapter 4; Research Question #3 and Research Questions #6-9 are addressed in Chapter 5; and Research Questions #8 and #9 are also addressed in Chapter 6.

### Delimitations

While this dissertation offers an expanded insight into sexual decision making of American undergraduates, it is limited by the non-representativeness of the data. The convenience sampling method challenges the extent to which the findings may be applied to all American undergraduates, yet it offers a compelling look into the practices of the undergraduates at two institutions of higher education on the east coast of the US.

Additionally, the analysis is also affected by the heterosexual bias of the data. The overwhelming majority of the respondents to the OCSLS as well as the participants in the interviews and focus groups are heterosexual. Future projects will be well served by an inclusion of more homosexual students as well as gender non-conforming students.

The major findings center around the impact of gender role expectations and their effects on sexual decision-making. For this reason, inclusion of more gender non-conforming students would likely add more texture to the findings.

#### Background: Factors Encouraging the Emergence of Hooking Up

The traditional form of courtship as a path to intimate relationships has faded from prominence among American college students (Bogle 2008a). In its place, different forms of interactions have surfaced with varying levels of exclusivity (Paik 2010a; 2010b). Among these, “Hooking up” has emerged as a popular trend in intimate and sexual relationships among adolescents and young adults. Much attention has been focused on this phenomenon, and researchers have begun to study these interactions empirically. Since the turn of the millennium, there has been a growing body of research on non-committed, or casual, sex among emerging adults, mainly in the fields of psychology and sociology. Some of this work focuses on young adult casual sex (Grello et al. 2006; Manning et al. 2005), while other work specifically examines hooking up (Bogle 2008a; Paul, McManus and Hayes 2000; Paul 2006, England and Thomas 2007) or “friends with benefits” (Bisson and Levine 2009; Puentes et al. 2008; Lehmiller et al. 2011; McGinty et al. 2007) or a combination of the two (Hughes et al 2005; Furman and Shaffer 2011; Epstein et al. 2009).

The emergence of hooking up has been impacted by many factors, notably the shift from the family to the peer group as the regulator of partner choice and the advent of technology affecting the ways young adults socialize and make connections. In fact, the technology of the automobile caused the shift to peers as a regulator of sexual decision-making (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a). Also impacting young adults’ sexual relationships were social changes taking place throughout the twentieth century, and the availability of increased options for contraception starting with the Pill in 1960. The AIDS epidemic is also significant, in that it underscored the dangers of sex and encouraged a shift toward sexual conservatism in the 1980’s (Levine 2003).

The characterization of sexuality, especially among young adults, as dangerous has many consequences, including a reduction in sex education provided in schools and the increase of abstinence-only sex education in many states (Levine 2003). This makes sexuality somewhat taboo, while simultaneously encouraging young adults' interest in it. Often in place of education, young adults are warned of the dangers of sexuality and later seek out peers for what has been termed a "gutter education" on sexuality (Kronhausen and Kronhausen 1960). Young women were told horror stories of the dangers of young men out to take advantage of them, and young men were even taken to prostitutes as a way for them to learn about sex (Kronhausen and Kronhausen 1960). This forced opposition between the sexes only reinforced the dichotomous ideology of "good girls," and "bad girls" (Elliott 2012). However, such a reliance on the peer group for education about sex also increased the importance of the peer group as a regulator of a person's choice of a sexual partner, and it accentuated the impact that peers had on affecting sexual decision making, as many young people engaged in behavior they believed their friends were doing.

The ubiquity of the media (and media-saturated culture) cannot be understated in impacting trends regarding young adult sexuality. The availability of televisions has been significant, but more significant regarding sexuality is the programming shown on television and how it has changed over the past few decades. Sexuality has crept into mainstream television shows, and many depictions of sexuality accompany stereotypically gendered ideals; however, mainstream depictions of healthy sexuality are rare (Gruber and Grube 2000; Kunkel, Cope, Biely 1999; Zurbriggen and Morgan 2006; Lauzen, Dozier, Cleveland 2006; Ward 2002; Ward and Rivadeneyra 1999; Brown 2002). The explosion of reality television provides a glimpse of what can be characterized as risky, casual, or even callous sex, where young scantily clad adults seem to live life for the purpose of sexual encounters. Media scholars have long asserted that it is not so much the amount of television viewing as it is the degree to which the viewer is invested in the program that affects behavior (Ward 2002; Ward and Rivadeneyra 1999). The measurements of viewer investment include the extent to which the viewer sees the depictions on television as *realistic* and likely to happen in their own lives. Reality



television is based on the premise that what is shown is in fact real (Lauzen, Dozier, and Cleveland 2006), so it can be extrapolated that viewers of reality television may be highly invested in what they see. The popularity of such shows among high school and college aged youth has served to make these types of hypersexual displays normative, which clearly impacts such behaviors as hooking up (Zurbriggen and Morgan 2006). Characters are often seen seeking out sexual partners; safe sex practices are rare, however, not just on reality television, but on television in general (Gruber and Grube 2000; Kunkel, Cope, and Biely 1999), suggesting that normative depictions of sexuality on television promote risky or otherwise unsafe behavior<sup>1</sup>. Astutely recognizing the impact of television in young adults' lives, media scholar L. Monique Ward refers to television as a "super peer," (2002:4), emphasizing that the role of television in shaping ideals about sexual behavior is equivalent or superior to the role of peers.

In addition to television, the availability of wireless technology impacts the social and sexual scene of today's young adults. Cellular technology allows for immediate contact through text message, and social networking sites allow for instant messaging, including photos, further promoting the idea of ever-present proximity to others. Many young adults prefer to find friends and converse with people on networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, instead of engaging in actual face-to-face conversation. The reliance on technology suggests that young people have different, and more extended, conceptions of identity, since technology allows people to manipulate their presentation of self (Ray 2007; Glasser et al. 2009; Hardey 2004).

In combination with the addition of technology into the lives of young people, the somewhat encouraging behaviors of parents can inadvertently foster hooking up. Many young people, especially middle- and upper-class youth, are pushed into an array of programs and activities as they age; all with the intention of helping them get into the best schools. Today's young people are continually striving for the best, to do their best

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<sup>1</sup> Most research investigating young adult sexuality regards it as 'risky.' Adolescent or young adult sexuality is seen as non-normative, that is not-procreative, so the characterization of it as risky, casual, or otherwise dangerous is common (Stein 2006). See Manning et al., 2005 for a more in depth discussion of this trend. However, across cultures, adolescent sexual partner swapping is normative in some areas, such as among the Trobriand Islanders, or the Muria of Central India (Schlegel 1995).

academically, to get the best jobs, all with the goal of achieving success in the future. It is unsurprising, then, that such achievement takes up a great deal of a young person's time. As youth come of age in an era where wireless technology allows them to contact a friend immediately through technology, it is no surprise that many young people are impatient in the pursuit of their goals; and as they age, finding a partner becomes no exception (Stepp 2007). Many young people believe that they will not find their life partner while they are undergraduates, indeed many wish not to, as they see their undergraduate career as a time to focus on academics, and also a time to experiment and "live life." The realization that finding a life partner is a task for 'after graduation,' is combined with the belief that every moment spent must contribute to their life's goals, and is easily facilitated, then, by high speed digitized communication, to create the imperative for young people to hook up. Pragmatically, they understand that their time as undergraduates will prepare them for careers and or graduate school, and they do not want to expend energy on relationships that will not likely last after graduation. So, instead, they choose to hook up, allowing themselves access to the fun of an undergraduate life, while also feeling that they are not wasting time in a relationship that is better spent in finding internships, summer jobs, or work study programs. In fact, some scholars suggest that the ever popular social networking websites, such as Facebook or Twitter, often used by young people as a way to hook up or comment on others' hookups, are serving to train young people into a 'now-oriented' lifestyle that will help them find success as corporate professionals (Glasser et al. 2009). The impact of these changes is significant in an examination of college students' sexual lives.

Heldman and Wade (2010) theorize causes for the rise of the hookup culture on college campuses, specifying the difference between the pattern of hooking up, which is likely to have been ongoing (Bogle 2008a), and "hookup culture," with the latter emerging more recently as the hegemonic form of intimate relations on college campuses as other forms of dating or relationships have lost prominence and popularity. "So, though casual sex has been a part of college life for decades, a new denigration of, disinterest in, or absence of monogamous, emotionally meaningful relationships may mark the move from subcultural practice to mainstream culture" (Heldman and Wade

2010: 327). As mentioned above, they look to the sexual revolution, the availability of oral contraception, and the women's movement as possible precursors to contemporary hookup practices, as these social changes set the stage for many changes to marriage, family, and courtship (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a), which specifically led to a shift in the sexual script that puts oral sex before vaginal intercourse in the standard progression of sexuality (Heldman and Wade 2010). Yet, they also look at certain contemporary patterns to explain how hookups have become so prominent in the lives of today's college students.

Some of these patterns concern the college environment itself, such as the change on college campuses regarding co-ed dorms. However, since dorms have been coeducational since the 1970's, it appears that the close proximity of students of the opposite sex may play a supporting role in the emergence of hooking up. Another notable change on college campuses is the increasing enrollment of women, where female students have been steadily increasing on college campuses, to the point where young women outnumber men on many campuses. This imbalance is quite important in heterosexual relationships, as the scarcity of men gives them power to shape the intimate relationship patterns to those of their choice (Bogle 2007). The large scale entrance of women into higher education has also led to an increase in the age at first marriage. As many young people strive for career aspirations, they de-prioritize monogamous relationships, which seems to only encourage hookups.

There are other changes affecting young adults that also impact hooking up. On campuses and off, there has been an increase in binge drinking among young adults. While alcohol consumption has been viewed as a normative part of the college experience, drinking to the point of excess, something much more potentially dangerous, has been increasing among both men and women; many people engage in sexual activity while intoxicated. There has also been an increase in the consumption of pornography, particularly over the internet (Reiber and Garcia 2010). Increased pornography viewing also impacts sexual scripts, as pornography is increasingly featuring oral and anal sex acts. Related to this, Heldman and Wade (2010) discuss the "pornification" of mass media as another factor encouraging hookup culture. This is related to the explosion of

reality television discussed above, but it specifically describes media which shows imagery that is sexually explicit and “encourages young women to participate in their own sexual objectification” (2010: 329). This leads to an increase in self-objectification where young people, especially women, consider their bodies as an object for the pleasure of others, which compromises their ability to act agentically or to feel entitled to their own pleasure (Holland et al. 2004; Bell 2013). Heldman and Wade (2010) see this linked with what they call the New Narcissism. Narcissism encourages a more transient approach to intimacy and highlights the game playing aspect of it, which could foster hooking up.

Wade and Heldman (2012) also point to the HIV epidemic to shape how people perceive risk and health. They indicate that today’s youth came of age slightly after the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic, which was marked with fear and concern. Due to advances in health technology, as well as successful public health campaigns encouraging condom use during vaginal intercourse, there is a perception that behaviors such as oral sex involve less of a risk. “In sum, it is possible that the hook-up culture would have emerged earlier in the wake of the Women’s Movement and the sexual revolution, but that the HIV/AIDS epidemic had a dampening effect” (Heldman and Wade, 2010: 329).

Heldman and Wade (2010) offer a compelling explanation for the emergence of the hookup culture. I would add to this the element of parental supervision, as mentioned above. There has been an increasing trend of over-monitoring on the part of parents, sometimes referred to as “helicopter” parents, who “hover” over their children and their activities (Alsop 2008). Such monitoring reinforces the value young adults place on preparing for the future, but it also can create a desire among children to rebel from their parents’ watchful eye. In this case, when a child escapes the hypervigilance of their parent, for example by going to college, they may choose to dive into the hookup scene enthusiastically.

Additionally, parental surveillance serves to underscore the stark divide between a “now” and “the future” in the minds of the young adult. With such attention paid to their future, it becomes a distant entity so that their current behavior seems separate and distinct from that imagined future. Also, as discussed above, exclusive relationships

become a part of that imagined future. Interestingly, parents seek to keep their children protected from the dangers of sexuality. Many parents, then, operating under the ‘danger discourse’ of teen sexuality, reinforce a dichotomy between “good” and “bad” peers, those who are chaste or sexually active (Elliott 2012). To encourage their children to spend time with peers considered safe, or chaste, as well as to keep them occupied, parents encourage their child’s participation in after school programs and activities that their socio-economic status allows. This time management, ironically, only encourages these children to hook up in the future because of the space between the now as they live it and the future they imagine. It is ironic that the explicit action on the part of the parents intent on protecting young adults from casual sex, actually encourages it; since relationships are seen as something they can look forward to in the future, many young adults seek out the pleasures of a relationship minus the “expense” of time, which fosters hooking up.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a review of the hookup literature that has developed since the turn of the millennium. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the dissertation, looking specifically at the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009) and the double standard, and their impact on the enactment of sexual agency, with a focus on the theoretical discussion of sexual agency referred to as the “male-in-the-head” (Holland et al. 2004). Chapter 3 describes the methods used, first justifying the mixed method approach, and then discussing the specific methodologies and the data used in the analysis. Chapter 4 is the first empirical chapter, differing from the rest by examining students’ perceptions of and experiences with exclusive relationships in the context of hookup culture. I include an examination of relationships to demonstrate not only that both forms of intimacy co-exist, but also to illuminate some of the reasons why students hook up, as gleaned from their perceptions and beliefs about relationships. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the hookup culture and students’ sexual decision making. Chapter 5 focuses on the assertion of sexual agency, in an effort to achieve safe sex practices, in partner choice, and in the choice of specific sexual behaviors in hookups. Chapter 6 examines how and why people abdicate their sexual agency in hookups, allowing others to guide the progression of sexual behaviors.

However, such “abdication” of agency has different outcomes and motivations, based upon shared expectations of gender, and due to this, what appears to be non-agentic, can actually be extremely self-serving. Chapter 6 includes a quantitative analysis, looking at one specific context in which young women abdicate their sexual agency in service to their male partner. In this chapter, I examine the theory of the “male-in-the-head” and if it still applies to young adults twenty-five years after it was postulated. Chapter 7 synthesizes these results and discusses them in the context of hookup culture. This concluding chapter also provides suggestions for directions of future research.

### Review of the Literature on Hooking Up

Much of the empirical work on hooking up is focused on young women, and a great deal of it discusses the after-effects of hooking up. Emergent in this research is the idea that hooking up is damaging to young women (Glenn and Marquardt 2001), that it impedes relationships (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Bogle 2008a), and that hooking up results in an unequal power differential favorable to males (Bogle 2008a; Lambert, Kahn, and Apple 2003; Paul and Hayes 2002; England and Thomas 2007). Further, many of the definitions of hookups used in the research instruments include a normative aspect which has certain implications on how about these encounters are viewed.

What exactly is a hookup? Hookups have been operationalized differently throughout both the academic literature and mainstream publications (e.g. Stepp 2007), yet most definitions characterize hookups as non-committed intimate interactions. Scholars are quick to point out the use of this terminology, “hookup,” to replace outdated notions of courtship or dating (Bogle 2005; England and Thomas 2007; Stinson 2010; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Fielder et al. 2012; Owen and Fincham 2012), but actual definitions of hooking up vary, and these definitional differences are important to note as they restrict the wide range of behaviors actually being studied.

Some scholars use a narrow definition, referring to hook ups as a casual sexual encounter that occurs only one time (Daniel and Fogarty 2007; Epstein et al. 2009;

Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008; Paul 2006; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul et al. 2000; Bradshaw et al 2010; Fortunato et al. 2010; Owen and Fincham 2011a), between strangers or people who do not know each other well (Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008; Lambert et al. 2003; Paul 2006; Paul et al. 2000; Paul and Hayes 2002; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Glenn and Marquardt 2001), without the expectation of a long term relationship (Paul and Hayes 2002; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D'Aureli, Gigliotti, Hall, Kiser and Stine 2007; Fielder et al. 2012; Fielder and Carey 2010; Reiber and Garcia 2010; Lambert et al. 2003; Owen and Fincham 2011a; Owen et al. 2010). One team of researchers uses an extremely narrow definition, operationalizing hooking up as having vaginal intercourse with a partner only one time (similar to the "one night stand" of the past); or oral or vaginal intercourse with a partner known less than 24 hours (Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008). Others refer to hookups using a broader definition, describing hookups as a sexual experience ranging from kissing to intercourse between two individuals who are not in a committed relationship (England and Thomas 2007; England, Fitzgibbons Shafer, and Fogarty 2008; Armstrong et al. 2009; Penhollow et al. 2007; Plante 2005; Wade and Heldman 2012; Epstein et al. 2009; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Gusarova et al. 2012).

These differences are important, since a definition that focuses on two strangers or people who do not know each other well simply will not capture the experiences of young adults who engage in these activities with people known to them or with people considered to be friends (Bisson and Levine 2009; Furman and Shaffer 2011; Hughes et al. 2005), which has been established empirically as a common event.

Related to differences in definitions, there is a qualitative difference in perspective among researchers examining hookups. Some research considers hooking up, or any form of noncommitted sexuality, to be negative. Due to this, there is a body of research that characterizes hooking up only as risky or bad (Glenn and Marquardt 2001) since it occurs outside of committed relationships. In their definition of hooking up, Daniel and Fogarty refer to hookups as "emotionally shallow" (2007: p. 1 of 3) and call for attention to the "problem of hook-ups" (2007: page 2 of 3). Similarly, Arnold

(2010:1) calls for “interventions to investigate and address the hook-up culture.” Some of these characterizations appear subjective, while others are embedded into the research design. Glenn and Marquardt (2001), one of the earliest studies of hooking up, linked hooking up to future aspirations for marriage, indicating a negative relationship between the two. In this way, their work offers a more cautionary tale.

Also related to the hierarchy of sexual behaviors (Rubin 1999) which denigrates non-coupled, non-procreative sexuality, there is a growing body of literature that sees hooking up as a risk behavior (Arnold 2010; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Daniel and Fogarty 2007; Eisenberg et al. 2009; Flack et al. 2007; Fortunato et al. 2010; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008; Heldman and Wade 2010; Kan et al. 2006; Lehmillier et al. 2011; Littleton et al. 2009; Manning et al. 2005; Paul and Hayes 2002; Penhollow et al. 2007; Reiber and Garcia 2010; Ven and Beck 2009). Similarly, there is research which sees hooking up as negative for women (Arnold 2010; Daniel and Fogarty 2007; England and Thomas 2007; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Flack et al. 2007; Gusarova et al. 2012; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Kooyman et al. 2011; Paul and Hayes 2002) or favorable to males (Grello et al 2006). In fact, by examining the literature on hooking up, it would be easy to come to the conclusion that this behavior is extremely bad for young women.

Some of the work describing hooking up as negative for women will correctly point out that ambiguous practices regarding sex can increase the likelihood of sexual assault (Ven and Beck 2009; Flack et al. 2007; Arnold 2010; Lambert et al. 2003) or the increase of verbal coercion after a refusal of sex (O’Dougherty Wright et al. 2010). Others mention the sexual double standard as a negative effect of hooking up for women (Fortunato et al. 2010; Ronen 2010; Paul et al. 2000; Paul and Hayes 2002; Reid et al. 2011; Wade and Heldman 2012; Young et al. 2010). England et al. (2008) assert that casual sex acts by women can lead to negative perceptions of them by their male peers, to the extent of removing such women from consideration as a potential girlfriend. Similarly, some work discusses how women in particular can get a bad reputation from hooking up (Kooyman et al. 2011) and how that reputation can induce further participation in the hookup scene.



A great deal of the research on hooking up is survey based (Paul and Hayes 2002; Lambert, et al. 2003; Paul, McManus and Hayes 2000; Flack et al. 2007; Gusarova et al. 2012) and many of the samples are comprised of one gender only, which is most often women (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder et al. 2012; Fielder and Carey 2010; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Littleton et al. 2009) or weighted more heavily towards one gender (Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus and Hayes 2000). The notable exceptions to this are the few studies which focus on males (Epstein et al. 2009; Kalish 2013) or have over 50% of male participants (Furman and Shaffer 2011; Gusarova et al. 2012).

Additionally, much of this research is focused within one geographic area (Bogle 2008a) or at one school (Paul and Hayes 2002; Lambert, et al. 2003; Paul et al. 2000; Flack et al. 2007). Most samples are not representative of the general population. Indeed, while Paul, McManus and Hayes (2000) do use a random sample of 555, and Flack et al. (2007) use a representative sample of 178, the remainder of the studies usually use convenience samples.

One example of a nationally representative sample examining hooking up is the data set used by Glenn and Marquardt (2001) and later by Burdette et al. (2009). Their work uses mixed methods, but focuses on women only. Additionally, the original research done by Glenn and Marquardt (2001) seems to link hooking up to a universal goal of future marriage, so the results appear polemic. Other scholars are utilizing a mixed methods approach (England and Thomas 2007, England et al. 2008), allowing for meanings and contextual information to emerge.

Many scholars seek to address the issue of non-representative samples by utilizing nationally representative data sets, such as ADD Health (Manning et al. 2005; Mendle et al. 2012; Snyder 2006) or the Chicago Health and Social Life Survey (Paik 2010a; 2010b). These studies are beneficial in that they use representative data, and yet the results may only be interpreted with caution, since the data collection may be decades old (Paik 2010a; 2010b) as well as covering a larger age range of respondents. Not surprisingly, the studies that rely on non-collegiate populations find lower rates of

hooking up (Eisenberg et al. 2009; Fortunato et al. 2010; Bergdal et al. 2012; Lehmillier et al. 2011).

Not only are the majority of studies focused on women, the samples utilized are almost all overwhelmingly Caucasian. The Eshbaugh/Gute research team (2008) uses samples that are 95-96% Caucasian, and the majority of work that reports the ethnic make up of the sample indicates over 50% is Caucasian. Two specific examples stand out among this trend. Ray and Rosow (2010) examine students of color on historically Black campuses, as well as on campuses where they are a significant minority. Interestingly, they find that when students of color are a significant minority, they feel as if their behavior is a proxy for their entire race, and these students eschew hooking up, and characterize it as “acting white.” The other example, a study of communication patterns among African American and Puerto Rican young adults living in an urban area, focuses more on cell phone use and considers hooking up under the wider umbrella of “casual sex,” reinforcing the idea that hooking up is prominent among white, college-age individuals (Bergdal et al. 2012).

Another bias among the literature on hooking up is that it focuses on heterosexual students. This may be a product of the proportion of gay and lesbian students, or the willingness of non-heterosexual students to engage in social research. In any case, the empirical data regarding hooking up primarily deals with heterosexual hookups. While the Online College Social Life Survey does have a small percentage of gay-identified students, over 90% of the sample identifies as heterosexual. This is a major gap in the literature.

Rates of hooking up vary as well. As mentioned earlier, differences in the sample or the operational definition used are important to note, since when comparing rates of hooking up, it is important to recognize whether those rates refer to the same behaviors. Additionally, as the body of research on hooking up has grown, increasing numbers of studies are using populations of students who indicate that they do hook up (Gusarova et al. 2012; Owen and Fincham 2011a).

The studies reporting the lowest rates of hooking up, as mentioned above, tend to use samples that are not collegiate (Fortunato et al. 2010), or involve a combination of

college-aged individuals who may or may not be in school (Eisenberg et al. 2009). Eisenberg et al. (2009) report the lowest rate of hooking up, indicating that 20% of their sample (29% of the males and 14% of the females) have hooked up. Fortunato et al. (2010) find that 28% of their sample has hooked up. Other studies find much higher rates of hooking up. Data using various waves of the Online College Social Life Survey found that as high as 75% of the undergraduate population engaged in hook ups (England and Thomas 2007). Earlier studies find similar prevalence rates of hooking up: Paul and Hayes (2002) found that 84% of women and 75% of men in their sample engaged in hook ups; Lambert, Kahn and Apple (2003) found 77.7% of women and 84.2% of men in their sample had hooked up. The study reporting the highest rate of hooking up is 87%, reported by Daniel and Fogarty (2007). These variations indicate that while hooking up is indeed popular and common among college students, not all students participate. The variety among rates of hookup participation points to the fact that there are factors that may encourage, as well as discourage, participation in hooking up, such as class year (Wade and Heldman 2012), social class (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009), or religion (Penhollow et al. 2007; Burdette et al. 2009; Freitas 2008).

“Gender is the most studied variable in research on hooking up” (Wade and Heldman 2012: 131). Many scholars point out that males prefer hooking up (Owen and Fincham 2011b; Lehmiller et al. 2011) while females prefer relationships, described by Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) as the “relational imperative” for young women. Due to these aspects of gender role ideology, it is common that hooking up can serve as a form of communication or status among peers (Plante 2005; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Paul and Hayes 2002; Armstrong et al. 2012; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). Hooking up can serve as a confirmation of gender identity, as well as a confirmation of heterosexuality (Plante 2005; Kalish and Kimmel 2011). Paul and Hayes (2002) assert that females feel pressured to hook up from their partners, but they also feel a social pressure to live up to expectations of their gender. Paul (2006) reiterates the social pressure to hook up, but she also discusses the social pressure for young males, who are taught to value casual sex and are also taught that feeling emotion is emasculating. Yet, much of this work also finds that young women may also fear “catching feelings” (Paul

2006) or prefer to avoid having committed relationships (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). While there is indeed a body of literature that presents hooking up as inherently negative for young women, there is also work that reports that engaging in casual sex does not impact relationship formation (Owen and Fincham 2012) or that it has no significant effect on well-being (Eisenberg et al. 2009).

Much of the literature mentions that women seek relationships, and engage in hooking up as a way to establish a relationship (Owen and Fincham 2011a; Reid et al. 2011). Yet, many researchers also assert that hooking up is indeed a pathway to a relationship (Owen and Fincham 2012; Bisson and Levine 2009; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Furman and Hand 2006; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Grello et al. 2006; Mendle et al. 2012; Wade and Heldman 2012). Reiber and Garcia (2010) assert that over half of their mixed gender sample indicates that wanting a relationship is a reason why they hook up. Bogle, writing about the double standard faced by women who seek out casual sex, asserts that establishing a “friend with benefits” serves as a middle ground for women, by helping them to avoid a bad reputation, and potentially making them feel better about the behavior, since a friend with benefits implies some form of ongoing relationship, which may be preferable to women (Bogle 2007; 2008a; 2008b).

While students may seek out relationships or casual hookups, a great deal of research indicates that sexual satisfaction is highest in sex acts with a committed partner (Paik 2010a; Armstrong et al. 2009; 2012). Armstrong, England and Fogarty examine rates of orgasm in hookups and find that sex in relationships is better for women (2009) and closeness with a partner will encourage techniques that are likely to lead to a woman’s orgasm, such as cunnilingus (2012).

Recent sociological work on hooking up has begun to interrogate the college social environment as rather conducive to hooking up (Bogle 2008a; Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney 2005; England and Thomas 2007; Ray and Rosow 2010), notably pointing out the availability of alcohol, accessibility to the opposite sex, the party imperative, and a lack of nonsexualized opportunities for mixed gender social interactions (Armstrong et al. 2005). Bogle (2008a) illustrates this point by contrasting interviews with college students with those of recent graduates to demonstrate how the

college environment leads to hooking up. The recent graduates cease hooking up behavior upon graduating, except in surroundings that mimic college, such as vacation spots where people engage in heavy drinking and search for sex partners.

The college atmosphere favors the pattern of hooking up, establishing what has been termed the “hookup culture” (Heldman and Wade 2010) where hooking up is the dominant pattern by which people experience intimacy (England and Thomas 2007; Paik2010b). Not only are hookups a common way to establish intimate relationships (Bisson and Levine 2009; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Mendle et al. 2012), but students are unlikely to recognize other alternatives (Bogle 2008b; Wade and Heldman 2012), which powerfully underlies the commonness of hooking up and the ubiquity of the hookup culture.

Describing the ubiquity of the hookup culture, Wade and Heldman (2012) refer to hooking up as hegemonic. With this terminology, Wade and Heldman assert that the practice of hooking up is so pervasive that to many students it seems inescapable. In theorizing the hegemony of hooking up, they discuss how individuals will partake in the practice because they see no alternative to it, even while hooking up may not be their personal choice for intimacy. To establish the hegemony of hooking up, Wade and Heldman (2012) describe elements of the hook up scene which have become normalized, such as the idea of college as a place to seek out sexual exploration, or the expectation of pressure upon females by male partners. When these beliefs are commonly held among college age individuals, it affects their choices and makes these behaviors seem common and unproblematic, which perhaps encourages participation in hooking up. Situating this within larger cultural changes, such as more liberal university policies regarding dormitories, as well as the ‘pornification’ of the culture and its resulting increase in self-objectification, we see how these elements combine to help popularize, or publicize if you will, hooking up (Heldman and Wade 2010).

This dissertation builds upon the existing literature in many ways. By employing an explanatory mixed methods approach, I am able to ascertain what the hookup experience is like for many college students. Using multiple methodologies provides more contextual information. Additionally, the data I use includes both men and women,

at two separate campuses. The focus group sample is quite diverse ethnically, which is another distinction and strength of my project. This provides me with a unique vantage point, from which I will be able to gain a clearer picture of the ways that gender interacts with sexual decision making on college campuses, as well as insight into factors informing these decisions and the enactment of sexual agency for young adults.

This research will be of particular importance to scholars of sexuality and intimate relationships, as well as to campus residence officials, sexual assault specialists, campus judiciary officers, fraternity and sorority councils, parents, and college students themselves. By examining links between gender, college contexts and sexual decision making, parents can better inform their college-bound children about what may potentially lie ahead of them; campus judiciary personnel can get a better grasp on the dynamics facing many students that come before them, and sexual assault counselors can gain a better understanding of collegiate contexts that foster sexual behavior and may impact sexual assault (Armstrong et al. 2005).

## Chapter 2: Theory

Hookups are thought to be unplanned, or spontaneous (Kalish and Kimmel 2011), yet for something so seemingly unplanned, they are actually quite scripted (Bogle 2008a; Paul and Hayes 2002). Sexual scripts involve shared beliefs among actors in a given context, and these scripts instruct the participants how to act and what these actions are supposed to represent. Sexual scripts are based on cultural narratives about sexuality, and shaped through interpersonal interaction where a negative appraisal of a behavior will deter that same behavior in the future. Additionally, sexual scripts are also affected by the individual and his or her desires and wishes (Gagnon and Simon 2003). These three interrelated levels of sexual scripts allow for sexuality to be a fluid thing that changes over time and across cultural contexts, while also recognizing the power of large scale messages about sexuality to influence sexual decision making.

The cultural element of sexual scripts describes these messages that exist in different societies about sexuality. Such messages are found in media, but are also deployed through structural elements of society such as in law and public policy (Levine 2003). There is a set of cultural messages that proscribe behavior in a general context, as well as sets of messages that are more specific to different contexts, subcultures, and historical time periods. Additionally, these messages are often contradictory, which confounds their utility as a guideline for behavior. Regardless, such messages are ubiquitous.

Many of the cultural messages about sex are also messages about gender, or rather, appropriately gendered behaviors. These cultural narratives set up gender as if it were mutually exclusive, so that any behavior, body, or actor that is not explicitly masculine must be somehow femininized, and behavior that is not adequately feminine is denigrated as masculine, or just inappropriate.

One of the enduring cultural messages, albeit rooted in biology, indicates that men are geared to seek out multiple sexual partners, while women are supposed to guard their

fertility and therefore be more choosy about when and with whom she procreates. As these messages endure throughout decades, they translate into the often repeated ideology which dictates that males should seek sex and women should seek love (McGinty et al. 2007). Evidence of these messages is found in the hookup literature, with authors asserting that men benefit from hooking up while women do not, and therefore seek out relationships (Reid, Elliot, Webber 2011; Rieber and Garcia 2010; Bradshaw, Kahn and Saville 2010; McGinty et al. 2007). This translates into a broad acceptance of male pleasure-seeking behavior, as well as providing a rationale that neutralizes such behavior: it is often excused as “boys being boys.” Furthermore, these beliefs are inscribed on to young women as well, with the effects of not only excusing male behavior, but the ubiquity of these messages serves to make heterosexual young women into co-conspirators, who collude with these behaviors by their acquiescence (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson 2004). Additionally, these messages have the effect of constraining the behavior of young women, too. If seeking out sex and pleasure is a specifically masculine domain, then if women adopt these behaviors, they must be perceived as inadequately feminine by both male and female peers. “Male assertiveness is consistent with masculinity; female assertiveness is perverse femininity” (Holland et al. 2004: 23).

Messages about appropriate femininity tell women to be chaste, pure, and to “save” themselves for a fulfilling and enduring love relationship, as love is the context through which women can actualize their full femininity (Cancian 1987). This is often referred to as emphasized femininity (Currier 2013). These messages emphasize the relational aspects of femininity and promote the norm that the enactment of successful femininity results in a monogamous relationship and the production of children. These messages curtail female sexuality because they ignore female pleasure and teach women that they achieve pleasure by supporting and pleasing their (male) partner (Holland et al. 2004). They are also heterosexist and they necessarily discount women who do not seek marriage or desire children.

Over the past few years, we have also seen the emergence of a new set of cultural messages aimed at young American women. Sometimes referred to as “girl power,” or



alternatively, “raunch culture” (Levy 2005; Powell 2008), these messages promote the idea of female empowerment enacted through the presentation of an overly sexualized self (Siegel 2007; Phillips 2000; Heldman and Wade 2010; Bell 2013). These messages tell young women they should actualize their sexuality and reclaim it. These narratives are in direct contradiction to the narratives promoting chastity and love, yet they are couched in the language of empowerment and they can also contain conflicting directives about relations between young men and women, resulting in young women’s ambivalence regarding “appropriate” behavior.

These messages promote the idea that a young woman needs to achieve a specific sexy appearance in order to attract males. Once the male is attracted though, the female is told she needs to ‘keep’ him by ensuring his pleasure sexually (Powell 2008; Bell 2013). These messages align with those about male sexuality: they reinforce the idea that males blindly seek out sex, but they offer a different glimpse of empowerment for women: the “power” of her sexuality. Again, such messages are problematic for young women. They are told they must be sexy and they must be sexualized, but again, the female is alienated from her own sexuality, because she is reminded that her sexuality exists for the pleasure of her male partner (Holland et al. 2004). Her sexuality and her pleasure are absent. These messages can lead to a very specific abdication of sexual agency for young women who go along with sexual activity they do not want, because they feel they must do so to please their partner (Powell 2008), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

An actor cannot pick and choose the cultural narratives to which he or she is exposed. Taken as a whole, these competing cultural narratives promote the “Madonna/whore” dichotomy of female sexuality (Phillips 2000), yet at the same time, both messages prioritize male sexuality and alienate young women from their own sexuality and sexual agency. It is therefore unsurprising that many young women struggle with the enactment of their sexuality and attempt to balance their interests and desires with an “appropriate” deployment of femininity (Powers Albanesi 2010; Holland et al. 2004; Tolman 2002; Phillips 2000; Powell 2008).

The ubiquity of the cultural messages is evidenced by the effect of the cultural on to the interpersonal level of sexual scripts. Actors in dyadic interactions are affected by cultural messages, but so are their partners; the weight of the cultural messages seeps into interpersonal interaction and shapes the ways actors perceive and respond to the conduct of others. For example, college aged males are aware that there is social approval for their engagement in casual sex, yet males are also aware of the cultural messages around femininity. This comes into play when males will engage in casual sex with a female partner, but then view that same female as ineligible to be his girlfriend, because of her engagement in casual sex (England et al. 2008; England and Thomas 2007; Reid, Elliot, Webber 2011; Ronen 2010; Heldman and Wade 2010). There are different criteria used to evaluate behavior based on gender, which is evidence of the sexual double standard (Crawford and Popp 2003; Wade and Heldman 2012; Kooyman et al. 2011; Bradshaw et al. 2010).

Individuals are also shaped by these messages when their desires are outside of the normative roles for their gender, for example, a young male who seeks out a relationship may find difficulty if his female partner thinks he is only on a quest for sex. This prioritizes communication as actors strive to achieve their goals in an interpersonal context, yet in the sexual scripts accessible to many American college coeds, such communication with sexual partners is de-emphasized.

The interpersonal element of sexual scripts is also significant in that the communication among peers is used to deploy new meanings of sexual behaviors. It is within this interpersonal context that a label such as “slut” is potentially devastating (Tanenbaum 2000). The interpersonal level of sexual scripts not only involves the interaction of sexual partners, but also their individual interaction with their peer group. For emergent adults, the peer group is a significant regulator of behavior (Roseneil 2005) as well as site for the conferring of status (Kimmel 2008; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Armstrong et al. 2009; Armstrong et al. 2012; Arnold 2010; McGinty et al. 2007; Paul 2006). Peers, especially during emergent adulthood, are extremely important referents and evaluators of behavior. For this reason, the peer group is an extremely powerful socializing agent during college. The choice of partner, evaluation of that partner, as well

as the decision to engage in certain behaviors, are all shaped by how a young adult will perceive his or her peer group will evaluate the behavior (Kimmel 2008; Kalish 2013; Kalish and Kimmel 2011). For this reason, young women may alter behavior to avoid the label of “slut” while young men may purposefully choose behaviors to earn status among peers. The strategic ambiguity (Currier 2013) of the term hookup allows young men and women to conform to expectations of the peer groups, so that young men enact hegemonic masculinity and females enact emphasized femininity as a way to escape the stigma of the “slut” status (Currier 2013; Epstein et al. 2009).

The third element of sexual script theory, the intrapsychic, is perhaps the least-theorized (Plummer 2005; Plummer 2007). Relating to the individual fantasies, thoughts, and sensations that affect sexuality, the intrapsychic level is significant because it allows for the introduction of pleasure. Pleasure, or corporeal sensation, is an important element of sexuality, and it affects how choices are inscribed on the body (Powell 2008). Actors may prioritize the intrapsychic to guide behavior, as they abdicate agency and “go along” with sexual activity that they feel “just happens” (Tolman 2002; Powell 2008). Powell (2008) sees this as an “embodied gender practice”: “In using this term, I refer to the ways in which gendered norms and discourse are enacted through the body in everyday practice; in thoughts, feelings, desires, and responses, in a way that is not always subject to individual recognition and change” (2008: 170). Following the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Powell (2008) posits that this embodied gender practice is the product of the culmination of social construction and social structure inscribed on the bodies of actors, or a sexual habitus:

“Habitus refers to the individual’s ‘feel for the game’, or the set of bodily dispositions and mental structures through which we interpret and respond to the social world, based on our past experiences (Bourdieu 1990)...Hence his [Bourdieu] notion of the ‘sexually characterized’ or gendered habitus (Bourdieu 2001) refers to the taking on of gendered norms in bodily practice, that is, in the very ways we think, feel and respond to others” (Powell 2008: 172, citations in original).

While recognizing the intrapsychic as another site in which gendered messages influence conduct, scholars (Powell 2008; McNay 2000) also see the possibility for the creation, or re-negotiation of new gendered selves. This is evident in the hookup behaviors of some young women, who will engage in hookups because it is pleasurable to them, despite gendered cultural messages indicating such behavior is improper, as well as in the behavior of young men who challenge gendered norms and seek meaningful relationships with young women.

As a theory, sexual scripts have remained fluid, and have been extended to describe sexual behavior in a variety of contexts. Bogle (2008a) as well as Paul and Hayes (2002) have set up a framework of a script specific to the collegiate environment that encourages casual sexual behavior without the expectation of a relationship. This idea of a “hook up script” is just one example of a specialized script that is germane to a certain time period and cultural location. Indeed, the benefit of the three interrelated levels of sexual scripts (cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic) allows for different scripts to emerge in different historical and cultural contexts.

The contemporary hookup script on college campuses implies that hookups are casual events (Bogle 2008a), taking place with people who may or may not know each other (Paul 2006), often when drunk (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Paul and Hayes 2002), and with little expectation of any continued interaction (Fielder et al. 2012). Yet, many of the elements of this script are challenged by my findings: some students report hooking up with the same person for over a year, which is not casual, and implies the parties are certainly not strangers. Additionally, students repeatedly indicated in interviews that the extent to which they knew each other was a deciding factor in their hookups, again casting doubt on the assertion that hookups involve strangers. Finally, my data clearly indicate that hookups are a prominent pathway to relationships on contemporary American college campuses.

The hookup script involves a shared ideology among contemporary American college students regarding intimacy and sexual practices. The hookup script may emphasize what it is that actors are supposed to do, yet there is less agreement about what these behaviors are supposed to mean, maintaining the ambiguity around the practice of

hooking up (Currier 2013). Due to the variety of ways to be intimate, and the ambiguity around hooking up, there may be confusion as to which script to enact when. If someone seeks a relationship, for example, they should hold back sexually, according to common custom. However, if it is “just” a hookup, such restraint is unnecessary. But when in the situation where they are unsure, the cues actors rely on are those regarding gender. The expected gender arrangements within hookup culture available to young adults are hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Currier 2013).

The uncertainty around the meanings of some behavior is not the only concern over the usefulness of sexual scripts. Perhaps the biggest challenge to sexual scripts as a theory is that it does not account for the corporeal. Plummer (2005) suggests that much work in sexuality has taken the actual bodies that perform sex for granted, and calls for “the need to recognize just how much our bodies and feelings interpenetrate with the social and to bring them sharply back into focus” (2005: xix, note 5). Indeed, in looking at college students’ explanations for why they engage in sexual activity, they often indicate doing so “because it feels good,” or “because I was horny.” These explanations show that the corporeal body is important in guiding decision making, even if the actors themselves are not able to situate those corporeal feelings into the larger social and cultural context promoting sexuality, or to a lesser extent, to interpret those feelings as being mediated by their peers and the college culture in which they live.

Another criticism of sexual scripts calls for attention to structural inequalities and their impact on sexual scripts (Jackson 2007). Do individuals have the same access to opportunities to successfully enact shared scripts? How do sexual scripts interface with the larger cultural narratives about sex and sexuality? Attention to female sexuality has lead to contradictory messages to young men and women regarding sexuality which sets up an inequality between men and women that affects their negotiation of a sexual script (Holland et al. 2004). As discussed above, this may affect the cultural level of scripts, but differences in social location, and the inequalities present in social institutions should also be taken into account. According to Stevi Jackson:

The locations we find ourselves in are shaped by material social circumstances and our location within gendered, classed, racialized,

and sexual hierarchies; our definitions of those situations and, in particular, whether our definition “works” for us depends on our social and cultural resources. If we take seriously the idea that our sexual lives are simply one facet of our broader social lives, then we must recognize that our sexual selves are shaped within profoundly unequal local, national, and global social orders (2007: 13).

Hence, structural inequalities cannot be ignored when looking at how social forces affect individual behaviors. One such structural inequality is gender, which will be discussed below. Gender is the most examined variable regarding hookup culture (Wade and Heldman 2012), and for that reason, it is an important analytical element in this dissertation. Access to cultural narratives also implies pressure to conform to them, and this can vary with structural location. In this respect, Jackson (2007) calls for an appreciation of how macro structural forces impact interpersonal, or micro, behaviors.

Micro and macro practices often inform and influence one another. Hooking up is a good example of this, whereby interpersonal interaction can become a larger behavioral pattern. This occurs when a micro activity (hooking up) is coupled with larger forces such as the presentation of a gendered self, and is also confined to a specific institution. As smaller groups interact, meanings transfer from group to group creating larger trends within an institution, such as a college or university. We can then see how behavioral patterns become associated with an institution and how simultaneously, the institution may promote the expectation that the behavior is normative. This leads to pluralistic ignorance (Lambert, Kahn, and Apple 2003; Reiber and Garcia 2010) where larger groups of people make assumptions about behavior patterns, believing them to be much more widespread than they actually are. What is more, when an actor believes the majority of his or her peers are engaging in a behavior, it makes the behavior seem much more attractive, and the actor is likely to shape his or her behavior accordingly to be more in line with that of his or her peers.

This pluralistic ignorance exists regarding hooking up. Hookups are thought to be part and parcel of the college experience, because so many people associate hooking up with college. Decoupled sexuality has existed for quite some time (Laumann et al. 1994; D’Emilio and Freedman 1997; Gagnon and Simon 2005) but with a new label of

“hooking up” applied, and a great deal of research characterizing the behavior as confined to young adulthood (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Manning, Giordano and Longmore 2006), hooking up has come to mean something different from the “one night stand” of the past (Heldman and Wade 2010; Stepp 2007). Because of this, hookups are believed to be pervasive in the college culture (Allison and Risman 2014; Bogle 2008a; Bogle 2005; Fielder et al. 2012; Owen and Fincham 2012; Stinson 2010). While quantitative data tells us hooking up is in no way universal, with statistics ranging from 34% (Fielder et al. 2012) to 87% (Daniel and Fogarty 2007) of surveyed college students reporting they hook up, it does indeed appear that hooking up is a common occurrence on college campuses in the United States.

Another way that a micro factor such as hooking up affects larger groups is when these beliefs (whether based upon pluralistic ignorance or reality) affect behaviors on a larger scale, and this generally happens when micro behavior is deployed as a communication of meanings about a larger force. In this case, hooking up serves as a form of gender performance (Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Armstrong et al. 2009; Armstrong et al. 2012; Arnold 2010; McGinty et al. 2007; Paul 2006; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul et al. 2000; Ronen 2010; O’Dougherty Wright et al. 2010). The elements of gender that are idealized within the hookup culture are hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Currier 2013). While this is linked to a display of (hetero)sexuality, as discussed below, performances of gender often precede and shape performances of sexuality (Tolman, Streipe, and Harmon 2003). It is to a discussion of gender, and gendered sexuality, that I now turn.

### Gender Performativity

One structural inequality that is significant in shaping the sexual behaviors of young adults is gender. While scripting theory provides a lens through which we can see social behavior as an expression of self, sexual scripts extend this to see sexuality as an expression of a sexual self; yet another factor that impacts this expression is gender, or

rather, the social pressure to enact a specifically gendered presentation of self (West and Zimmerman 1987).

While the term “sex” describes the biological distinction between male and female, gender is culturally and socially produced, and describes the constellation of behaviors deployed through the life cycle to communicate meaning about the actor’s masculinity or femininity. According to West and Zimmerman, gender “is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (1987: 127). This may be rooted in biological sex, but does not always need to be. Further, gender, and one’s gender identity or enactment may change over the life cycle or based upon one’s social, cultural, or historical location (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Gender has been an important signifier of identity for centuries (Kimmel 2011) and has certainly been used as both a mechanism for classification and stratification for some time. In many cultures, masculinity is privileged and femininity is subordinated. Many scholars assert that modern conceptions of many fundamental issues are read from a masculine standpoint, whereby the masculine model is seen as the basis from which all others spring (Rubin 1999). One subject to which this line of thinking has been applied is sexuality. Scholars assert that sexuality is often viewed from a male lens, which prioritizes conquest, a more physical sexuality and penetrative sex over other forms of intimate expression (Holland et al. 2004). It is from such a viewpoint that the concept of a sexual double standard emerges (England et al. 2008; Young, Penhollow and Bailey 2010; Tolman et al. 2003; Reid, Elliot, Webber 2011; Crawford and Popp 2003) where men with many sex partners are praised and women with many partners are scorned. The double standard is rooted in the idea that women are ‘naturally’ innocent, passive, and do not (or need not) enjoy sex. The double standard also supports the idea that women are all seeking a monogamous marital relationship, and that such an arrangement is the only context in which women can openly enjoy sexuality. Such a restricted view of sexuality often stigmatizes women who do enjoy sexuality, or who are otherwise sexually agentic. Moreover, this satisfaction with sex can also be the basis for oppressive treatment



towards women whose behavior does not fit in line with mainstream social expectations (see the literature on sexual assault for more on this topic).

Another pertinent aspect of gender performance is the relational aspect of gender. Women are socialized to value monogamous relationships, while males are socialized to prioritize sex (Tolman et al. 2003; Holland et al. 2004; McGinty et al. 2007). While such socialization can vary based upon a person's race, culture, religion, or social class, what is significant is how these messages permeate throughout young adult interactions, where males are socially supported for seeking sex, and females are supported when seeking relationships. This is not only restrictive in terms of the potential options for intimacy it allows for both men and women, but it sets up a dynamic where women are often disempowered in heterosexual relationships. If women are thought to only want relationships, and men are thought not to want them, this means that women have less power in the (heterosexual) relationship in terms of asserting what it is she wants. Females are more likely to start the discussion about the nature of the relationship (Kalish and Kimmel 2011), but it is often left up to the males to provide the answer, and regardless of whether or not the female agrees with her male partner, she is likely to abide by his response.

This dynamic can be described by the "principle of least interest" (Waller 1938), which says that the person with less investment in a relationship has all the power in that very relationship. If the woman seeks a committed relationship, as opposed to a casual hookup, that implies she is more invested, and is what spurs her to initiate the "talk" about the relationship. If the male does not want a relationship, he simply needs to articulate that, and his desires are met. It is much more difficult for a female in such a situation to be able to achieve the relationship she desires if her male partner does not.

Many scholars point out that men prefer hooking up (McGinty et al. 2007) while women prefer relationships, in accordance with this Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) describe the "relational imperative" for young women, which is based upon cultural expectations of gender, specifically emphasized femininity, which values the demonstrative and affectionate ways in which a woman can please her man. The relational imperative stresses the importance of relationships, and encourages women to

define themselves by their relationship status. While relationships are prioritized, young women may have a negative association with sexual activity taking place en route to the relationship, since it is within a relationship that sexual relations for women are most accepted (Bogle 2005, 2008a). Bogle, writing about the double standard faced by women who seek out casual sex, asserts that establishing a “friend with benefits” serves as a middle ground for women, protecting them from a bad reputation, and potentially making them feel better about the behavior, since a “friend” implies some form of ongoing relationship, which may be preferable to women (Bogle 2005; 2008a). Yet there is a danger of the relational imperative. Underlying gender expectations imply that women seek relationships, which can obscure the potential for young men who seek relationships, and this can have negative effects for young men who want to establish a relationship within hookup culture. Since traditional heterosexual masculinity dictates that men seek sex without emotion, men who do have emotions regarding relationships, and yearn for meaningful emotional connections, may appear as less desirable partners within hookup culture (Kimmel 2008). This exemplifies how contemporary hookup culture combines with traditional gender expectations to position men and women as adversaries instead of collaborators, with negative effects for those who do not abide by conventional expressions of gender.

Elements of a traditional gender arrangement are present in lay and scholarly publications on hooking up. Journalist Laura Sessions Stepp includes presumptions of her ideas of gender arrangements in the subtitle of her book: *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both* (2007). This underscores the idea that love and marriage are universal goals, and helps to support her assertion in accordance with the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009) that hooking up, or any non-monogamous sexual activity, is an impediment to reaching this goal successfully for young women. Glenn and Marquardt, scholars who published one of the first empirical publications on hooking up (2001) also fall into this bind where marriage is characterized as a universal ideal and hooking up is discussed as an obstacle to its achievement. This shows not only a gendered bias and the power of the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009), it is also quite heterosexist, as both of these publications are from the

United States, where marriage is not yet even a fully realizable goal for anyone who is not heterosexual.

These authors are not the only ones to promote a gendered bias in their work, and indeed, the ideas they discuss are rooted in popular conceptions of gender. Men are often excused for sexually aggressive or promiscuous behavior and many women do indeed want monogamous relationships. But many men want that as well, and modern conceptions of masculinity can stop them from asserting that or seeking it out in a meaningful way (Kimmel 2008; Epstein et al. 2009). As mentioned above, gender can be very important in stratifying groups of people, and males whose behavior falls outside of traditional or hegemonic masculinity are often scorned, to the point that they will enact their masculinity in such ways as to leave no question about their manhood (Kimmel 2008). In some cases, especially for young men, the enactment of masculinity can supersede the importance of other goals, such as a relationship, and a young man may act in a way to fit in with his peers, even at the expense of his own personal goal of a monogamous relationship (Kalish and Kimmel 2011).

There is a great deal of pressure on young people to live up to certain ideals of gender. The gendered script for males, sometimes referred to as “the Boy Code” (Kimmel 2008) emphasizes virility, conquest, and an insatiable desire for sex. Indeed, as will be discussed below, for young men, hooking up, or the quest to find female partners becomes a form of communication to other males. The script for females is slightly more complicated, as they still find themselves subject to a sexual double standard (England et al. 2008; Reid, Elliot, Webber 2011; Young, Penhollow, and Bailey 2010). Young women need to be attractive to the opposite sex, yet they often experience backlash or slut-shaming if they are too forward in their hookups. Additionally, these codes of gendered behavior will change in various contexts, such as at an historically black college (Ray and Rosow, 2010) or at a religiously affiliated school (Frietas 2008). However, as much as gender shapes young adults’ behaviors in various contexts, and they act in such a way to live up to ideals of masculinity or femininity, something else influences their hooking up behaviors. Young adults may also engage in certain behaviors to assert their heterosexuality. Even well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is still an emphasis on

heterosexuality and a stigma attached when someone may inadequately display heterosexuality.

The institution of heterosexuality and its accompanying heteronormativity both shape and constrain one's behavior, especially for college aged students. Young people may be compelled to act in a certain way if they believe such behavior asserts their masculinity or femininity, or their heterosexuality. Hooking up, as a public communication of private events, is a vehicle through which young people can communicate with others their status as a heterosexual, as well as their heteronormativity by enacting a behavior which they believe is commonplace in the collegiate environment (Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Lambert, Kahn and Apple 2003; Reiber and Garcia 2010). In this sense, hooking up at college is not dissimilar from the patterns of courtship on American college campuses through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as coeds would make sure their peers were aware of who was out with whom (Bailey 1988).

The institution of heterosexuality is still pervasive in shaping young people, and clearly impacts their enactment of gender (Allen 2003a; Allen 2003b; Tolman, Striepe and Harmon 2003). The institution of heterosexuality inundates society with the notions that heterosexual behaviors are optimal, denigrating any other behaviors (Rich 1983). Tolman et al. assert, "Ideologies of masculinity and femininity, which infuse constructions of adolescent male and female sexuality, fit together to reproduce particular and limited forms of sexuality...the notion that adolescent boys are sexual predators fits together with the notion that adolescent girls are supposed to be sexually passive. Both notions represent and reproduce compulsory heterosexuality" (2003: 10). In the context of American hookup culture, this operates in differentiating perceptions and behaviors by gender. For males, hooking up becomes a form of homosocial communication, by which they communicate and earn status with their peers. For females, compulsory heterosexuality, in tandem with emphasized femininity, prioritizes romance, which "disable[s] them from being agentic and authentic about their bodies and sexual relationships" (Tolman et al. 2003: 9), which I discuss below.

## Agency

The social construction of gender allows us to look at differences among men and women, so we get to examine masculinities and femininities. This can help illuminate different choices of behavior and the different meanings attached to a practice like hooking up. Heather Powers Albanesi (2010) uses the construction of gender to explain different sexual decisions under the framework of agency. I go further and show how agentic sexual choices are not only a product of various constructs of gender, but that agency, or lack thereof, can also be part and parcel of a specific gender performance, yet these gendered performances, and the resulting deployment of agency, are affected by cultural messages that offer conflicting models of young adult sexuality, especially for women.

Gender arrangements grow out of the contexts in which actors find themselves (West and Zimmerman 1987), so what we see as gendered hookup behaviors may also be a product of the social networks in which the actors live/exist. Is it because they are female that sorority girls are more agentic in their sexuality, or is it because of the context and expectation of behaviors within Greek campus life that are more likely to support and validate a female's agentic sexuality within that context? Nonetheless, all the actors are living within the college context, though to varying extents are they submerged in campus life, so the effects of the campus culture may be mediated by the extent of one's immersion into it.

Agency has been defined as the ability to act in a self directed manner (Morasch 2006). Actions done in the service of one's goals can then be seen as agentic, yet it is important to recognize that the choices of an actor are also affected by the social context in which that behavior takes place. Regarding sexual decision making, social elements such as the construction of gender, as well as the accompanying notions of heterosexuality, can impact agency. Specifically, sexual agency has been defined as "the willingness to exert power within a sexual encounter in an attempt to sway the outcome of events" (Powers Albanesi 2010: 10). Within this context, agency is more than the ability to act in a self directed manner, but it involves actively doing so in regards to sexual activity. Actors can be agentic in terms of expressing their desires, or they may

use their agency in an effort to assert their boundaries and to curtail sexual activity. In addition, actors may relinquish their agency for a variety of reasons, discussed in Chapter 6. Choices such as these only become viable given the social circumstances. In collegiate hookups, gendered expectations frame choices for men and women differently. According to Allen, Husser, Stone and Jordal, “Female sexual desire is still regulated through the tool of sexual reputation, with women carrying the burden of protecting their reputation *and* ensuring safer sex and contraceptive responsibility, perhaps more so than ever” (2008: 518; italics in original). In the new millennium, women are expected to want and enjoy sex, but the double standard persists (Crawford and Popp 2003; Reid, Elliot and Webber 2011; England et al. 2008) and shapes the enactment of sexual agency for young women (Holland et al. 2004; Powers Albanesi 2010; Allen et al. 2008). The vagueness of the term hooking up assists this, by serving to protect the reputation of the woman while enhancing that of the man (Epstein et al. 2009; Currier 2013). Currier (2013) asserts that the “strategic ambiguity” of the term allows men to earn status by emulating hegemonic masculinity and women to perform emphasized femininity as a way of accommodating the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009) and living up to gendered expectations.

This exercise of sexual agency is interesting for women, since in many cases, it can be their earliest attempts at embodying their sexual agency, and they then feel disentangled from their own agentic sexuality. The double standard that exists makes this an attractive alternative for women who are coming into their sexuality but are doing so in an environment where women who seek out sex are stigmatized (Ronen 2010; Allen 2003a; Allen 2003b; Young, Penhollow and Bailey 2010). So, rather than risking the potentially devastating label of ‘slut’ by going out deliberately to seek sex (Tanenbaum 2000), sex-positive young women can wade into the hook-up scene and enact their sexuality as they choose while being able to fall back on the idea that the sex ‘just happened’ (Tolman 2002). The ambiguity of the term (Currier 2013) as well as the presence of alcohol also offers potential ways for sexually agentic women to evade stigma.

Hooking up is seen by many as the sexual domain favored by males (Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Kimmel 2008; Holland et al. 2004). Males are thought to enjoy sex and eschew relationships, so hooking up is seen as an unproblematized behavior for young men. “Casual sex remains a male prerogative” (Allen et al., 2008: 518). Yet while hooking up is thought to be desired by males, expectations of gender also impact males’ sexual agency. Traditional notions of heterosexual masculinity dictate that men seek out sex with as many females as possible (Kimmel 2008); men are still rewarded for having multiple partners. However, while it is agentic for males to seek out hookup partners, different elements of masculinities emerge that impact males’ agency in sexual decision making (Kalish 2013).

In the late 1980’s a group of researchers in the UK began an examination of gender, power, and sexual agency among young heterosexuals. While their analysis was focused on the deployment of agency regarding safe sex, their theory is quite useful to my analysis. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson’s “Male-in-the-head” (2004) describes the culmination of cultural gendered messages that set up a disproportionate power game among young adults that prioritizes hegemonic masculinity. They see “the power of heterosexuality as masculine” (2004: x) and recognize the many complexities facing young women as they attempt to maneuver pleasure and propriety. This is especially difficult for young women, since the messages of conventional feminine behavior do not provide them tools with which they can enact sexual agency. In fact, those messages teach women to be sexually inexperienced, to ‘allow’ sex to occur, to make men happy, and to prioritize trust, love and relationships. Again, the pleasure, needs, desires, and subjectivity of young women are muted or ignored. More importantly, these messages set up a rather impossible contradiction for women that [conveniently] eases pressures on men at the same time. “Unless women actively resist the norms of femininity, they are caught in conventions of female acquiescence in a male activity: the point of sexual encounters is meeting men’s needs and desires” (Holland et al., 2004:6).

The “male-in-the-head” describes how these conventional norms set up an unequal power relation between men and women that serves to affect both men and women’s use of sexual agency. Both young men and women think of the generalized *male* other when making sexual decisions. This may affect how a young man may believe his behavior will be perceived by his peers, or it can alter the behavior of a young woman who will act in a way in which she believes her male partner expects. Holland et al. conducted their research in the late 1980’s, at a time when AIDS was emerging as a public health threat as well as a time in which the so-called “Second Wave” of feminism was yielding to the emergence of the “Third Wave” (Siegel 2007). This is pertinent, since Holland and colleagues state that feminism assists to make gender hierarchies unstable, and that feminism provides “a distinct vantage point from which to clarify the interconnections of the organization, institutionalisation, discourses, experiences, and sexual politics of heterosexuality” (2004: 17). One of the significant differences between the Second and Third Waves of feminism is that the Third Wave appeals to and is mainly comprised of young women (Siegel 2007; Baumgartner and Richards 2000), women of the very age group studied in 1988 by Holland et al., as well as by me, 25 years later. Due to the effects of the Third Wave of feminism, as well as their engagement with newer forms of media, it is anticipated that young women of today will be more aware of feminism in their lives (Siegel 2007), and this may affect their sexual decision making. For this reason, it is pertinent to examine the effects of the “male-in-the-head” after a generation of feminism and education about HIV and AIDS. I anticipate the “Male-in-the-head” still exists for young women, and that it also serves to affect the behavior of young men as well.

As young adults, male and female, wade through the terrain of college attempting to maneuver intimacy and agency, they are reshaping the sexual script available to them so that hooking up has not only emerged as a common form of intimate behavior, it is indeed emerging as a pathway to an ongoing relationship (Bisson and Levine 2009; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Furman and Hand 2006; Mendle et al. 2012; Owen and Fincham 2012; Stinson 2010; Wade and Heldman 2012). For some, the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009) and the double standard make this terrain a minefield



fraught with challenges. Yet in spite of these challenges, young adults do engage with hooking up and relationships on campus, and attempt to balance their sexual desires with gendered social expectations. As more young people navigate this terrain, the hook up script will be continuously re-constructed to include recognition of hookups as a means to a relationship, as well as a stage upon which young men and women can enact their sexual agency.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter describes the methods used to carry out this study, including a description of the participants as well as a discussion of the analysis. It is of note that the methodology was evolving throughout the data collection process. This study involves a two step multi-method embedded approach, where the primary focus is on qualitative data. The qualitative results are enhanced by a quantitative analysis of patterns found in the qualitative data.

#### **The General Perspective**

This project involves an embedded mixed-methods approach (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, I can understand the factors that affect sexual decision making among undergraduate college students. By utilizing both approaches, I am able to get more information than I would by only using quantitative or qualitative methods. Quantitative data is very useful, but provides little in the way of contextual data explaining why actors choose certain behaviors over others. Qualitative data is useful for its richness, but is sometimes seen as limited by smaller data sets or the subjective nature of the data. By using both methods in one project, I can account for both of these potential criticisms, while strengthening the project and the data it yields. I am also able to rely on more than one foundational ideology to account for the constructed nature of meanings that surround sexual behaviors and choices.

This explanatory mixed-methods project involves sequential data collection where the qualitative data was analyzed initially, and then quantitative data was used to enrich the qualitative results. The quantitative data is used to expand upon the data yielded from the qualitative aspect of the study (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). The strength of such an approach is that it allows me to examine meanings of behaviors, as well as provides an

opportunity to get more information about interesting patterns found in the qualitative data. However, a drawback of this approach is that it can involve more time to implement. Because I used quantitative data from the existent *Online College Social Life Survey* (OCSLS) hosted at Stanford University, the survey instrument has already been completed, saving a great deal of time. Additionally, sampling in such a mixed-method approach can be a challenge, but I recruited subjects from the same population as the quantitative portion for the qualitative portion. Since data collection for the quantitative aspect was ongoing since Fall 2006, I was not able to recruit the same participants for the qualitative aspect, but I can sample from a subset of the same population, undergraduates at “Big University.”

An example of another project that employed a similar design is the Glenn and Marquardt study on Hooking Up released in 2001 as a report to the Independent Women’s Forum. In this study, the researchers first collected qualitative data in 62 in-depth interviews with female undergraduates, and then followed that up by collecting data from a national sample of 1000 undergraduate women, in the form of telephone interviews (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). In this approach, the qualitative data was collected first, and from the qualitative data, the quantitative survey instrument was developed. Such an approach allows for comparisons between the interview data and the representative survey data. However, it also implies that the survey data is based upon the interview material. A similar sequence in the present study will allow for the significant themes from the interviews to be examined further in the quantitative analysis. The fact that the OCSLS is already existent saves time but constrains the analysis to the existing variables.

This project goes a step further to also include qualitative data from four focus groups conducted at a highly diverse liberal arts college on the East Coast. I ran two focus groups with males, and two with females. These groups discussed hooking up, dating, relationships, and sexual decision making. This school did not participate in the OCSLS, however, to generate comparisons with the large scale survey data of the OCSLS, I also obtained permission to collect survey data at the school. The survey is an abbreviated survey based off the survey instrument of the OCSLS. Throughout the

dissertation, I refer to this 180 case survey as the ‘exploratory’ survey, since I use that data to compare with other sources of qualitative and quantitative data, but I do not use that data for any predictive analysis.

### The Research Context

The data was collected at multiple sites. The interviews were conducted at a large, public research university on the East Coast of the United States. The school has a diverse student body, with 18,000 undergraduates and a large graduate student population. Throughout, I refer to this school as Big University. Shortly before the commencement of data collection, Big U was added to the NCAA Division I, and since the change, the athletics department has grown in influence and reputation.

Four focus groups were conducted at a different school on the East Coast of the United States. While smaller in terms of enrollment with roughly 6,000 students, “Small College” is known for its diverse student body and has been recognized for the large proportion of degrees granted to students of color, one of the nation’s highest at a college that is not an historically Black college. On this campus, many students have full or part-time employment, and many financially contribute to their family of origin.

### The Research Participants

#### Interviews:

Interview data were collected at Big U during the 2008-2009 academic year. Potential interview subjects were recruited through announcements in large Sociology classes, word of mouth, and through recruitment flyers distributed in classes and posted on campus. Eligible subjects were over eighteen years of age, fluent in English, and willing to be interviewed. No compensation was provided to the subjects, nor was any coercion used or incentives offered. My goal was to conduct at least forty interviews

taking between 30 and 90 minutes each, until theoretical saturation was reached, and subsequent interviews no longer yielded new data. I conducted 50 total interviews with 49 participants, with an average age of 21. The interview sample includes 32 female students and 17 male students. Forty-seven percent of the students interviewed were white. To be able to examine relationship patterns among high status students, I over-recruited student athletes and Greek-affiliated students, resulting in 11 Greek affiliated students (five males, six females), and 12 student athletes (six males and six females). Throughout the discussion, I refer to these students, the student-athletes and the members of Greek organizations, as high-status students. Fifty seven percent of the sample lived on campus at the time of the interview; almost half of the sample (49%) indicated they were in a relationship at the time of the interview, and 44 students, or 90% of the sample, indicated they hook up. Demographic information about the interview sample is displayed graphically in Table 3-1.

Interviews took place on campus, and focused on intimacy and sexual decision making, and factors that influence choices about both (Interview guide is in Appendix A). I attempted to interview students who do and do not engage in “hookups,” so that meanings may emerge from the negative cases, or those who do not hookup. Prior to each interview, subjects were informed of the main topics the interview will cover, and informed that they have the right to terminate the interview at any time or skip questions at their choice. Only one student exercised either of these options. Potential risks and benefits of participating were verbally discussed, and the consent form was discussed, including the opportunity for the respondent to ask questions. After giving verbal and written consent, students chose a pseudonym that was attached to the interview data. They also filled out an information form with their name and pseudonym. These forms are kept in a locked filing cabinet, for the sole purpose of removing subjects from the study if they so choose. No students exercised this option. All other materials contain only the pseudonym to maintain confidentiality. Interviews were digitally recorded with subject consent, and transcribed for coding purposes. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company well-versed in confidentiality.

Table 3-1  
Characteristics of the Participants

<u>Variables</u>	OCSLS <sup>1</sup>	Big U <sup>1</sup>	Interviews <sup>2</sup>	Small College Survey <sup>3</sup>
<i>Age:</i>				
18	20.3% (4865)	9.5% (89)	0% (0)	2.4% (4)
19	26.3% (6309)	19.7% (185)	12.2% (6)	8.9% (15)
20	18.8% (4512)	26.5% (249)	34.7% (17)	17.3% (29)
21	15.3% (3663)	18.6% (175)	14.3% (7)	25% (42)
22	8.7% (2086)	11.7% (110)	20.4% (10)	17.9% (30)
23	3.0% (708)	5.4% (51)	6.1% (3)	11.3% (19)
24	1.5% (364)	1.8% (17)	2% (1)	8.3% (15)
25+	6.1% (1457)	6.8% (64)	10.2% (5)	8.9% (15)
<i>Ethnicity:</i>				
White	68.4% (16509)	52.1% (494)	46.9% (23) <sup>^</sup>	18.5% (31) <sup>g</sup>
African American	7.7% (1853)	15.9% (151)	18.4% (9)	50.9% (81)
Hispanic	14.2% (3423)	14.6% (138)	12.2% (6)	18.2% (29)
Asian/South Asian	16.6% (4001)	22.3% (211)	12.2% (6)	1.3% (2)
<i>Year:</i>				
Freshman	33.6% (8060)	11.3% (106)	10.2% (5)	4.2% (7)
Sophomore	24.6% (5891)	27.1% (255)	4% (2)	11.9% (20)
Junior	19.6% (4691)	32.1% (302)	40.8% (20)	29.2% (49)
Senior	16.7% (3992)	22.0% (207)	36.7% (18)	49.4% (83)
"Super" senior	4.3% (1042)	7.3% (69)	8.1% (4)	5.4% (9)
Graduate	1.2% (299)	0.2% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
<i>Sex:</i>				
Male	31.2% (7472)	30% (282)	34.7% (17)	40.5% (68)
Female	68.8% (16504)	70% (658)	65.3% (32)	59.5% (100)
Greek Affiliation	12% (2587)	9.9% (93)	22.4% (11)	11.3% (19)
Student-Athlete	7.6% (1812)	7.6% (71)	24.5% (12)	8.3% (14)
Live with Parents	14.2% (3411)	23.5% (221)	10.2% (5)	42.3% (71)
Ever Hook Up	61.2% (14752)	63.8% (604)	90% (44)	84.9% (141)
Been in Relationship <sup>*</sup>	51.3% (12292)	57.3% (539)	46.9% (23)	45.5% (76)
Been on Dates	60.1% (14489)	63% (597)	85.7% (42)	85.6% (143)
"Finished" a Partner <sup>i</sup>	25.1% (5581)	25.5% (238)	n/a	n/a
Sample size	24131	948	49	168

numbers listed are percentages, number in parenthesis is raw score

<sup>^</sup>- the interview sample also includes 4 students (8%) identified as biracial, and one student who identifies as Pacific Islander

<sup>g</sup>- the exploratory survey also includes 16 students who are multi-ethnic, 10.1% of the total sample.

<sup>\*</sup> - The OCSLS asks about being in a relationship since the start of college;

the interviews and exploratory survey asked about being in a relationship at the time of data collection

<sup>i</sup> - "Finishing" is performing oral or hand stimulation when you do not want to have intercourse;

numbers here reflect entire sample, analysis in Chapter 6 uses females only.

Sources: <sup>1</sup> On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

<sup>2</sup> Interviews conducted by Author at Big U, 2008-2009

<sup>3</sup> Exploratory Survey collected by Author at Small College, 2013

### Focus Groups:

Four focus groups, two groups of males and two groups of females, were conducted at another, smaller college described above, and referred to throughout as Small College. All participants gave consent to participate and to have the group audiotaped. To ensure confidentiality, only age and ethnicity were collected. Among the two groups of males, the first group had twelve participants, and the second group had seven. They ranged in age from eighteen to twenty four, with the majority between eighteen and twenty. While there was no attempt to recruit particular students, all students present in both male focus groups were students of color. The majority was African American or Caribbean American, two were biethnic: one indicated he was Puerto Rican and Black, and another was Filipino and Hispanic. Both of the key informants who facilitated the male focus groups were African American. This composition is similar to the campus population, and especially resident students.

The young men who participated in the focus groups were all resident students on campus, living among two different wings of the same residence hall. Conducting the groups in a residence hall likely influenced the comfort level and ethnic composition of the group, as the majority of resident students are Hispanic or African American. They all appeared very familiar with each other, and with the two key informants who ran the groups. The groups took place over a span of two weeks during the spring semester in 2013. At the conclusion of each group, participants were instructed to respect the confidentiality of their peers.

The focus groups of women were held in an academic conference room over the same two weeks in Spring 2013. Female subjects were recruited from Sociology and Criminology classes. The first group had ten women, aged between 20 and 23. The second group had nine participants, ranging in age from 21 to 25, with one non-traditionally aged student who was older than 25, but did not specify her age. The majority of the women in both groups were 22 years old. Similar to the men's groups, the majority of the women were African American, African Caribbean or Hispanic. Unlike the men's groups, there were white women in the focus groups, but these women were a small minority. Despite the academic setting, the women's focus groups were

also quite comfortable discussing sensitive topics like relationships and sexuality. These young women were vocal about the world around them, and shared a great deal of opinions on partners and relationships.

The OCSLS:

For the quantitative analysis, I analyze the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS). This survey, hosted at Stanford University, with Paula England as the Primary Investigator, is the largest survey of college students' intimate behaviors. The survey includes data from 24,131 participants at 22 colleges and universities across the United States, from a community college to the Ivy League. While the data are not representative, since respondents were located through a convenience method rather than a random sample, it nonetheless represents a large cross section of American college students. Descriptive information about the participants in the OCSLS is displayed in Table 3-1.

The survey has been broadly used by sociologists across America (England and Thomas 2007; England et al. 2008; Armstrong et al. 2009; Armstrong et al. 2012; Kalish 2007; Padgett 2012; Sohn 2013) and findings from the OCSLS are consistent with other information gleaned from different data sources, establishing that the OCSLS is a valid and reliable instrument.

I also use a subsample of the OCSLS, the data collected at Big University. This data was also collected in large introductory courses, and students were able to complete the survey at their own time from the private computers. This convenience sample is not representative of the undergraduate population of the school, but many measures are consistent with the larger survey. The subsample includes 948 students. Descriptive information about this subsample is found in Column 2 of Table 3-1.



## Instruments Used in Data Collection

### Interviews:

Qualitative research originated in anthropology but has gained legitimacy due to its widespread use in sociology, as evidenced by the multitude of journals relating to qualitative methodology. One of the significant characteristics of qualitative methodology, which merits its utilization in this project, is that qualitative data allow for a researcher to ascertain meanings of behaviors and phenomena. Additionally, qualitative data are emergent and interpretative, so that themes may be identified at different points in the research process, and the meanings of these themes may also change (Creswell 2003). Because sexuality is a very personal and significant aspect of a young person's life (Kronhausen and Kronhausen 1960), qualitative research allows for an investigation of multiple meanings for subjects, thus taking into account the potential fluidity of sexual behaviors and the meanings attached to them.

This aspect of my dissertation will take a phenomenological approach, studying individuals (here, college undergraduates) to understand the meanings of experiences and behaviors these subjects share. Intimate relationships are shared by many on the college campus, but there are likely different meanings attached to relationships, which is precisely why the qualitative aspect is included. Here, the project will involve semi-structured interviews to allow subjects to identify patterns of choices and decision making. While interviews can be affected by recall bias and the presence of the interviewer, they do allow for rich data to emerge from the descriptions of subjects' experiences.

However, because in qualitative research, interpretations are generated from the descriptions of behavior provided by respondents and the analysis of the researcher, it is important to consider the role of the researcher and any potential bias I may introduce. I teach many undergraduate courses relating to sexuality and related topics, and students frequently open up to me about their personal lives; however, I also have a decade of experience as a rape crisis counselor. While this will benefit me as I interview, especially should any recollections of coerced sexual experiences arise on the part of a respondent, it may also hinder me, since I may apply a power differential in situations where

respondents do not see an enactment of power. To mitigate this, I used member checking to determine if my interpretation of themes matched with respondents' experiences, and my interpretations generally corresponded with the views of the two informants I used as references.

My role as an instructor and a teaching assistant enables me to interact often with undergraduates, thus giving me entrée into the "field." However, this same role of instructor or teaching assistant can result in a precarious power differential that will impact my role as a researcher. To avoid having respondents feel as if my role as a teacher coerced their participation in the study, I did not collect data from any current students of mine, nor any student for whom I am responsible to grade. I did not recruit subjects from my classes until the semester ended and students' grades were submitted.

Furthermore, all efforts were made to make the data collection process easy for participants. The Institutional Review Board at Big University has approved the study, as did the IRB for the Small College where I did the focus groups and exploratory survey, and the strictest guidelines regarding confidentiality were maintained.

Other efforts were made to ensure validity and reliability of the qualitative data. As mentioned above, member checking was used to guard against my own bias, but also to ensure that the themes I interpret as relevant are seen as accurate by the subjects themselves. I also attempt to provide as rich of a description as possible so that the data paint a very clear picture of sexual decision making by undergraduates. To achieve such description, I also make sure to include in the discussion of results any contrary themes that emerge, again, to offer the most comprehensive interpretation possible.

The interview schedule was devised based upon exploratory analysis of the quantitative data, but it also includes flexibility to allow for respondents to provide their own insight into the meanings of their sexual behaviors and the factors affecting those decisions. Bogle (2008a) asserts that it is the college context that fosters hooking up. Yet, most studies on the topic show that hooking up is near universal, but is not the *only option* for college students. Therefore, there is likely to be some mechanism of self selection among college students who engage in hooking up behaviors. It is possible that hookup encouraging behaviors are the only perceived way to engage in social activities

for young people, or it is possible that there is something about the expectation of going out that has an impact on the decision to engage in these behaviors at the expense of other behaviors not as conducive to hooking up. Because of this, it is imperative to engage in qualitative data collection that can elicit these meanings for college students today. To gain such insight, the interview schedule includes questions about what it means to “go out” and what young people expect when they go out, as well as questions about the meanings of sexual activities and, indeed, the meanings of relationships, dates, and hook ups.

#### Focus Groups:

Four focus groups were conducted at another public college on the East coast of the US, Small College. This small, liberal arts school has been recognized for its diverse population of students, where students of color are the majority. The groups discussed partner choice, relationships, and sexual behaviors. By the second hour of the second group, saturation was reached, as topics covered in the first group were repeated. Saturation was reached quickly in the women’s focus groups, as topics began to repeat in the second hour of the second group. Many of the students in the focus groups discussed experience with relationships and hooking up.

Two key informants helped organize and run the focus groups of young men. They also served as referents for member checking, to ensure the internal validity of the focus group data. These key informants had coursework in sociological research methods, and the author instructed them on confidentiality and comporment, as well as the research questions and main topics to cover. They were told to allow for natural discussion among the group, and to probe for more information. The author was present in the room during the groups, but the undergraduate key informants facilitated the groups to mitigate any effect a female researcher might have on the young men’s candor.

## Survey:

Data were collected for the *Online College Social Life Survey*. The OCSLS is an on-line survey hosted and administered by Stanford University. Participating institutions include Stanford, the University of Indiana, Ithaca College, The Evergreen State College, Arizona State University, Santa Barbara State University, Radford University, Whitman College, Harvard University, and Stony Brook University. Students in large undergraduate classes were given the chance to complete the survey at their own time from their personal computers, so it is not possible to report a rate of survey completion. Over 24,000 students completed the survey, from 2005 through 2011. This survey is one of the first multi-university instruments collecting sexuality data, and one of the largest collegiate surveys in existence, and one of its strengths is the wide geographic area covered by the participating schools.

The survey instrument asks closed-ended questions of demographic importance, including age, class year, race, religion, as well as questions about where the student was born, raised, and educated. Questions about family make-up, religious background and educational aspirations are included as well. The survey instrument includes questions about behaviors involved in different types of intimate encounters, asking students about what they do and with whom, in encounters characterized as dates, hookups, and relationships. Respondents could indicate engaging in more than one of these activities. Students' romantic history is included as well, with questions about dating, relationships, establishing relationships, as well as experience with coerced sexual activity. Finally, the survey asks questions about attitudes towards a variety of topics, from marriage to education to abortion. The closed-ended nature of the questions renders the responses amenable to quantitative analysis.

Due to the convenience sampling of the OCSLS, there is a threat to external validity, which is why I specify that results are only related to the collegiate population at the schools studied. However, the large sample size protects against threats to statistical conclusion validity. The widespread use of the OCSLS attests to its content validity and reliability as an instrument, and the similarity with previous surveys establishes criterion validity (Creswell 2003).

## Analysis

### Qualitative analysis:

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in 2009, so that data was analyzed first, and informed the focus group analysis. The initial step was to identify phrases or concepts in the transcripts that appeared interesting, and recurred over multiple transcripts. Data was organized around recurring concepts, which formed the basis of the codes. The frequency of these recurring concepts was counted so that those endorsed by many participants formed the basis of the analysis. The focus group transcripts were approached the same way, and similar codes emerged. This process of refinement throughout analysis helped shed light on nuances that appeared across both forms of data. The use of multiple data sources was intended to mitigate the small sample size and increase the validity of the findings (Miles and Huberman 1994).

### Quantitative Analysis:

In the quantitative data analysis, binary logistic regression is used to determine which factors are significant in predicting agentic sexual behavior among undergraduates, such as initiating dates and relationships. Binary logistic regression is used due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables. Because a dichotomous dependent variable is coded so that a respondent either engages in the behavior or not, it is scored with either a zero or one, where a value of one indicates participation in that behavior, and a zero does not. Binary logistic regression utilizes a curved regression line to account for data values at the tails of the distribution, rather than Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, which uses a straight line to predict values on the dependent variable by changes in the independent variable.

The specific survey questions used in these analyses are: Since you have been in college, have you had a relationship that lasted more than six months? Other questions of

interest, which require recoding of response choices are: Since you have been in college, how many dates did you go on where the date involved going to a fraternity, sorority, or dorm event?; Since you have been in college, how many dates did you go on where the date did not involve going to a fraternity, sorority, or dorm event?; How many people have you hooked up with whom you didn't know prior to that night?; How many people have you hooked up with in the case where you were not already in a romantic relationship with that person but you did know him or her?; Since you started college, have you ever performed oral sex or hand stimulation of a partner to orgasm mainly because you did not want to have intercourse but felt like you needed to give them an orgasm one way or another? For the questions regarding number of dates, these two questions were summed, so that dates which involve Greek events and those which do not are both included. The summed variable was dummy coded so that students who answered anything other than zero were coded as "going on dates," and those who indicated zero number of dates were coded as "not dating." The questions regarding number of hookup partners were similarly summed and dummy coded to indicate any participation in hooking up. Students who have hooked up at least once were coded with a one, and those who indicated zero hookups were coded with a zero. The question regarding providing oral or hand stimulation was recoded into a dummy variable as well. The original response categories allow respondents to indicate if they have ever done this, and if they have done so on more than one occasion. I collapsed these response categories so that an affirmative response, either one time or more than one time, was coded as a yes, and scored with a one.

Prior to running the regression equations, I first calculate several diagnostic statistics to ensure that I do not violate any of the assumptions of binary logistic regression. First, I will examine the number of cases to independent variables. The large size of the data set generated from the OCSLS ensures its suitability for logistic regression analyses (Tabatchnick and Fidell 2012). Next, is an OLS regression to determine if outliers or multicollinearity are present. To examine if multicollinearity is a problem, I use Variance Inflation Factor scores. In preliminary analyses, the Variance Inflation Scores did not exceed a value of 2.5. This conservative guideline indicates that

multicollinearity is not a problem in these models (Allison 1999). Additionally, outliers do not appear to be a problem, based on the standard residuals (Tabatchnick and Fidell 2012). Throughout the following chapters, when I discuss results, information regarding VIFs and outliers are included as a footnote. Binary logistic regression equations are based on themes which emerge from the qualitative interviews, as well as theory.

#### Mixed Methods:

As mentioned previously, my dissertation will rely on a mixed-method design using a sequential approach to data collection, so that qualitative data is collected and analyzed prior to the analysis of quantitative data. I chose this method so that I can quantitatively test assertions made and themes emerging from the interviews. Analysis of the quantitative data will expand upon themes generated during the interviews. Data from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects will merge during the interpretation. The integration of both sources of data will allow for a more comprehensive picture of the intimate scene on today's college campuses.

Validity has been characterized as one of "the most important" aspects of a mixed methods project (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007: 146), allowing for worthwhile and precise conclusions to be drawn from all aspects of the study. In a sequential design such as this one, results are stronger when they are based on significant themes that are informed by both forms of data collection and analysis. Additionally, I can consider threats to validity during the planning stage of the research; for example, in sampling for the interviews, I will attempt to draw from the same sampling frame as the quantitative aspect. Additionally, during the qualitative analysis, I utilize member checking and provide as rich of a description as possible to ensure the quality of the analysis. This will maintain the integrity of the data, and strengthen the utility of the results.

## Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has explained the mixed methodology of my dissertation: the setting of data collection, the methods of collection, the participants, and the forms of analysis. I explained my rationale for using multiple methods of data collection, and discussed how the multiple forms of data collectively formed the basis of the results and discussion. The next chapter is the first empirical one, discussing the results regarding students' views of relationships within hookup culture.



## Chapter 4: Relationships

Hooking up is indeed common among the interview sample, with only 10% of the sample indicating that they never have-- or do not --hook up. Interestingly, this ten percent (n=5) is entirely female. In the descriptive survey data, 11% of the sample has never hooked up. Yet even these students were aware of the hookup culture, and choose not to partake. However, among the interview sample, almost one half of the participants indicated being in an exclusive relationship at the time of the interview, and 46% of the exploratory survey sample was in a relationship at the time of the survey, which demonstrates that both hooking up and relationships exist as options or forms of intimate relationships on college campuses (England et al. 2008; Paik 2010a). What has changed for contemporary college students is the ways in which they establish exclusive relationships (Reid et al. 2011). Here, I use qualitative as well as quantitative data to examine students' views of relationships, how they establish relationships, the effect of hooking up on relationships, and sexual decision making within the context of an exclusive relationship. First, we examine students' views of dates.

### Dating

Not many students interviewed indicated going on traditional dates as the way to establish a new relationship; instead the students who did indicate "going on dates" usually did so with someone with whom they were already involved intimately. Many students indicate that dating is the domain of those in actual relationships. Lisa R (21 years old, white, junior, student athlete) says, when asked if her friends go on dates, "Some of them, the ones that are in relationships. I feel like you don't really—like how you see in the movies, if someone's like, 'Oh, will you go on a date with me this Friday night?' I feel like no one does that. It's just kind of like when you're in a relationship,

you go out together, but other than that, you just kind of meet at parties, or meet up in groups at a bar or something.”

Michael Salazar (21 years old, Hispanic, senior, fraternity member), responds specifically to a question asking if everyone dates, “They should. I wouldn’t say everybody. Most people don’t really go on dates unless they’re in a relationship. It doesn’t have to be everybody, but they should.”

Judy (20 years old, white, junior, student athlete), describes the difference between hooking up, and being in a relationship in regards to going on dates:

I think it depends on how together you kind of are. If you’re just hooking up with someone, I feel like you wouldn’t [go on dates], especially in an on-campus relationship, because you can just go to their house, or go to their room, and hang out, whereas—but if you’re actually dating-dating, you’re official, you have to do more to spice things up, and keep it interesting.

Judy’s comment implies that dates are more public than hooking up, which would take place in a more private setting, such as someone’s house or room. Dating involves more of an announcement to others that you are spending time with this person, where hooking up is more secretive and back-stage. This is why students believe that people who date are already in relationships, since the relationship itself is more of a public recognition of the couple’s togetherness. Of the five male students who indicated that people who date are already in relationships, all are high status males, three fraternity members and two athletes. Of the six women, only two were high status women, both athletes.

Again, even when they do not engage in the behavior, many students are aware of what dating involves, and some even yearn for that type of courtship, perhaps seeking the public validation that may come with it. Jennie, a 21 year old white senior sorority member, describes her view:

Rachel: Would you say then, that hooking up is a traditional signal that you are looking [for a relationship]?

Jennie: I think that in this day and age, it's [hooking up] common. Not traditional, maybe, but it's definitely the more prominent idea — the prominent ways of meeting somebody that you would have a relationship with. You don't really hear about like guys knocking at your door and asking your father's

permission to take you out on a date anymore. It's unfortunate. I wish it were that way still because I'm very old-fashioned, but definitely 21<sup>st</sup> century, things have changed.

Jennie suggests a desire for something more traditional or “old-fashioned,” while she admits that hooking up is normative among her peers.

Some students described being in situations where they were unsure if they were on a date or not, and in those circumstances, relied on traditional markers to determine if it was in fact a date. In that ambiguous situation, the markers students use are those associated with traditional gender role ideology and traditional dating scripts (Laner and Ventrone 2000). Students were more likely to assume something was a date if one party, usually the male, paid for it, or if one party picked up the other, suggesting the importance and significance of planning, or at least of “intention.” Some students believed the outing was a date if there was a kiss at the end of the evening; or if the outing took place off campus. Expectations of gender are clearly implicated in students’ views of dating. Additionally, if they were interested in the person they were with, they were more likely to see it as a date; conversely, if they were NOT interested in their companion, they were more likely to believe that the outing was not a date, but a gathering of friends.

There was a great deal of variety in regard to responses asking “who goes on dates?” Students indicated they were aware of dating, even if no one within their friendship circle ever dated. In the exploratory survey, 86% of the students answered affirmatively to a question asking if they go on dates. Yet, when asked “does everyone go on dates,” only 29% said yes. These students do date, but they do not see this behavior as common among their peers. However among the interview sample, more students (n=7) indicated that “no one” dates as opposed to “everyone” dates. Most students indicated that older students would be more likely to date, as well as those in relationships, as discussed above.

To quantitatively examine just who goes on dates, I conducted a binary logistic regression using the OCSLS data. To create my dependent variable of “do you date,” I summed the two variables asking how many dates the student has gone on since the start of college. In the data set, these are separated into dates that involve a Greek-

organization social event, and dates that do not. I summed these variables and then created a new variable, dummy coded, so that students who have gone on any dates were scored a one, and those who did not were scored a zero. With this summed variable, 60% of students have gone on dates. Based upon the variety of answers found within the interview sample, I included a number of independent variables: year in school, GPA, Greek organization membership, athletic team membership, educational aspiration, number of sex partners, self reported attractiveness, race/ethnicity (three dummy coded variables indicating African American, Hispanic, or Asian ethnicity), living with parents, desire for a relationship, and having been in a relationship since the start of college. This analysis was performed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

I conducted diagnostic statistics to guard against potential violations of logistic regression assumptions (Fox 1991)<sup>2</sup>. Regression results are found in Table 4-1. As the students indicated in the interviews, Greek organization involvement was significantly associated with dating, where fraternity and sorority members were 156 times more likely to go on dates. Also, student athletes were significantly more likely to go on dates, but the effect was not as strong, athletes were 31 times more likely to date than their non-athlete peers. Students in later years of education were more likely to go on dates, and these effects were all significant at the  $p < .001$  levels. In the interviews, students also indicated that those in relationships were more likely to date, but the quantitative data does not indicate this: desire for an exclusive relationship was positively related to going on dates, although this effect was not significant, and having a relationship since college was negatively related to going on dates, significant at the  $p < .001$  level. Although race

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<sup>2</sup> The dataset is large enough to provide at least ten cases per predictor, so sample size is not an issue (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012). I detect no problems with outliers or multicollinearity. Using the Cook's D statistic, I detected no problems with outliers. Additionally, there were no standard residuals greater than two (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012), indicating outliers were not a problem. I saw no problems with multicollinearity based upon Variance Inflation Factor scores. The average VIF was 1.08 (Allison 1999). The model chi-square was significant at the  $p < .000$  level, indicating that the model estimated with the independent variables provides a better fit to the data than a model that only includes the intercept. This indicates that this set of predictors helps to discriminate between factors that increase the likelihood of going on dates.

Table 4-1  
Do you go on dates?

Variables	Full set	Big U only	Full set	Big U only
<i><u>Social Network and Sexual Capital Variables</u></i>				
Greek Affiliation (1= yes)	2.565** (0.942)	1.961^ (0.674)	1.435** (0.361)	1.414 (0.347)
Athlete (1= yes)	1.309** (0.269)	1.582 (0.459)	1.175^ (0.161)	1.710 (0.537)
Self-Reported Attractiveness	1.185** (0.169)	1.096 (0.092)	1.168** (0.155)	1.090 (0.086)
Number of Previous Sex Partners	1.168** (0.155)	1.130** (0.122)	1.152** (0.141)	1.133** (0.125)
Been in Relationship (1=yes)	.880** (-0.127)	1.249 (0.223)	.955 (-0.046)	1.208 (0.189)
Desire a Relationship (1=yes)	1.125 (0.118)	1.854 (0.617)	1.169^ (0.156)	1.782 (0.578)
<i><u>Demographic Variables</u></i>				
Sex (1= male)	0.962 (-0.039)	0.659^ (-0.417)	0.976 (-0.025)	.636^ (-0.453)
African American (1= yes)	0.681** (-0.384)	0.761 (-0.273)	.683** (-0.381)	.648 (-0.433)
Hispanic (1= yes)	1.031 (0.030)	0.953 (-0.049)	1.022 (0.021)	1.087 (0.084)
Asian (1=yes)	0.819** (-0.200)	0.595^ (-0.520)	.844** (-0.170)	.648^ (-0.434)
Parent Married (1= yes)	1.073 (0.070)	1.261 (0.232)	1.075 (0.072)	1.224 (0.202)
GPA	.973* (-0.027)	.895^ (-0.110)	.975* (-0.026)	.906 (-0.099)
Year in School	1.453** (0.374)	1.343** (0.295)	1.481** (0.393)	1.349** (0.299)
Live with Parents (1=yes)	.871^^ (-0.138)	1.033 (0.033)	.970 (-0.030)	1.152 (0.141)
Educational Aspiration	1.062^^ (0.060)	1.372^^ (0.316)	1.075** (0.072)	1.294^ (0.258)
Model Chi-Square	16949.77**	699.794**	18103.369**	735.344**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.198	0.181	0.181	0.177
sample size	16938	708	16938	708

^ p<.05, \*p<.01, ^^ p<.005, \*\* p<.001

numbers listed are odds ratios; number in parenthesis are unstandardized coefficients

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

differences were not mentioned by students in the interviews, African American and Asian students were significantly less likely to go on dates.

I also ran the same model, isolating only the subsample of the OCSLS from Big U (n=708)<sup>3</sup>. Results of this regression are in column 2 of Table 4-1. However, when looking at the smaller subsample, regression coefficients change. In the smaller sample, the effect of Greek organization involvement is reduced. At Big U, Greeks are 96 times more likely to go on dates, however, the significance of this effect is reduced to  $p < .05$ . Students in later years were still significantly more likely to date as well. Experience with a relationship was positively related to dating, however this finding failed to reach a level of significance. Desire for a relationship had a positive effect on going on dates, but this relationship also failed to reach a level of statistical significance. In the Big U subsample, sex emerged as a significant predictor of going on dates, where males were less likely to report such behavior (significant at the  $p < .05$  level).

Because I combined Greek organization dates with non-Greek dates, and the effect of fraternity involvement was so robust, I re-ran the models using only non-greek dates to determine if other factors impact non-greek students, or if Greek-affiliated students go on dates outside those involving Greek-sponsored events. Results are in column 3 of Table 4-1<sup>4</sup>. Looking only at non-Greek events as dates, involvement in Greek organizations remains positive and significant in affecting the likelihood of going on dates. Greek affiliated respondents were 43 times more likely to go on dates than their non-Greek peers. Athletic team membership was also positively related to going on dates, although the effect was smaller; student athletes are 17 times more likely to go on dates. As with the earlier model, year in school again reaches statistical significance,

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<sup>3</sup> Again, the sample size was not an issue (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012), and there were no problems with outliers or multicollinearity. The mean VIF was 1.13, indicating no issue with multicollinearity (Allison 1999). And again, the model chi-square was significant at the  $p < .000$  level, indicating that the model estimated with the independent variables provides a better fit to the data than a model that only includes the intercept.

<sup>4</sup> Again, there were no problems with sample size, outliers (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012) or multicollinearity (Allison 1999). The mean VIF score was 1.08. The model chi-square was significant at the  $p < .001$  level, indicating that the model estimated with the independent variables provides a better fit to the data than a model that only includes the intercept.

where students who are further along in their education are 48 times more likely to go on dates. Also, desire for an exclusive relationship was positively associated with dating, but having been in a relationship since starting college was negatively related to dating. Both of these relationships were not statistically significant. These results disprove Hypothesis #2b, and they complicate the interview findings which suggest that dating is a traditional signal to indicate interest in a relationship, yet the interviews also suggest that hooking up can serve the same purpose, as will be discussed below. Other findings indicate that students with a higher GPA are less likely to date, as are African American and Asian students. Students with higher educational aspirations, those with more previous sex partners, and those with higher levels of self-reported attractiveness are all significantly more likely to date.

Again, many of these effects change when using the subsample of only Big U students. Greek-affiliated students are more likely to date than their non-Greek peers, but the significance of this effect disappears. Students who are in their later years of education are more likely to date, as are those with more sex partners. Again, educational aspiration is positively and significantly related to going on dates, and males are significantly less likely to report going on dates.

While students believe that dating is a way to signal interest in a long term relationship, it does not appear to be the strongest way to achieve an exclusive relationship, since desire for such a relationship, while positively associated with going on dates across all the models, does not reach statistical significance. This indicates that just because students seek to have exclusive relationships, there can be many ways to go about achieving them, and hooking up has emerged as a viable pathway to relationships, as Jennie mentioned above.

The OCSLS includes variables asking about both hooking up and dating as a pathway to a relationship. A large proportion of students indicated going on dates with the person who subsequently became their relationship partner, and a somewhat smaller proportion of students indicated hooking up before forming a relationship with that partner. Most interestingly, over 60% of students in the OCSLS indicated BOTH dating and hooking up with their significant other. Table 4-2 shows the percentages of students

indicating dating and hooking up with their relationship partner. The most recent wave of data collection of the OCSLS asks students who indicated both hooking up and dating their relationship partner which happened first, the date or the hookup. Due to this question being added to the survey at a later date, the amount of students who answered the questions is small, about 8% of the total sample. Regardless of the small proportion of students who answered this question, the response patterns are informative to this analysis. In the full OCSLS data set, 1977 students, or 8.2% of the sample, answered this question, and 61.4% indicated they dated their partner before they hooked up; 38.6% indicated they hooked up before they ever went on a date. When looking only at men, and only at women, these patterns continue. The number of students from Big U who answered this question is a larger proportion of the subsample, 11.6%, or 110 students. At Big U, both dating and hooking up coexist as ways of forming relationships, but again, more students indicate dating before hooking up. At Big U, 60.9% of students dated before hooking up with their current relationship partner, and 39.1% indicated hooking up before dating their relationship partner. However, when separating the genders, there is a slight difference: of the men at Big U, 51.7% hooked up before they dated their partner, and 48.3% dated their partner before they hooked up. Of the women, 34.6% hooked up first, and 65.4% said they went on a date with their partner first. These numbers should be consumed with care, as the subsample of men at Big U who answered this question was only 29 men. Regardless, this data demonstrates that both dating and hooking up certainly exist for undergraduates, which challenges assertions found in the literature that dating is not a viable pathway to relationships (Heldman and Wade 2010). This offers partial support to Hypothesis #3, by showing that hooking up is a pathway to relationships, but it also challenges Hypothesis #3 by demonstrating that dating is in fact a pathway to relationships, too. Interestingly, Table 4-2 demonstrates that a small proportion of students in relationships, 3.2-5.5%, formed relationships without experiencing a date OR a hookup before the relationship. These relationships likely formed through friendships, or emerged after “group hang-outs” (Bailey 1988) that would not be characterized by students as a date or a hookup.



Table 4-2  
Students' Reports of Hooking up and Dating as a Path to a Relationship

Response Choices	Full OCSLS	OCSLS Males	OCSLS Females	OCSLS: Big U Full	OCSLS: Big U Males	OCSLS: Big U Females
Dated Before Relationship	90.80% (12238)	91.90% (3240)	90.70% (8969)	89.70% (533)	91.90% (124)	88.90% (407)
Hooked Up Before Relationship	66.40% (12023)	69.70% (3184)	65.30% (8812)	74.40% (523)	81.50% (124)	72.10% (398)
Did BOTH Before Relationship	61.80% (11994)	65.20% (3173)	60.60% (8974)	69.00% (522)	76.60% (124)	66.50% (397)
Did NEITHER Before Relationship	4.80% (11994)	4.50% (3173)	4.80% (8974)	5.00% (522)	3.20% (124)	5.50% (397)

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

Values shown are percentages; number in parenthesis is the valid n of respondents who answered the question. Responses indicate dating or hooking up with someone and then forming a relationship with that same person.

While dating may be considered a “traditional” way to establish a relationship, hooking up has emerged as a viable option as well, and for many students, a major factor is the *time* involved in dating. As seen in the quantitative results, students with higher GPAs are less likely to date; these students may be focused on their studies and do not wish to expend time or energy on a date that may not lead to a relationship, showing support for Hypothesis #1. For students such as these, hooking up serves to alleviate some of these concerns: hooking up involves less of a time commitment, and it is more normative on college campuses to arrange a hookup late at night or on the spur of the moment, perhaps after their studying is done for the evening, without a great expenditure of time. In this way, students may share an implicit understanding of time limits in college, and therefore the normativity of hooking up is embedded in college students’ understanding of primary obligations. Gender is implicated here as well, as some young men may not only choose to forego the time invested in dating, but also the financial investment, as some men indicated that they do not have money to spend, or do not want to spend money on a young woman with whom he is not exclusive. Traditional gender expectations are still strong regarding students’ views of dating, which require the young woman to wait to be asked on a date as well as require the young man to pay for it (Laner and Ventrone 2000). Hooking up allows for students to disentangle from some of these expectations, as young women can initiate hookups, and they often do not involve a financial expenditure on the part of the male. This escape from traditional gender expectations does little to challenge these expectations and the effects they have on hooking up and relationships.

### Hooking up as a Pathway to Relationships

In addition to dating, hooking up appears to be a common pathway into exclusive relationships. In the interview sample, 71.4% indicated that they hooked up with someone and later established an exclusive relationship with that same person. In the exploratory survey data, 67% of the students answered affirmatively to the question,

“have any of your hookups led to a relationship?” As discussed above, in the OCSLS, 66.4% of students indicating hooking up with a partner prior to establishing an exclusive relationship, and 90.8% of students indicated going on dates with a partner prior to establishing an exclusive relationship. However, to establish that both hooking up and dating co-exist as a pathway to a relationship, 61.8% of students indicated BOTH hooking up and going on a date with their partner before establishing the relationship, as displayed in Table 4-2.

The large proportion of students who have hooked up with someone as a pathway to a relationship includes students with a more narrow definition of hooking up, like only kissing, as well as those who use a broader definition that sees hooking up involving any type of intimacy ranging from kissing to intercourse. This shows that other sexual behaviors occur in the course of forming an exclusive relationship, and that exclusivity is not required for sexually intimate behaviors, but when students are exclusive, they will engage in a wider variety of behaviors, as will be discussed below.

### Views of Relationships

In the interviews, students (10 women; two men) believed that older students would be more likely to have relationships. Some also feel that people who are more future oriented (nine women; three men) as well as those who are "needy" (seven women; three men) would be more likely to have relationships. The largest proportion of the sample (13 women; four men), in accordance with traditional gender role expectations, believed that females are more likely to have relationships, which may truly mean that students believe that more women seek relationships. Interestingly, many students (including some who are Greek-affiliated themselves) indicate that Greek-affiliated students are more likely to have relationships, where other Greek-affiliated students feel that they and their peers are less likely to have a relationship. To examine this using the OCSLS data, I ran a binary logistic regression using the variable, "since you've been in college, have you been in an exclusive relationship that has lasted six months or more?"

As predictor variables, I included sex, year in school, educational aspiration, grade point average, Greek organization involvement, athletic team participation, self reported attractiveness, number of previous sex partners, total number of hookups, live with parents, parents' marital status, and dummy variables indicating African-American, Hispanic, or Asian ethnicity. Results are found in Table 4-3<sup>5</sup>.

In the full OCSLS dataset, many of the variables significantly affected relationship involvement. However, contrary to the belief of the students interviewed, Greek organization and athletic team membership were not significantly related to being in a relationship. The sex variable did show that women were more likely to have a relationship, as were students who live with parents, and those in later years of college. Students who rated their appearance highly and those with more sex partners were more likely to be in a relationship, while those with a higher number of total hookups were significantly less likely to be in a relationship (all significant at the  $p < .001$  level). In the full data set, African-American and Asian students were significantly less likely to be in a relationship, while Hispanics were more likely.

I reran the model isolating only the subsample from Big University. Results are in column 2 of Table 4-3<sup>6</sup>. In the smaller subsample, some differences emerge. Most notably, at Big U, Greek affiliated students were more likely to be in a relationship, significant at the level of  $p < .05$ . Similarly to the large set, women were more likely to have a relationship. Having a higher number of previous sex partners was related to a higher likelihood of being in a relationship. And higher number of total hookups

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<sup>5</sup> To guard against potential bias due to outliers or multicollinearity, I ran an ordinary least squares regression for diagnostic purposes (Fox 1991). The dataset is large enough to provide at least ten cases per predictor, so sample size is not an issue (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012). I detected no problems with outliers or multicollinearity. Using the Cook's D statistic, I detected no problems with outliers. Additionally, there were no standard residuals greater than two (Tabachnick and Fidell 2012), indicating outliers were not a problem. I saw no problems with multicollinearity based upon Variance Inflation Factor scores. No VIFs exceeded 1.5, and the average VIF was 1.12 (Allison 1999). The model chi-square was significant at the  $p < .000$  level, indicating that the model estimated with the independent variables provides a better fit to the data than a model that only includes the intercept. This indicates that this set of predictors helps to discriminate between factors that increase the likelihood of being in a relationship.

<sup>6</sup> Again, I detected no problems with outliers and multicollinearity was not an issue, the average VIF was 1.17 (Allison 1999).

Table 4-3  
Have you had a Relationship?

Variables	Full set	Big U only
<i><u>Social Network and Sexual Capital Variables</u></i>		
Greek Affiliation (1= yes)	1.016 (0.015)	1.697 <sup>^</sup> (0.529)
Athlete (1= yes)	.983 (-0.017)	1.026 (0.026)
Self-Reported Attractiveness	1.179** (0.165)	1.147♦ (0.137)
Number of Previous Sex Partners	1.167** (0.154)	1.152** (0.141)
Total # of Hookups	.912** (-0.092)	0.962* (-0.038)
<i><u>Demographic Variables</u></i>		
Sex (1= male)	0.600** (-0.510)	0.410** (-0.891)
African American (1= yes)	0.573** (-0.556)	0.525♦ (-0.645)
Hispanic (1= yes)	1.136♦ (0.127)	1.056 (0.055)
Asian (1=yes)	0.807** (-0.215)	0.693 (-0.366)
Parent Married (1= yes)	0.862** (-0.149)	0.792 (-0.234)
GPA	1.002 (0.002)	1.040 (0.039)
Year in School	1.681** (0.519)	1.645** (0.498)
Live with Parents (1=yes)	1.128♦ (0.120)	1.135 (0.126)
Educational Aspiration	0.980 (-0.020)	1.057 (0.056)
Model Chi-Square	24013.144**	937.822**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.219	0.212
sample size	23408	919

<sup>^</sup> p<.05, \*p<.01, ♦ p<.005, \*\* p<.001

numbers listed are odds ratios; number in parenthesis are unstandardized coefficients

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

significantly reduced the likelihood of a relationship. In the Big U subsample, the only effect for race to reach a level of significance was for African-Americans being less likely to be in a relationship. This race effect is counter to characterizations in the literature of hooking up being a “white thing” where black students are more likely to have relationships (Ray and Rosow 2010).

Examining only the large sample would reveal an element of pluralistic ignorance (Lambert et al. 2003) regarding the effect of Greek organization involvement and relationships, yet the Big U subsample reveals that, on the Big U campus, Greeks may be more likely to be in a relationship. Students are accurate in their appraisal of females as being more likely to be in a relationship as well. Additionally, in both the full set and the Big U subsample, the more people hookup, the less likely they are to maintain a relationship, supporting the characterization made in the interviews, as well as in the literature (Glenn and Marquardt 2001) that hooking up has a negative effect on relationship formation.

There is a disconnect between students’ behaviors and their views of the effectiveness of starting a relationship through a hookup. Many students recognize hooking up as a common pathway to relationships, or, as Jennie put it above, the “prominent” way to start a relationship, yet they question the efficacy of doing so. Even among the students who describe having relationships which started from hookups, they are not sure that this is indeed a good way to start relationships. Seventeen of the students interviewed (35%) indicate such dissidence between their own behavior and belief. Fifteen of these students are female, which reflects the power of the relational imperative on women (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). The relational imperative stresses the importance of relationships for women, and encourages women to define themselves by their relationship status. While relationships themselves are prioritized, young women may have a negative association with sexual activity taking place en route to the relationship, since it is within a relationship that sexual relations for women are most accepted (Bogle 2007, 2008a). That these young women (and men) do not see “success” in a behavior which they have actually done shows how cultural messages help students to reframe their own actions. In this instance, the cultural messages about

gender encourage women to see something as “unsuccessful” because of the trajectory which got them there, even in spite of the end result, the relationship. Additionally, a negative appraisal of the relationship may also encourage students to see it as less successful, which also demonstrates evidence of the relational imperative. The opposite applies as well, in how women reflect on past hookups. The relational imperative is shown below when Courtney (a 23 year old white senior) implies that without the relationship, the hookup is “done for nothing,” so the ensuing relationship validates the sexual experience, and stops her from “feeling like crap,” which makes her “lucky.”

Rachel: When you think about those hookups that have led to relationships and those that haven't, do you like think about them in any different way?

Courtney: yeah, lucky

Rachel: OK, they're lucky or you're lucky?

Courtney: Umm well it has happened to me before so I guess I consider, I guess it's a way to feel better about it, like it wasn't just something I did for nothing, or I don't really have to worry about feeling like crap afterwards.

Among males, those who indicated that they have formed a relationship from a hookup but would not do so again rely on a double standard to support this ideology. Under the double standard, the behavior of their female partner comes under scrutiny, while their own parallel behavior avoids examination. Here, Ali, a 20 year old African American fraternity member, indicates that his current relationship started with a hookup. He says that he wanted a relationship with her, which is why he hooked up with her. Yet moments later in the same interview, he says: “Some people form relationships from hook ups, and I disagree with that personally. I feel like if someone's gonna hook up with you like that, what's gonna stop them from hooking up with somebody else like that? That's how I look at it.” For Ali, then, his partner's behavior comes into question because she could do it again “with someone else.” The female gets judged more harshly for engaging in the very behavior males do without question. Again, this is without considering her motivation for hooking up with him was probably the same as his: perhaps she hooked up with him because she wanted a relationship with him, which

would be the thing stopping her from “hooking up with somebody else like that.” In this instance, it appears that the double standard resonates more loudly with Ali than his view of his own relationship potential. In contemporary campus environments, the double standard is alive and well, and it allows men (and women) to judge *women* for behaviors that when done by males, are almost entirely without comment, criticism, and in some cases, even validated (Risman and Allison 2012).

### Sex in Relationships

Some students emphasize the importance of experiencing sexual intercourse with a partner before establishing exclusivity. Counter-intuitive to beliefs held in previous generations, these students feel that sexual performance is an important element in a relationship, and would need to have sex with a partner before establishing intimacy to ensure that they are sexually compatible. Ashley, a 22 year old white student athlete in her senior year, discusses this:

Rachel: From the way you just described it with the last question, it almost seems like you think hooking up actually can make it easier to form relationships?

Ashley: Yeah, I think you get a lot of things out of the way that you'd want to know. Because you wouldn't want to build a relationship with someone and then hookup and not have any sort of chemistry, physically.

Rachel: Is there anything else about hookups that you'd like to tell me?

Ashley: No, I think basically, I mean, as I said, I just think hookups are more of a physical thing, and I think that they're necessary before you can have a relationship because it would suck to get into a relationship with someone and then find out that you have zero chemistry and then be like, "Well, I like them as a person, but..."

Students discuss that the relationship forms after a period of repeated hookups. Many students describe long term hooking up with the same partner, which exemplifies the normative aspect of hooking up as a pathway to relationships. Here, Eva, a 21 year old Pacific Islander and member of a sorority, describes the trajectory of her most recent



relationship: “And from then on, we probably hooked up for like a year and a half. Then we started dating.” Other students describe shorter timelines, however, one of the things that students mention to offset the length of time they’ve hooked up, is the intensity or closeness that can develop between the two, such as if they spend a lot of time together, or how well they know each other, which is evidence of students’ attempts to conform to the relational imperative, especially for females, since relational contexts are those in which female sexuality is most validated (Bogle 2007). Earlier exploratory regression analyses using the first few waves of the OCSLS indicate that the extent to which the parties knew each other was a significant predictor of more intimate sexual behaviors taking place on a hookup (Kalish 2007), and, as will be discussed below, the students interviewed were very clear that there were some sexual behaviors that they would not perform with a partner who was just a hookup, as opposed to a relationship partner.

Interestingly, many students, male and female, do indicate that there are certain sexual behaviors they will not do unless they are exclusive, which indicates that they recognize a clear distinction between hooking up and relationships, with the latter being more intimate and serious, and due to that belief, they will only engage in certain behaviors with an exclusive partner. In the exploratory survey sample, 70% indicated that being exclusive with a partner impacts how far they would be willing to go sexually. The OCSLS asks about which sexual behaviors respondents experienced in their last sexual encounters, including hookups and the last sexual experience in a relationship. In the full OSCLS, 39.2% of students had vaginal intercourse during their last hookup, while 76.8% had vaginal intercourse on the last occasion they did anything sexual with their relationship partner. This is displayed in Table 4-4.

Other students may engage in a variety of sexual behaviors, but do not have intercourse with a partner unless they are exclusive. Students who mention this feel as if they need to keep something special so that their partner will want to take the step towards exclusivity in order to experience intercourse. Many females indicated this, as a way to maintain the interest of the male partner and in accordance with the gatekeeper role for women, yet, in the context of a vibrant hookup culture on campus, the effectiveness of this can vary, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 4-4  
Sexual Activity in Most Recent Hookup and Relationship

Response Choices	Full OCSLS	OCSLS Males	OCSLS Females	OCSLS: Big U Full	OCSLS: Big U Males	OCSLS: Big U Females
Last Hookup: Vaginal Intercourse	39.20%	40.30%	38.70%	39.90%	42.10%	39.00%
Last Relationship: Vaginal Intercourse	76.80%	74.30%	77.80%	76.00%	72.10%	77.30%
Last Hookup: Performed Oral Sex	26.70%	27.70%	26.20%	26.20%	28.40%	25.20%
Last Relationship: Performed Oral Sex	60.30%	61.20%	60.10%	57.50%	57%	57.80%
Last Hookup: Received Oral Sex	28.70%	41.90%	22.40%	29.10%	43.70%	22.80%
Last Relationship: Received Oral Sex	58.80%	68.50%	55.30%	58.80%	71.30%	55.10%
n: Hookup Behavior	14754	4780	9939	604	183	421
n: Relationship Behavior	11985	3167	8788	529	122	405

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011  
Values shown are percentages

## Views of Hookups compared to Relationships

Students are extremely aware of what it means to be in a relationship, even if they eschew that terminology in favor of other terms such as “talking,” or being “in a union.” When asked to compare hooking up to relationships, a number of patterns emerge in students’ responses, which not only reflect what relationships mean to them, but also illuminate some of the reasons why many choose to hook up over forming exclusive relationships. While many recognize that relationships are more intimate, committed, and selfless, they also see that relationships imply a future orientation to which they may not aspire while in college, as well as relationships being characterized as “work.”

Interestingly, of the seven students who refer to relationships as work, six of them are female, which is counter to traditional gender ideology which suggests that women have less difficulty with the level of emotional investment that relationships require. Many characterizations of relationships being work entail a description of the emotion work (Hochschild 1979) that accompanies the time investment of a relationship. Daisy, a 20 year old Asian sophomore, describes the difference between a relationship and a hookup: “Relationships are so much more work! Oh my God! It’s like the whole calling and ‘what are you doing?’” Many students describe both the emotion and time investment, and mention how college offers other things that also take time. Jennie, a 21 year old white senior, sorority member, describes all of this:

Rachel: Okay, how do you think relationships differ from hookups?

Jennie: Commitment. You have to divulge a lot more personal information when you’re with somebody in a relationship. If you are hooking up with somebody, they don’t really care about your family life or your past or your major or where you’re going in the future. When you’re in a relationship, you have to be willing to discuss and confide in somebody, and let them know about your background. They want to know about your previous hookups and they don’t—they want to know intimate details of your life, so you have to be willing to share that with somebody. I think they’re more common than relationships, only because these are the “best years of your life.” So its kind of that whole carefree vibe that people get. I don’t think—I mean, I do know a lot of people in relationships, but I think hookups are easier, and I think when you have so many commitments—you have school, and you have work, and you’re

planning for the future, I think having a relationship is too time consuming.

So hooking up seems less intimidating and is surely less time consuming compared to the personal exposure involved in a dating relationship. Additionally, while students recognize the time investment of a relationship, not all of them consider that to be negative. Edwin, a 20 year old white student athlete in his freshman year, says about his current relationship, “You do all the outside things, like if I was to hook up with a girl, I’d ask her to come over for an hour or two, and then I’d point to her to leave or pretend I’ve gotta do something by myself. With my relationship, I hate being away from her. I like spending all my time with her.”

When students discuss the investment required in relationships, major themes emerge. As Jennie put it above, there is the time commitment, which is difficult, but also complicated by the fact that the college environment itself also provides other things which take up time, such as school work, or offer other complications to a relationship, such as the party imperative and pressure to play the field to experience all that college has to offer, “the best years of your life.” For these reasons, a relationship is seen as constricting, or as something to aspire to in the future. According to James, a 20 year old white student athlete in his freshman year, “I don’t think relationships work because they’re just—right now you’re too young. There’s a lot of opportunity out there for a single person to experience life at its fullest.” Although this sentiment was shared by many students, it is of note that both Jennie and James are more invested into campus life: Jennie in her sorority and James as an athlete. This is indicative of the additional obligations and time constraints on Greeks and athletic team members, but it also speaks to the pressure that such students may feel to experience all the pleasures college may offer (or of some idealized version of college life), that is so prominent in the stereotypes of Greek organizations and Division I athletes, so that they may feel additional pressure to live up to such characterizations. Edwin, quoted above discussing how he enjoys spending all his time with his girlfriend, discusses this as well, and here, the fact that his girlfriend is also an athlete makes a huge difference in their relationship:

Edwin: I mean, relationships give you a lot more stress than just hooking up does, unless you're one of those guys that hooks up with lots of different girls and has the stress of trying to stop people from finding out. It's definitely a lot more stress because you feel obliged to that person, but you're still in college at the same time. You want to have a relaxed relationship, but you can't at the same time.

Rachel: Why can't it be relaxed?

Edwin: It's too difficult, I think, as an athlete, to juggle the workload between your practice and games, schoolwork, and a girlfriend.

Rachel: Yeah, I can imagine that. Does it make it easier or harder in that case, being that your girlfriend is an athlete, too, and she's got the same responsibilities?

Edwin: Yeah, this has been the best relationship that I've had simply because she understands that I have to go to practice. She had to do the same. This is by far the easiest.

For many students, a relationship implies a serious future commitment, and if they are unsure how to envision such a future long term, they will avoid relationships. In this way, it seems dating relationships become the pathways to more than what can happen now or soon; relationships become the beckoning of a future for students, and this can be frightening. Older students are more likely to discuss the pressure they feel to assess long term plans. "I feel like as you get older, you're kinda more expected to eventually find somebody and be in a serious relationship instead of going from person to person to person." Courtney (23 year old, white, senior) was in a relationship at the time of the interview, but she also expressed doubt at the long term viability of her relationship, again demonstrating the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). She is successful in that she has a relationship, but because she is pragmatic about what the future holds, she has doubts. For many students (5 females, 2 males, 14% of the total interview sample), relationships themselves imply a future orientation.

A large majority of the students interviewed (n=38, 25 women and 13 men, 78% of the total interview sample) discuss the level of intimacy that relationships require, which differentiates them from hookups. That intimacy can involve spending time together, and meeting family and friends.

“I wouldn’t take somebody out I’m hooking up with to go meet my parents...sometimes if you’re in a relationship its more than just to have sex.” – Stephen Anderson, 22 year old African American junior, student athlete.

“Umm, you’re in a relationship, I think that it’s you probably talk a lot more consistently, I know plenty of people that hook up with someone and may not talk to them Monday through Friday, probably only talk Friday through Sunday, ummm, I mean, if I am in a relationship, the person is gonna meet my parents or my friends. If it’s a hookup it’s just kind of like personal between you and that person, you don’t necessarily need to know all about them or their mom or dad or something like that...” – Veronica Walker, 23 year old white senior.

This intimacy also involves getting to know more about the person, and being considerate of their feelings.

“Relationships are more hanging out, doing stuff besides partying together, being able to confide in the other one, getting to know the other person on a more intimate level.” – Eva, 21 year old Pacific Islander senior, student athlete.

“How you feel about them, like you really care about the person you are in a relationship with, but if you’re just hooking up with somebody you’re not really like gonna be worried about how they feel or what’s going on in their life.” – James, 20 year old white freshman, student athlete.

Interestingly, we see in these excerpts a differentiation of relationships from things usually associated with hooking up: “partying” and having sex. Here, students recognize that relationships involve a deeper connection beyond that associated with partying. It is due to this acknowledgement that students self-select onto paths toward hooking up and partying, or on to paths toward relationships, even though hooking up can lead to relationships, as discussed above. In line with this self selection, a portion of students (n=6, 12%) explicitly state that you cannot find a relationship at a bar, demonstrating once again that hookups are inextricably linked to the drinking culture at college (Bogle 2008a, 2008b; Daniel and Fogarty 2007; Flack et al. 2007; Wade and Heldman 2012; Vander Ven and Beck 2009). Nathaniel (21 year old Hispanic senior) describes this well:

Rachel: How do relationships differ from hookups?

Nathaniel: the setting.

Rachel: what do you mean by that?

Nathaniel: Where they meet up, how they meet, things like that. If they meet through a mutual friend, it's usually going to be a relationship. If they first meet in public and then go into a private area, then it makes it seem like a relationship because you're presenting it first and then taking it further personally. But if its something like going straight to the room, going then eating outside, having people see you then splitting up, then it seems more secretive and a hookup. Also, if it's a club, then that makes it seem more like a hookup because the setting would be implied. Nobody goes to a club or a bar to make a relationship.

Nathaniel's comment also alludes to the public-private dichotomy between relationships and hooking up. Meeting through friends implies that the peer group is aware of the pairing of the two people, which is more public and therefore more likely to lead to a relationship, where hookups are more "secretive." Eva (21 year old, Pacific Islander, senior, student athlete) echoes almost the exact same sentiment, but with the nostalgic view of dating expressed earlier by Jennie:

Eva: I feel like dating is kind of lost in our generation.

Rachel: What makes you say that?

Eva: I think more people look to hook up with people at parties rather than like ask someone out, just be like, "Oh, would you like to go out to dinner sometime?" Just spend time getting to know each other. I feel like a lot of people are just like, "Oh, I'll see you at the bar." I think that's a bad sign for a relationship.

### Effects of Hooking up on Relationships

One of the first studies on hooking up asserted that hooking up negatively affects marriagability for college women, as it leaves "women with few opportunities to explore the marriage worthiness of a variety of men before settling into a long term commitment with one of them." (Glenn and Marquardt 2001: 4). Since then a common characterization of hooking up has been that experience with it impedes one's ability to form a relationship (Mendel et al. 2012; Paik 2010a; Reid et al. 2011). Such impediment is derived from inexperience with the emotional investment required for a relationship

(Daniel and Fogarty 2007) or from sheer inexperience with relationships at all (Kimmel 2008). Conversely, many authors also assert that hooking up has replaced dating (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Bogle 2005; Stinson 2010) and is indeed a pathway to relationships (Bisson and Levine 2009; England and Thomas 2007; Owen and Fincham 2011a, 2011b; Heldman and Wade 2010). It is clear that both patterns of intimacy exist simultaneously (Paik 2010a), but less is known about the effect of hooking up on relationships.

When asked about their thoughts on the effect of hookups on relationships, two patterns emerged. Some students (seven women, one man, 16% of total sample) say hookups can have both positive and negative effects on relationships, noting that intimate closeness can both facilitate a relationship and lead to the danger of “catching feelings.” Five students (two men, three women, 10% of total sample) believe that hooking up has a positive impact on relationships, mostly related to the sexual aspect. A larger proportion of students, however, view this effect as negative.

The students who feel that hooking up positively affects relationships say hooking up makes relationships easier. These students describe thinking of sex as an important aspect to a relationship and feel that hooking up easily facilitates this physical aspect. "Yeah I think you get a lot of things out of the way that you would want to know," says Ashley, a 22 year old white student athlete in her senior year. These students also say that hooking up provides them with skills that are required when initiating a relationship, specifically confidence. According to Jake, a 20-year-old white fraternity member in his junior year, “People, who hook up a lot, if they want a relationship, will find it easier because of confidence.” Again, sexual experience and the comfort of talking to potential relationship partners, i.e. “game,” are seen as important traits necessary in the establishment of a relationship. These skills and experiences are more important tools to help establish a relationship in the absence of a culture of courtship, which also relies on status, yet within courtship other markers of status are more important, such as popularity (Bailey 1988). It is of note, however, that this is an area where there is pressure due to expectations of masculinity, since males are expected to have “game” regarding the establishment of intimacy, so that males with hookup experience will have more confidence approaching young women. In this way, hooking up bolsters a young man’s



sense of masculinity, as well as his confidence, which may help him, then, to achieve success in intimate encounters with his female peers. Young males who are less successful in hooking up, or who choose to opt out of hookup culture, may have more difficulty establishing relationships.

Many more students characterize hooking up as having a negative impact on relationships. Some describe aspects of intimacy; specifically stating that hooking up devalues a relationship, while others, similarly to what is in the literature, described inexperience with relationship skills. Other students discuss the danger of "catching feelings" and getting hurt (Paul 2006). Another group of students describes negative effects, but these students describe the sexual aspect, for example saying that hooking up puts a lot of pressure on the sex act, or that it leads people to feel objectified. The largest proportion of students referred to a double standard and specifically mentioned how females can be negatively characterized because of hooking up. This relates to Hypothesis #5, but offers a more intricate effect of gendered stereotypes on students' behaviors than was predicted.

Fourteen students interviewed (seven women, seven men, 28.5% of the total sample) state that hooking up devalues relationships. Whether they are aware of it or not, many of these students echo characterizations of hookups found in media coverage of hooking up (Stepp 07). Laila, a 22 year old Asian female in her junior year, who refers to herself as 'traditional,' describes this as "going backwards": "I think if something starts off with a hookup, I don't think it's stable, you kind of skip the whole getting to know the person, I guess, process, and those dates and stuff. Hooking up is, you skip that big part in the whole relationship process and you just get to the main point on an intimate level, it's almost going backwards, I think." Here, Laila implies that sex is the main point of the relationship, yet she feels that such intimacy should also be emotional.

In their characterization of hooking up as devaluing relationships, many students mention the place of sex within a relationship and the emotions they feel should be associated with those sex acts. Iron Man, a 22 year old white male in his senior year, specifically uses the word "devalue" to convey his point: "I feel that the commonness of hooking up can kind of devalue those acts when you're in a relationship. It kind of takes

away a certain feeling you have when you're actually engaged in those behaviors with someone that you have feelings for." Others say that having lots of hook ups "waters down" the relationship experience. These students have a high regard for sexuality within a relationship yet they do not scorn others for non-relationship sex. This characterization prioritizes relational sex more highly than nonrelational sex (Bogle 2007; Rubin 1999), showing evidence of the relational imperative (Reid et al. 2011; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009).

Other students feel that hooking up devalues the actual need to have a relationship as opposed to devaluing elements of a relationship such as intimacy, as Laila noted above. Here, Mary, a 19 year old biracial female in her junior year, relying on an often repeated adage, describes this. "Because it's that saying-- what's that thing about the milk and the cow? [laughs] You don't need to buy the cow if you already got the milk or something like that? Yeah, I think that's the perfect thing for it right there. Usually guys are just like, 'you know, I already had sex with her. Why do I need to commit? She's already giving it up.'" This statement reaffirms the gatekeeper position for women and recognizes how some women will wait for a relationship to have sex, while it ignores women's own sexual subjectivity and implies that a woman has sex only to establish a relationship, and derives no pleasure from it.

Many characterizations of hooking up see it as emotionally absent, and due to that, some feel that hookup experience does not provide adequate socialization into how to achieve a successful relationship. As discussed above, some feel that hooking up provides experience helpful in forming a relationship, such as sexual comfort or confidence in approaching potential partners. Other students recognize other aspects that are important in a relationship, and feel that hookup history can be an obstacle to forming a relationship. Six students interviewed (four women, two men) specifically mention that the negative impact of hooking up on relationships is that people who hook up do not know how to behave within the bounds of a committed relationship. With this view, some students look at the practical behavioral elements of a relationship, noting that experience with hooking up may not prepare someone for the expectations they face in a relationship, again underscoring the different, more serious, and public, nature of a

relationship which requires things such as consistent contact or exposure to one's partner's extended social circle. Veronica Walker, a 23 year old white female in her senior year, describes this:

Ummm, I think if you are the type of person what's always hooked up when you're drunk, umm where like people always just hooked up with a guy and he's never been in a committed relationship, then once you are in a committed relationship I think its, you might not even know how to, like, how to do the typical thing. You know what I mean, it, just, you don't, might not even be good at like consistently calling. If you're a guy that's never had a serious relationship even if you hooked up with plenty of girls you may not be good at you know, calling her every day. You might not be good at meeting her parents or things like that.

Other students consider the emotional investment of a relationship and feel that hookup experience may lead people to approach a relationship the way they approach a hookup, which they see as having a deleterious effect on both parties in the relationship. Scott Chandler, a 22 year old white fraternity member in his senior year, discusses this impact:

Yeah I think that people confuse the two. I think that some people who are hooking up with someone think that there is a relationship, they get hurt and there are some people that because they are hooking up with other people they don't know how to have a relationship. Or they are in a relationship and it's based on sex and the other person feels that they are being neglected, emotionally neglected, you know, they are not connecting on a different level. And if I am with somebody I like to connect on all different levels, some guys they can't disassociate the two. So they can't separate it.

Scott's comment alludes to another reason why students consider hooking up to have a negative effect on relationships: the danger of "catching feelings" (Paul 2006). These students (five women, three men) do not see the feelings as negative, instead they see potential pain that comes from a disparity of emotions felt between the two people involved. It is important to note that the danger of feelings is not seen as a negative element of a relationship in itself, however, catching feelings reveals a vulnerability that leaves one open to getting their feelings hurt, which is again a potential side effect of a relationship, which these students attribute to the hookup culture. Some see this as

leading to future or at least, potential pain, as Emily (a 21 year old biracial female in her senior year) describes:

But if it's someone who is very, very romantic and is very—I don't want to say conservative because it kind of gives different ideas, but kind of Disney-ish, which is fine—the romance and the—the that's just a really fun, beautiful thing, and I think we all need some of that. But I think that if someone like that enters a world there you don't need to love someone and the person doesn't need to love you to enjoy sex, they can be really, really emotionally wrecked and hurt.

Emily references the potential future hurt feelings which can occur when someone approaches hooking up with the expectation that what they are doing is exclusive. These situations were mentioned by the majority of students who evaluated hooking up to have a negative effect on relationships in regard to feelings, and most of these students saw females as the ones who were getting hurt, in accordance with traditional notions of female sexuality. However, other students also see difficulty in forming relationships with people who have had such experiences in their pasts. Carlos, a 19 year old African American male student athlete in his freshman year, discusses how this can be problematic:

Carlos: With girls, I think it makes them a little bit more numb, not willing to open up to guys who really do want to pursue a relationship because they might have had that experience where they thought, "Okay, we're gonna be exclusive," but the guy was just hooking up. So, then they start to hook up and they become numb to it.

Rachel: Is there anything else about hookups you'd like to tell me?

Carlos: It's just a relationship killer, I think

Carlos' comment speaks to another drawback in relationships that is caused by hooking up. Instead of seeing potential hurt feelings, he sees the lack of potential for a relationship itself ("a relationship killer"), due perhaps to the young woman having experienced the painful vulnerability voiced by Emily. There is a gender difference here where the females were more likely to mention the concerns regarding potential vulnerability and hurt feelings, and the males discuss the effect of such vulnerability as

restricting the possibility for a relationship to arise. This pattern reveals a danger of the relational imperative, while also reaffirming the gate-keeper role for young women in the college culture. Underlying gender expectations and in fact, gendered constructions, imply that females are the ones who seek relationships, obscuring the opportunities for young men to seek out relationships, and as Carlos describes above, this can have negative effects on young males who do want to establish a relationship within hookup culture. Since traditional heterosexual masculinity dictates that males seek sex without emotion (Connell 1995), those men who do have emotions regarding relationships, and yearn for meaningful emotional connections with young women may appear to be less desirable partners within hookup culture (Talbot and Quayle 2010). This is an example of how contemporary hookup culture combines with traditional gender expectations to position males and females as adversaries instead of collaborators, with negative effects for both males and females who do not abide by conventional expressions of their gender.

The links between hooking up and relationships discussed above referred to the emotional nature of the relationship, catching feelings, inexperience with the connection required in a relationship, etc. Other students see links coming from the sexual or intimate nature of hooking up on relationships. Similarly to Mary, above, other students who see hooking up as having a negative impact on relationships say that hooking up puts too much pressure on sex, or that it leads people to be more sexual faster than they would ordinarily. The hookup culture implies an expectation for sex and this impacts students' sexual decision making and the timing of their choice to engage in sex.

I think that once someone starts dating someone, if they haven't already had sex with this person it's kind of 'when you going to do it?' so there's this outside pressure even if no one's actually saying that, you know based on what you've seen, what you've heard, that that's kind of the next step. And so I think that what people choose to do sexually and in relationships is really, at least in the beginning, really dictated by what people expect them to do, the timelines.  
--Emily, a 21 year old biracial female in her senior year.

Some students see this pressure manifesting in direct opposition to what Mary said about the milk and cow. Many feel that hooking up deters relationships, because some may not see a need for the relationship in order to get sex. Other students see the

opposite: "I don't know. It depends on the person. Like if you just always want to hookup, then-- maybe the person that always hooks up feels that in order to get into a serious relationship, they might have to have sex with that person first. Maybe they might not know that, 'No, I can actually have a date and push to have sex after the three month period.' Because they're so used to hooking up," says Veronica J., a 25 year old Hispanic sorority member in her senior year.

Here, we see two competing discourses prominent in hookup culture both impacting sexual decision-making in relationships. These discourses rely on a version of male sexuality as "always wanting" and a version of female sexuality that is more emotionally laden because of the expectation to serve as gatekeeper. Both rely on the sexual standard being set by a generalized male other, or the male-in-the-head (Holland et al. 2004). While this may appear to elevate the status of males on contemporary college campuses, it becomes slightly more complicated. Contextualizing these discourses within hookup culture complicates relationship formation for both males and females, yet these cultural narratives are more focused on female sexuality, so the effects on young women appear to be more prominent, while at once beyond their control, as discussed below, and the effects on males go largely undiscussed.

Of the different effects on relationships students describe because of hooking up, the largest proportion of students mentioned judging other people, or being judged as promiscuous, or "easy," because of a hookup. Per contemporary gender expectations, it is female students who are likely to be so judged, since male sexuality implies the expectation of seeking multiple partners and female sexuality does not. Nineteen students (13 women; six men), or 39% of the total interview sample, make reference to how hookup experience can lead to a negative label, especially for young women. Many of the males, and quite a few females, indicate that, in the words of Stephen Anderson, a 22 year old African American male student athlete in his junior year, "If a girl decides to give it up the first night, I don't think a relationship is happening." Here we see evidence of the double standard, where females run the risk of scorn and stigma for a behavior that is encouraged in males. Young men may be willing to engage in sex with young women, but then will negatively appraise her potential as a partner. This element of the double

standard is also discussed more in Chapter 5. Veronica Walker (23 year old, white senior) says, "I think it depends on the impression that you give to the person. I know that if you're going to sleep with them on the first night, I don't know if the guy would necessarily consider... It's so, such a double standard 'cause they're doing it too, so I should think that about the guy, you know what I mean, but it's not that way." The females are well aware of this, as reflected in Veronica's quote above, which is why they must be so pragmatic in their sexual decision-making. They operate in a society with messages telling them that they must "give it up" to get and keep their man, but they also know that if they appear too eager for sex, they run the risk of slut-shaming (Bell 2013). The intricacies of this effect on sexual decision making for young women are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Students see different judgments emerging from a hook up history that can deter someone from a relationship. For students who do form relationships after repeated hookups there can be an issue where people do not trust that their partner is really committed because of his or her experience hooking up. Jennie, a 21 year old white sorority member in her junior year, touches upon this in her response to the question asking if she thinks hooking up impacts the ability to form relationships:

Yeah, I think so. I think it would make it harder for somebody to take you seriously, or if you've hooked up with a lot of people, and then somebody wants to start a relationship with you. I would imagine being worried that-- well, what makes me so different? Why are you going to stop hooking up with "X" amount of people to be exclusively with me? So I think there would be a trust issue. Like I know if I started seeing somebody who had a ton of hookups in the past, I'd be like, 'It seems like it's your lifestyle, so what makes me different from those other girls that you're going to stop doing that and just be with me?'

Jennie reveals the trust issue mentioned by her peers. Six students (three women; three men) refer to this. Jennie also refers to the hook up "lifestyle" and the characterization of this lifestyle is associated with pleasure seeking behavior that deters commitment. In response to the same question, John Dobias, a 25 year old white male in his senior year, reveals another negative aspect to this lifestyle which also has a great impact on relationship formation. "It could, I believe, yeah. If you're someone who makes

a habit of it, I think you could kind of-- I think men, specifically, can start to have a very objective view of women and that they're more of like a means to sexual satisfaction more than a person." It is this "objective view" of women that embodies and emboldens the double standard and the slut-shaming of women who pursue sex. What is behind this double standard is a rigid set of behaviors expected of men and of women, but which posits them as adversaries instead of as peers. This also impacts males' decisions regarding partner selection, as discussed in the following chapter. These expectations are the cornerstone of the male-in-the-head (Holland et al. 2004).

#### Sexual Agency in Relationships: "There's no cuddling in a hookup"

Students see a constellation of effects that hooking up has on relationships, some of which relate to sex. Yet, they are very specific in their views of sex in a relationship, what it means, and which acts are reserved for a relationship as opposed to a hookup. Ten students (six women; four men) see relationships as having more sex than hookups. Similarly to this, a number of students discuss the sex acts they are only comfortable with when taking place within a relationship, specifically oral sex. This pattern has been found in the literature using the OCSLS<sup>7</sup> (Armstrong et al. 2012). Six women and seven men state that they will not perform oral sex unless in a relationship; they will, however, allow a partner to perform oral sex on them. Sarah, a 19 year old white female in her first year of college, describes this pattern and in discussing why she feels it is this way, illuminates a significant difference between hookup sex and relationship sex:

Sarah: I don't know. I think probably guys don't go down on girls until they're in a relationship and feel like they have to.

Rachel: What makes them feel like they have to?

Sarah: I don't know, just out of like a mutual, like, you do something for me, I do something for you type. Or just like, I don't know, guys are more attentive to their needs, to someone else's needs, if they care about the

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<sup>7</sup> See Table 4-4 for OCSLS data regarding vaginal sex and oral sex in hookups and relationships.



person. Like hookups are usually for personal pleasure as opposed to someone else's.

All of the men who indicate they will not perform oral sex unless in a relationship are high status. Sarah, and others, describe how her peers enact their agency regarding sex in a relationship. They become gatekeepers, and assert boundaries by refusing to perform oral sex unless in a relationship, which is agentic.

However, we also see that within relationships emerge a different pattern of sexual decision-making and a specific deployment of sexual agency, what I call altruistic agency. Seven women and nine men, (n=16, 33%) describe this pattern of altruism. Interestingly, more males (n=9, 53% of the males) than females (n=7, 22% of the women) describe that they "do more" for their partner in a relationship. This difference reveals a different element of masculinity than that commonly associated with college men. These men take pride in pleasing their female partners, which is counter to proscriptions of male sexuality as rather insatiable and self-centered (Kimmel 2008). In accordance with stereotypical notions of female sexuality, the females describe going the extra mile, having sex more often, or performing oral sex on their male partners. The males also describe concern over their longevity or stamina, or their performance. In stark opposition to performance anxiety regarding hookups, as discussed in Chapter 5 where men are concerned with reputation, in relationships their concern is with pleasing their partner. Here is Michael Salazar, a 21 year old Hispanic fraternity member in his senior year:

Michael: Okay, yes. If it's just like a hook up, besides like regular sex... Definitely being exclusive, being in a relationship-- I mean, if you're going to be exclusive and in a relationship, you just feel that much more comfortable. Me personally, I just feel more comfortable doing other things. But if it's just a random hookup, it's usually just average sex, I guess, just normal sex, nothing out of the ordinary, no fantasies or fetishes or anything like that.

Rachel: when you say "regular sex," you mean vaginal sex?

Michael: yeah, just vaginal sex-- not necessarily positions. I feel like positions or whatever is just like a taste, just depending on the person's taste. I've never done anal with someone I haven't been exclusive with. I

haven't eaten a girl out or oral unless I was exclusive with her. So that definitely, to me, is a factor.

Like I said exclusive--- I feel like if you're in a relationship with somebody and the person wants something, whether she wants anal... I'm all about pleasing her. But on a random, like if it's just a one night thing, I just feel like--- like from my personal experience, like one night stands--- not necessarily one night stands, but just something that didn't mean anything, it's just heat of the moment thing, you just have sex and that's it.

Similarly to Sarah above, Michael differentiates a hookup, which "doesn't mean anything" and is about his own pleasure, from a relationship, which is "all about pleasing her." Scott Chandler, a 22 year old white fraternity member in his senior year, reiterates this differentiation, but this extended excerpt demonstrates the altruism of his agentic sexuality: he derives pleasure from being more open and from pleasing his partner:

Scott: Ummm, they [relationships] are definitely more intimate, ummm I personally prefer to be in a relationship because it's more intimate, because you can be yourself, express yourself, not be embarrassed. I like to explore my sexuality, like just different... what's the word I'm looking for... I don't know, scenarios. I like to explore different scenarios and with a partner I want to do that and with a hook up I don't. Oh definitely, most definitely. Ummm like I would do sexual acts with somebody that I would never do with somebody if I wasn't dating them.

Rachel: such as what?

Scott: Ummm, like I don't personally perform oral sex if I'm not dating somebody or any kind of anal stimulation or anything like that. For me if I am not in a relationship with somebody then it would only be kinda like, sexual. Really just intercourse and like, I don't know, I feel comfortable trying other things for myself that I haven't even done if I am in a relationship with someone. Cause if I'm in a relationship with someone that I really care about then I don't really give a shit, I don't get embarrassed. Embarrassment is not a factor.

[later in the interview]

If it's a relationship, like my first time being intimate, I want to more importantly, make them have an enjoyable experience. Even if we've had intercourse for a few hours, even if foreplay, or intercourse has gone on for like 2-3 hours, on more than two occasions, when I didn't come, it wasn't for any other reason because I was trying to make them have a good time and it wouldn't bother me at all. I wouldn't care. It's going through my mind, what can I do that's different? To show them a good

time, especially if I care about them, how can I make them enjoy themselves and be different from others.

Scott specifically mentions that his pleasure, indeed his orgasm, is secondary to his partner's. He derives pleasure from not only pleasing her, but doing so in a way that certainly separates him from his peers, and it is within the context of a committed, intimate relationship that he is most comfortable exploring these different "scenarios." The comfort and trust of the exclusive relationship allows him the flexibility to explore his sexuality without embarrassment. Relationships, as we see, are considered to be more mutual, as is the pleasure generated from within them (Armstrong et al. 2012). Conversely, hookups are more egocentric and self-interested, especially for young men. There is more actual intimacy in a relationship, which allows young men and women to eschew gendered expectations as they navigate sexuality with a committed partner. By doing so, these young men and women re-construct the meanings of masculinity and femininity within a relationship, allowing for more altruism on the part of males and more sexual subjectivity of the part of females, and likely resulting in more pleasurable sexual experiences in relationships.

### Campus Culture and the Hegemony of Hooking up

In the interviews, students were asked about options for social engagement for people who do not wish to hookup. Almost universally, they describe social events on campus and state that hooking up is not mandatory for having a social life on campus, demonstrating that they are aware of the variety of options for fun. I then asked how a person who did not want to hook up would find a romantic partner. The responses generated demonstrate the hegemony of hooking up on campus (Heldman and Wade 2010).

Some students describe situations that could be characterized as hookups, evidence that, for these students, they cannot visualize options for relationship formation that do not involve hooking up. Overwhelmingly, the largest proportion of students (13

women, 7 men; n=20; or 41% of the sample) answered this question by stating, "I don't know," or by stating that *no such options* exist. According to Lola, a 20 year old white sorority member in her junior year: "I don't think there are any. I really don't. Because if you don't want to hookup before getting into a relationship, good luck finding a relationship. Sad, but very true." The fact that 41% of the sample does not know how to establish a relationship in the absence of hooking up shows the power of the hookup culture on relationship formation. As Lola shows above, some lament that this is the case. Some of the other females echo this, even stating "Ummm, I mean, if I knew that [how to form a relationship without hooking up], maybe I'd have a relationship, you know? [laughs]" (Veronica Walker, a 23 year old white female in her senior year). Veronica's sentiment reflects both the hegemony of hookup culture (Heldman and Wade 2010) and the power of the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009, Reid et al. 2011).

The college environment is implicated in these results as the majority of the students in this category are resident students. Twelve of the twenty are residents, eight are commuters; however, of the commuters, four are student athletes, who reside off-campus in a house with their teammates, so they are still very involved in campus life. Scott Chandler (a 22 year old white fraternity member in his senior year) even discusses the college context in his (extremely blunt) reply to the same question: "They're probably fucked [laughs]... there are not too many options. This is college, get real. This is where nerds go to have sex with other nerds. It's true." This comment not only underscores the expectation that one is supposed to have sex in college, it recognizes that markers of social capital or status are less important, even if "nerds" are looking to have sex. However, the element of status is important, as seen in the uniformity of responses of all seven males who are high status. Roughly half of the females were high status. Regardless of Scott's belief that "nerds" are having sex on campus, for male athletes and fraternity members, the sole pathway that they see for establishing an intimate relationship is hooking up, or at the very least a pathway that involves hooking up in the process of forming the relationship.

The second most common response to this question, albeit a vague one, was that students can find a relationship without hooking up by "putting yourself out there."

Sixteen students (10 women, 6 men) responded in this manner. When asked to specify what they meant, many described being out and about on campus, being open socially, and not specifically searching for a relationship. Emily (a 21 year old biracial female in her junior year) says, "I think that's really the best way to do it. Or if you have a routine--- like you go to the gym every Wednesday at this time--- that would be a good way to meet somebody. So just putting yourself in places where there are people, number one, so not like in the quiet study or the library, even though I have known people that have found their significant others in the library. I think that's the best way to do it, just kind of put yourself out there." Other students mentioned religious or social clubs (n=13; six women, seven men), school or work (n=10; nine women, one man) or meeting someone through friends (n=10; eight women, two men), because, in the words of Laila, a 22 year old Asian female in her junior year, "I guess mutual friends help sometimes, because usually your friends and yourself, you have the same kind of mentality." The concept of "putting yourself out there" also underscores the public view students have of relationships. Students view relationships as being more public than hookups, and accordingly, they believe that finding a relationship in the absence of hooking up is also best accomplished publicly, or "in places where there are people." Very few students (n=6; four women, two men) refer to more traditional forms of courtship, such as dating, and those who did were more likely to refer to newer iterations such as speed dating or online dating. Yet it is important to note that when making such suggestions, students are unsure of their success and this implies tentativeness. John Dobias, a 25 year old white male in his senior year, captures this in his response:

You know, you always see these commercials for those dating sites on TV. I guess that could be an option. I'm very skeptical about the success of those, but I suppose they could be an option. Just going to all the clubs and getting involved in a sport or something like that, you're going to be exposed to people. I always---when I always give my friends advice, I'd say, "go study at the library instead of studying in your room. You can meet people there." Just doing stuff you might normally do by yourself, do stuff like that but with other people in a public setting. I think being in those situations, you're more likely to find somebody than if you were kind of just hanging out by yourself.

From these responses, it appears that while hooking up is not mandatory for hanging out socially on campus, as far as establishing a relationship, it appears to be not only the norm, but hegemonic in the sense that students do not easily envision what could be other successful paths to relationships without hookups. Thinking through to successful relationships, well, it seems complicated, since students even doubt the effectiveness of starting relationships through hooking up, but they continue to do so as other options are not as prominent for them. Even though it may not be the only way, hooking up is the most common game in town, and more importantly, a game they are learning to play.

### Discussion

Taken collectively, these results sketch a picture not commonly associated with hookup culture, one that shows both hooking up and relationships coexisting, which challenges Hypothesis #3. Moreover, these results also suggest that dating is not as “dead” as popular media suggests, yet, as has been found in the literature, dating is not the most common pathway to committed relationships (England et al. 2007; England et al. 2008) among the students interviewed. Dating, with all of its gendered expectations (Laner and Ventrone 2000) certainly still exists, but more so among students who are already in committed relationships. American college students may go back and forth between hooking up and romantic relationships as the context in which they experience sexual intimacy (Olmstead et al. 2013; Paik 2010b), yet they are extremely aware of the differences between the two.

It is not surprising that many students characterize relationships in a future-directed tense, or as something involving too great an expenditure of time for them at this moment (which supports Hypothesis #1). Many of these students have instilled within them prior to entering college that there is the present, and that there is a distant future to which they are working. These views stem from their upbringing, where parents underscore the importance of diligence and focus on school work, so that they may attain

a good career (Elliott 2012), which teaches young adults to compartmentalize. This perspective, within the context of advanced technology, gives a sense of immediacy, where students seek instant gratification, such as that provided in a hookup. The juxtaposition of these two concepts serves to make hooking up a more viable option than relationships for many college students. These students are focused on their future, and envision that future as the time for relationships, yet they want to have fun, so hooking up emerges as a rational choice for fun and intimacy without the time or effort of a relationship. These students compartmentalize their time as being more future-oriented, and they also learn to compartmentalize their emotions. Additionally, many parents have concerns about their adolescents' sexual activity. These parents rely on a 'danger discourse' of teenage sexuality that encourages them to view their own children as more innocent than their peers, who become otherized as a mechanism for parents to maintain their belief that they are good parents who have protected their children from the dangers of sex (Elliott 2012). This encourages parents, particularly those in the middle class, to over-schedule their children's activities, as a way to shield them from the dangers of sexuality which emerge in unsupervised time with their peers. Inadvertently, these efforts to protect adolescents from the dangers of premarital sex while in high school, help to illuminate hooking up as the hegemonic choice for intimacy in college, since the over scheduling of time reinforces the idea that everything an emergent adult does must be in the service of preparing for their future, their careers, and in prioritizing college as the locus and conduit to those ends. This compartmentalization underscores the value of their time and encourages students to choose hooking up over relationships. Hookups, then, serve to fill in the spaces between the compartments of the "future" and the present.

Underlying students' views of the differences between relationships and hookups are some fairly consistent beliefs about gender, and what is considered appropriate for heterosexual men and women. Sadly, in this context, young men are characterized as being more agentic and subjective, and due to that, males have a wider range of behaviors which are considered appropriate. Women are often thought to be more relationship oriented and emotional, they are often seen as the object of pleasure (Bell 2013), and they are judged more harshly for their sexual behaviors and choices, by both males and

females (Risman and Allison 2012). Yet, the symbolic power awarded to young men in collegiate hookup culture results in unanticipated effects for these very men. Notions of masculinity, especially in college, tell men that they are expected to want sex, seek sex, and engage in it without emotional consequence (Kimmel 2008). These views underscore the characterization of women “that they're more of like a means to sexual satisfaction more than a person.” Such a restrictive view of masculinity complicates things for young men who do seek an emotional connection to a sex partner, or who desire to achieve a committed relationship. Additionally, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, expectations about masculinity complicate things for young men when they are in a situation and do not wish to hookup. Furthermore, such discourses about masculinity are shared by young women, who may doubt the sincerity of a young man’s desire for a relationship. These perceptions that ‘all men’ want sex and ‘all women’ want relationships is the foundation of the double standard, and because these perceptions are not restricted to men, the position of the gatekeeper, and the vulnerability of that illusion of power for young women, is made clear. As we have seen above, and will continue to see in the following two chapters, the double standard is operating in the sexual decision making for both young men and women.

Another surprising finding is that both young men and women are rewriting the sexual script to allow for a more altruistic sexual expression within relationships. It is in the interpersonal sphere where young adults can construct change in contemporary sexual scripts, when they are comfortable to express their vulnerabilities and their desires to a partner. It is within the context of a committed relationship where young people are freer to “explore different scenarios,” and different sexual behaviors such as oral sex (Backstrom et al. 2012). Indeed, the students here describe sex in relationships as being more pleasing to them than the sex in hookups, especially for women, which reflects other findings regarding women’s orgasm in hookups and relationships (Armstrong et al. 2012). While the relational imperative can be restrictive of women’s sexual choices outside of relationships, the social validation of the relationship status comes with the benefit of more pleasurable sex.



The other main factor which emerges from these results is the role of the college campus in young adults' intimate relationships. College has often been characterized as a site for sexual freedom and experimentation (Becker 1972), and within the contemporary college context, the campus culture fosters hooking up, as shown by the lack of perceived alternatives for students who do not wish to hook up and do seek a romantic relationship. This is compounded by the availability of alcohol and the lack of supervision for many resident students, who are surrounded by opposite sex age mates in large numbers (Kalish and Kimmel 2011). Students are mindful of these expectations, as is evidenced in their appraisal that "nobody goes to a club or a bar to make a relationship." Contemporary American coeds cannot easily envision a pathway to a relationship that does not involve hooking up. A lack of perceived alternatives demonstrates, or more importantly, encourages, the hegemony of hooking up on college campuses: even those students who choose not to partake in hookups recognize the prominence of hooking up and are unable to visualize ways to establish relationships in the absence of hooking up. These "new" and more than imagined physical encounters become, then, efficient, if not expedient, ways to meet larger social expectations for coeds.

## Chapter 5: Asserting Agency

Due to the cultural narratives about sexuality to which contemporary college students are exposed, many of them feel entitled to enjoying their sexuality. Such messages are often more straightforward regarding male sexuality, characterizing it as a natural expectation while in college for males to seek out as many partners as possible (Kimmel 2008). Yet this sexuality is also accomplished publicly, which places an emphasis on the peer group as a salient regulator of male sexual behavior. Cultural messages about female sexuality are more conflicting. Young women are still taught to be protective of their sexuality, and that the most appropriate context for the expression of their sexuality is within the confines of a committed relationship, if not marriage. This underscores the role of the relational imperative in shaping the decisions of young women (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). Young women are also inundated with messages that tell them to embrace their sexuality, and that doing so is imperative for them to get and keep a man. Popular media, especially magazines aimed at young women, are replete with messages instructing young women on sexual techniques, instructing them that they must be sexually adventurous so that their male partners will not seek out another female who is more sexually skilled (Bell 2013). This sets up a double bind for young women who want to embrace their sexuality, but also live in a society where the double standard is still operative (Crawford and Popp 2003; Reid et al 2011), and the label of “slut” is still pervasive and damaging. The public aspect of sexuality is another complicating factor for young women, who may risk a reputational hit if they choose to agentically enact their sexuality (Tanenbaum 2000; Bell 2013).

This results in a precarious view of sexual agency for women, which is significant, since in many cases, college can provide opportunities for their earliest attempts at embodying their sexual agency, and then they feel disentangled from their own agentic sexuality due to the contradictory messages about sexuality they see in society, and especially the media. The double standard that exists makes hookup culture

an attractive alternative for women who are coming into their sexuality but are doing so in an environment where women who seek out sex are stigmatized (Ronen 2010; Allen 2003a). So, rather than risking the potentially devastating label of ‘slut’ by going out deliberately to seek sex, sex-positive young women can wade into the hookup scene and enact their sexuality as they choose while being able to fall back on the idea that the sex ‘just happened’ (Tolman 2002). The ambiguity of the term (Currier 2013) as well as the presence of alcohol also offers potential ways for sexually agentic women to evade stigma.

In spite of these obstacles, young collegiate men and women do choose behaviors that are in the service of their own sexual pleasure. Such sexual agency is very commonly found regarding safe sex practices and in establishing the boundaries of their relationships. Additionally, college students enact agency when choosing sexual behaviors, as well as their choice of partner, in accordance with the public aspect of college sexuality. However the impact and motivations of these choices vary, and one factor that is important in shaping these variations is gender.

### Establishing Exclusivity

Young women act agentially to determine the status of their ambiguous relationships. When it comes to forming an actual relationship, the women are the ones who attempt to negotiate whether the hooking up will proceed to a deeper level of intimacy. In a precarious deployment of agency, she asks: ‘Are we a couple or not?’ yet, ironically, the decision is left up to her male partner. In the interviews, both the females themselves report starting such conversations, sometimes referred to as a “DTR,” or Define the Relationship talk, and the young men indicate that their female partners also initiate these talks. However, for young women, this is a situation where the enactment of agency can be precarious or disempowering. It also demonstrates the male in the head, as women base their behavior on the perceived expectations of their partners, and prioritize those expectations over their own desires (Holland et al. 2004). This is an example of the principle of least interest (Waller 1938; Eslinger, Clarke and Dynes 1972)

which says that the person who is least invested in the relationship controls that relationship. Here, the young woman who seeks a relationship initiates “the Talk” with her male partner to ascertain the boundaries of their relationship. Her partner holds all the power to determine if they are in fact exclusive, or, if they are just hooking up casually. The partner with less investment holds the power to determine relationship status. If one does not want clearly defined boundaries of exclusivity, where such ambiguity allows for more flexible behavior without the concern of “cheating,” they simply do not need to initiate any conversation that would establish such boundaries, and the unclear nature of hooking up allows for this. It is unlikely that someone will initiate a talk to establish that the hookup encounter does not have boundaries, as it is easier to leave that unsaid and undefined if that is the actor’s goal. Seventeen women (53% of women) and six men (35% of men; n=23, 47% of the total sample) interviewed indicated having experienced such a talk, offering support for Hypothesis #3. Among these six males, half of them indicated that their female partner started the conversation, and only one indicated that he started it. Of the women, eight indicated that she started the conversation.

The survey data regarding such conversations is a bit more complicated. The OCSLS asks, “How did it become clear that this person was your boyfriend or girlfriend?” The possible answers are “I initiated a talk in which we decided that it was an exclusive relationship;” “S/he initiated a talk in which it was decided that it was an exclusive relationship;” “I heard him/her refer to me as a boyfriend or girlfriend;” “I just sort of knew;” and “other.” In the full set of responses, 71.8% of the 12,239 students who answered the question indicated that there was a talk. Data from this question is shown in Table 5-1. Looking at only the males, 48.4% indicated that they initiated the talk, and 21.9% indicated that their partner initiated it. The frequencies from the female only sample reiterate this: 20.4% of the women indicated that they started the talk, and 51.9% indicated that their male partner did. The subsample of Big U students demonstrates the same patterns, and is shown in Column 2 of Table 5-1. Of the full sample, 69% indicate that they had a talk to determine exclusivity, 41.9% of the males indicated they initiated the talk, and 26.6% indicate that their partners did. Of the

Table 5-1  
 "How did it become clear this person was your boyfriend or girlfriend?"

Response Choices	Full CSLS	CSLS Males	CSLS Females	CSLS: Big U Full	CSLS: Big U Males	CSLS: Big U Females
I initiated a talk in which we decided it was exclusive	27.90% 3409	48.40% 1567	20.40% 1833	23.40% 125	41.90% 52	17.80% 73
S/He initiated a talk in which we decided it was exclusive	43.90% 5378	21.90% 709	51.90% 4658	45.60% 244	26.60% 33	51.10% 209
I heard him/her refer to me as a boyfriend or girlfriend	5.30% 643	3.00% 97	6.10% 545	6.40% 34	3.20% 4	7.30% 30
I just sort of knew	18.30% 2243	23.50% 760	16.50% 1477	17.90% 96	25% 31	15.90% 65
Other	4.60% 566	3.30% 106	5.10% 457	6.70% 36	3.20% 4	7.80% 32
n	12239	3239	8970	535	124	409

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

females only, 17.8% indicated that they started the talk, and 51.1% indicated that their partners did. While it is not clear if this talk involved the male partner asking the female (in heterosexual couplings) to “go out with” him as indicated in the interviews, this demonstrates a difference between the students interviewed and those answering the survey.

The Small College exploratory survey shows different results. This survey instrument asked, “How did you become exclusive?” and possible answers are: “I asked them out;” “they asked me out;” “we had a talk;” “Facebook;” “they called me boy/girlfriend;” and “I just kinda knew.” This data shows that 53.3% of the respondents indicated either having such a talk or being asked out. Results from the Small College survey are shown in Table 5-2. When differentiating the males from females in the Small College survey, there is an interesting result: none of the males indicated asking their partner out. However, 38% indicated that their partner asked them out, and 8% indicated having a talk to determine exclusivity. The female subsample demonstrates a different pattern, where 14.3% of the females indicate that their partner asked them out. Three percent indicated asking their partner out, and 41.4% indicated that they and their partner had a discussion to determine exclusivity. It is also worth noting that a full twenty percent of the Small College sample indicated that they became exclusive by seeing a Facebook status, which demonstrates not only the public characterization of relationships discussed in the previous chapter, but also the role of technology in the intimate relationships of college students, at least at this small liberal arts school. It is also possible that something like a Facebook status could be the catalyst for such a discussion, but without a similar response category in the OCSLS, this is only speculation.

The interview data provides more context than survey responses, and as such, allows for a deeper analysis of motivations for having such a talk. In an indication of the male in the head (Holland et al. 2004), there is a different pattern in the motivation of men and women interviewed. When the males start the conversation, it is more of a traditional way to establish boundaries: the males are more likely to “ask out” their female partners, specifically asking her to be his girlfriend. Due to gender role

Table 5-2  
 "How did you become exclusive?"

Response Choices	Full	Males	Females
I asked them out	1.70% 2	0.00% 0	2.90% 2
They asked me out	24.20% 29	38.00% 19	14.30% 10
We had a talk	27.50% 33	8.00% 4	41.40% 29
Facebook	20.80% 25	24.00% 12	18.60% 13
I heard him/her refer to me as a boyfriend or girlfriend	3.30% 4	0.00% 0	5.70% 4
I just kinda knew	22.50% 27	30% 15	17.10% 12
n	120	50	70

Source: Small College Exploratory Survey, Data Collected 2013

expectations that do not encourage young women to ask young men to be their boyfriends, in combination with cultural messages that indicate that young men do not want relationships, the young women do NOT ask for a relationship, or a title, instead they ask to clarify the boundaries of exclusivity. They ask to make sure that their partner is not hooking up with anyone else. This may appear an insignificant detail, but it is evidence of competing messages impacting young women, and shows that in light of such conflict, the women rely on the generalized male other, or the male in the head (Holland et al. 2004), when enacting their agency, which is easier, or more comfortable for them, rather than risking more vulnerability and actually asking their male partner what he wants. The competing messages at play here are the cultural narratives about young adult manhood (echoed by the males themselves, see Chapter 4 on Relationships) which indicate men in college do not want to be tied to relationships, and the relational imperative which dictates that women should want relationships, juxtaposed with the principle of least interest. Because of the relational imperative, many women do want such relationships, but they fear risking losing their male partner by pressuring him (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009). The concern that the male could go find someone else is pressing, and it also manifests in sexual decision making. This fear is influenced by the cultural narratives about male sexuality (Kimmel 2008) and it shapes young women's perceptions of their male partners. These young women attempt to maneuver their desire for a relationship without pressuring or scaring off their male partner, so they ask about exclusivity, which reflects sexual responsibility and can mitigate the double standard (Crawford and Popp 2003), but they do not specifically ask for the coveted relationship status, hoping that the male partner will not only want the exclusivity, but also give the relationship status when he is ready, thus reinforcing the gendered expectation of the male as the initiator and the female as passive. This does not prove that hookups cannot be a pathway to relationships, rather that in order for that to occur, both parties need to have the same expectation of the hookup outcome, and such expectations are affected by gender role ideology.

All of the students who mentioned having a DTR talk described a period of hooking up prior to the talk, and many indicated that they felt they were exclusive



anyway prior to the talk, which indicates the sentiment was there prior to the discussion. For the young women who describe the male partner asking them out, they indicate that the feelings were there on their part prior, demonstrating that such agentic maneuvering can be successful for these young women who are with young men who do want relationships. The reality that many young men do want relationships, as opposed to the common stereotype, allows for young men and women to establish relationships in hookup culture, yet does so without change or critique of the gendered stereotypes that position males and females as opposing sides.

### Contraception and Safe Sex

Both male and female students deploy sexual agency regarding their choices about contraception and safe sex practices. Students describe regular use of condoms during their experiences of vaginal intercourse. However, for both males and females, the enactment of this agency is achieved mainly through bodily communication, such as reaching for a condom, or just silently putting one prior to vaginal intercourse. That both parties are in unspoken agreement attests to the ubiquity of the desire to engage in responsible sex, especially during hookups. This communication through body language, as opposed to verbal communication, is effective in that it results in the use of a condom, but this is limited by the unspoken nature of the act. Both males and females act agentially and are able to have safe sex, but since it is unquestioned, it does not provide young adults with skills to practice ways to effectively negotiate the deployment of sexual agency in other aspects of a relationship.

Gender differences do emerge regarding safe sex practices. For many males, the use of a condom is generally sought to prevent pregnancy, as parenthood is something they see in their future. While some men do rely on their female partners to prevent pregnancy, there also exists for young men a discourse regarding the costs of unintended pregnancy. Twenty-four percent of the young men interviewed (n=4) indicated that contraception was a foregone conclusion. In fact, they were somewhat incredulous when

asked if they have ever had difficulty with partners over the use of contraception. For some, the idea of unsafe sex is threatening, so they are wary of partners who encourage it, interpreting the request for unprotected sex as an indication that she is purposely trying to infect them with a STI or trap them with a pregnancy. These sentiments were extremely common in the focus groups. The men in the focus groups seemed wary or even suspicious, doubting a partner's admission of being on birth control.

Male Voice: But what if she says, "All right, yo, I'm on birth control. Can we go raw?" Would you still do it?

Multiple: I want to see the birth control pills.

Multiple: No.

Male Voice: I don't want to hear you just got it.

Male Voice: You don't take the birth control pill for two days, and you can get pregnant very easy.

Male Voice: If you go to the doctor with her, or you watch her get a shot from the doctor, you're good.

Traditional notions of masculinity emphasize responsibility and the need to be able to be a provider. This is not lost on male college students, and explains why they prioritize the use of condoms to prevent pregnancy during college when they do not see themselves as responsible or financially stable enough to be a provider to any potential offspring. Parenthood is something that, for many of these students, resides in the "future" compartment when they envision their life. In the quote below, the issue of avoiding pregnancy supersedes the pressure on the young man to provide a sexually fulfilling experience for his female partner, in recognition of the importance of being a responsible male:

I guess, with the same girl, I slipped up and I guess I got too heavy and I guess I put it in without a condom at one time, but then I took it out, "I'm going to put on a condom." She was like, "Why?" I told her, "I don't really do that; it's not what I do." Then she was like—she was telling me that it feels good that way. I'm like, "Yeah, I know it feels good, but I'm saying you don't want a baby, right? You want to have a baby?"

And she made a face, then, "Okay, put the condom on." (Ali, an African American male, junior, fraternity member, age 20)

Female students are also aware of the risk of pregnancy, and many females expressed difficulty with male partners who wished NOT to use condoms. These females indicated feeling pressure to live up to the desires of their male partners, but this contradicted with their desires to maintain safety. Many of these young women found this dynamic to be unfair. Here, Veronica J., a 25 year old Hispanic female (senior, sorority member), describes an encounter with a male with whom she had regular, consistent hookups, “He was a little bit reluctant, and I was like, ‘No, you have to.’ Mind you, he told me if I become pregnant I’d have to take care of it myself, and I’m like, ‘But I’m telling you to put a condom on.’ He was relying on me to be on birth control, which is idiotic, because I wasn’t even on birth control at that time.” Young women like Veronica struggle because they are told they need to please their male partners, but at the same time they do not feel a reciprocal concern from their partners who do not seem to prioritize safe sex to the same extent.

Many more female than male students mentioned the use of contraception to prevent sexually transmitted infections. These students utilized their sexual agency to ensure safe sex practices, often requiring their partners to get tested for STI’s. This group of students describes a more forthright style regarding their safe sex activities, for example asking their sex partners about their sexual history, or asking a partner to get tested for STIs and HIV. These students are more emphatic about deploying agency to protect from pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted infections, and they assert their boundaries more easily, indicating that they will not engage in sex acts unless safety measures are taken. The following interview quote is from Arianna, a biracial 24 year old senior and member of a sorority, responding to a question asking if she has ever had disagreements with sex partners over the use of contraception. She was extremely emphatic regarding her boundaries and safety. Other females expressed similar sentiments, but did not offer as much detail:

Arianna: Mm-hm. Wait, contraception? Actually, no. But there was disagreement about the fact that they didn’t get tested and I said I wouldn’t have sex with them.

Rachel: This is someone who had never been tested in their life?

Arianna: No, they were tested before, but not recently, and I said no, even with a condom I wouldn't do it.

Rachel: And how did that go over for them?

Arianna: They weren't happy. (Laughs.) Because it was kind of like we were kissing, everything was fine, and then you know, he wanted to take the next step, and I'm like, "Wait, have you been tested recently?" and he's like, "No, not for a long time," and I was just like, "Okay, so we're not doing this then," he's like, "But I have a condom." And I'm like, "Yeah, you might also have something else."

Both male and female students recognized the potential awkwardness of initiating a conversation regarding sexually transmitted infection, but they also felt that temporary anxiety was less important than their sexual health. In fact, some students used their partner's receptiveness to the conversation as a way to gauge their responsibility and viability as a sexual partner. John, aged 25 (white, senior), is one of the few males who spoke at length about the need to maintain sexual health. Here, he is very eloquent about such conversations:

It's a very touchy thing. I don't want to be like, "So, how many people have you had sex with? How many unprotected people have you had sex with?" Because it comes across very offensive, but in a sense, it's important I always felt. If someone were to ask me that, I would never take offense to it. I'd be like, "I'm just glad you're concerned about this. It shows maturity and that you're not an irresponsible asshole, for lack of a better word." Yeah, it was always me initiating it, and 90% of the time, it would always be a very positive reaction, kind of the same reaction I can picture myself having in terms of, "Oh wow, you're mature and responsible. This is good. This is a good thing."

More females than males expressed sentiments similar to John's.

In my interview sample, there is a small subset of students who indicated sexual activity with both opposite sex partners and same sex partners. These students, who identified as gay or bisexual, were the most vocal about safe sex practices, specifically mentioning the use of contraception for sex acts other than vaginal intercourse. While this group of students is too small to allow for any generalizability to a larger population,

their comments are interesting because of their distinctiveness regarding oral sex practices, which were rarely mentioned by their heterosexual peers. Says Emily, a 21 year old biracial senior, “If I know—and not because they tell me, but because they can say, ‘I got tested on this date,’ that we are both clean, I would rather not use dental dams or anything like that, just because I feel like it can really be a bother sometimes.”

Another student expressed concern over a partner NOT sharing the same concern about safety. Says Coco, a male, 20 year old African American junior, “No, if someone tells me no condom, what the fuck is that? Peace. That means you are trying to give me something on purpose. Never.”

Both males and females act agentially regarding contraception. This is likely due to their coming of age in the new millennium, with public health campaigns and widespread public education about the risks of unsafe sex. Another likely explanation is that contemporary college students deploy their agency out of a fear of pregnancy more so than out of a concern for safety, particularly on the part of males, since parenthood is viewed as an element of their future requiring a great deal of time and financial resources. The fact that students regularly describe condom use during vaginal intercourse indicates a greater fear of pregnancy than STIs since discussion of the use of protection for similarly risky behaviors such as oral sex are almost absent, particularly among heterosexuals.

The increased emphasis on safety on the part of female respondents corresponds with traditional depictions of femininity which position the female as the “gatekeeper” or protector of her sexuality. While earlier iterations of this aspect of gender role ideology confer upon women the duty to fend off sexual advances, it appears that a more modern version exists for young women who are more aware and sexually active, where they are the ones who are faced with the task of ensuring their sexual health and protection from pregnancy.

## Choice of Partner

Males, in accordance with traditional masculinity, act agentically in their pursuit of sex, especially when their partner is someone who helps them earn status. Gender role ideology also impacts sexual decision making because males rely on stereotypical notions of femininity when choosing what sexual acts to engage in, and with whom. As mentioned above, these males will engage in sex as an enactment of their masculinity, but their specific choices are affected by the extent to which their female partner will bolster their status among peers.

Status-earning partners are highly attractive or highly sought after by other males. Males gain accolades from friends for talking to attractive or “hard-to-get” girls, as the following focus group excerpt demonstrates:

Male Voice: How do you feel about new ones?

Male Voice: You feel good, you're like, damn.

Male Voice: I got it! She went to a party. Mad dudes trying to talk to her. She curb all the other dudes, and went home with me.

Often, males indicated that the positive reinforcement from their peers encourages them to hook up. Sixty-five percent (n=11) of the males interviewed indicated that approval from their peers, or the perception of such approval factored in their choice of hookup partner. According to Iron Man, a 26 year old white male, “They’re like, ‘Dude, she’s SO hot!’ So I was like, ‘All right!’” This comment, describing his most recent hookup, shows not only the impact of his friends’ praise: their comment made him feel good about his choice to hookup with this particular girl, and it also made him feel good about himself. This supports both Hypotheses #7 and #8 in regard to men.

The peer group effect endures even outside of their presence. When asked what they are thinking during a hookup, a number of men indicated their mind was on their friends’ approval of their partner and the accolades they expected for hooking up with her. Fifty-three percent of the males interviewed (n= 9) mentioned that they were anticipating the approval they would get when recounting their exploits to friends. According to Michael, a 21 year old Hispanic fraternity member, “It really just depends. If it’s a hot girl, I generally tend to think, ‘oh wow, I’m about to have sex with this girl!’”

However, not all males are thinking about the approval they may earn. Forty-one percent of the males interviewed (n=7) indicated they were concerned about how their partner would perceive their performance. Twenty-four percent (n=4) specifically mentioned their own reputation, and how important it was to maintain (“I’m gonna represent”):

“My reputation counts a lot. I don’t want to be that bad person. So as far as what’s going through my head about what I’m going to do, then yeah, I’m gonna represent, I guess. I don’t want my name to come out of a bad conversation, like, ‘he was bad news.’” -Jason, a 20 year old Hispanic fraternity member.

The men in the focus group were also quite vocal about performing well (“laying it down”) to avoid being known as an inadequate partner. They discussed how they needed to mitigate a bad performance (“bust in two [minutes]”), even when such performance was a product of their feeling toward their partner (“shit was that good”).

Male Voice: You know you have to lay it down. You know the probability is high for her—unless she really cares about you— not to stay with you. And you know how girls talk, so you'll be in that group to not get any.

Male Voice: If shit was that good, I don't last that long.

Male Voice: She can't leave until she get the best performance.

Male Voice: I was chasing a girl that was a 10, 11, and I did that shit—your ass is staying here for at least six more hours. I gotta make up for that.

Male Voice: I bust in two, and then I'm like, "Look, girl, my first time. Let me get about 10 minutes, this orange juice, and we get like that."

Collegiate males are aware of the approval of their peers and consider it in sexual decision-making. As mentioned above, some partners help young men earn status; conversely, some partners detract from their status. These are described as “bad hookups:” a girl who is unattractive, or who has an undesirable personality trait. Interestingly, for some, appearance can mitigate her less than ideal personality, Scott, a 22 year old white fraternity member, describes a hookup partner of his: “she’s a cute girl and everything it’s not about that, I just really get turned off by her personality and I wonder sometimes which head is doing the thinking, so like this girl, I’m attracted to her but her personality kind of ruins it for me,” yet he continues to hookup with her, and

attributes it to his male libido. Twenty-four percent of the males interviewed (n=4) indicated they had experienced feedback from friends due to a “bad hookup.”

Additionally, a young woman can be a “bad hookup” if she is rumored to have had a lot of partners<sup>8</sup>. Seventy-six percent of the males interviewed (n=13) made reference to “slutty” or “promiscuous” girls as bad hookups. Again, these young men were describing that they did indeed hookup with these young women, but because she was “slutty” or “nasty,” they changed their behavior. James, a 20 year old white student-athlete, describes his sexual decision-making:

Rachel: How do you decide what you will or will not do sexually on a hookup?

James: How well I know the girl, like how long I’ve known her and if I think she’s like a big-time slut or not.

Rachel: How would you know if she’s a big-time slut?

James: Just what I’ve heard about her, like if people have told me stuff about her before, how she’s acting that night, if she’s acting really touchy, just if she wants sex, then I know she’s a big-time slut.

Rachel: Now, if you know that she wants sex, will you have sex with her or would you not?

James: That depends on looks, actually.

Rachel: It depends on how she looks?

James: Yeah. If she looks really good, I’ll have sex with her, but if she’s just like average, I’m not gonna have sex with her. I’ll do other stuff, but I wouldn’t have sex with her. If that was the first night I met her and she was just a slut, I wouldn’t have sex with her. But I have done that before, so I don’t know why I’m saying that.  
[laughter] I just thought about that and I actually have done that before.

James has a clear idea of how he is supposed to act with a girl whom he considers a “big-time slut,” yet, by his own admission, he struggles with curtailing the sex. Additionally, her looks can even mitigate the “slut” status and encourage him to have sex with her. Ironically, she becomes a “big-time slut” if she wants sex, yet young men engage in the

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<sup>8</sup> It must be emphasized that such characterizations are based on perceptions that may or may not be rooted in reality.



same behavior of ‘just wanting sex’ without any concern about losing status. In fact, for males, they earn status for it, again illustrating the power of the sexual double standard on college campuses (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009).

The men in the focus group spoke critically about the double standard as they perceive it. However, while critical of it, they also abide by certain standards for judging a woman’s suitability as a hookup or a potential relationship partner (someone to “cuff”):

Male Voice: Let me just tell you guys what it is. If a guy fucks 50 women, he is the man. If a girl fucks 10, she's a whore. I didn't even have to get to 50....

Moderator: The girl me and you talk about—if she has 20 bodies [partners], how do you look at her? Don't lie.

Male Voice: She's a dog.

Male Voice: She's a whore, a slore [slut + whore].

Male Voice: She's a slore with two Hs....

Male Voice: At 18 years old, a girl has 50 bodies, I'm over it. I ain't gonna front; she's off. Why would you have 50 bodies? But if I know her, I'm like, all right; she just likes to have sex. A lot of people do. You can't judge a girl because she likes to have sex.

Male Voice: Really?

Male Voice: Because, at the end of the day, you want to have sex with her, too, so I'm not gonna be like, "Oh, she's a ho." But to cuff me, that's a whole other story—you gotta be loyal, because as much as you like sex—you could have sex with me, and then go out and have sex with somebody else.

Ali, a 20 year old African American fraternity member, also discussed the different labels girls can have, and how that impacts his behavior. When asked how he decides what he will do sexually on a hookup, he replied, “how much info I have on them.” He continued, discussing how he makes sexual decisions, but also how he evaluates potential for a relationship (a “wifey”):

Before the fact, even before I even get into a situation, there's a predetermined mindset, in that I know, "Okay, this girl looks like, or from what I know, from the people I talk to and the surveys that I've done [laughs], I know that this girl is a girl that's trustworthy," or a girl that's clean, you know?

And then I know the girls that I know, like, "Oh, she a dirty girl." Not dirty, but like she nasty, you know? Like she do some nasty stuff, you know? And those girls, you kinda stay away from. But then you know the girls that, you know that they do they nasty stuff, but nobody really knows about it except the people that are close to them, and you only heard it because of the fact that you know those people—those are the people that you try to make your moves.

The other ones where you know like, okay, they're good, but they'll never ever do anything like that, those you look like, "Okay, she could be a possible wifey."

Ali is aware that the labels people can get are not always accurate, but he also recognizes that a person's behavior in public may not always align with their behavior in private ("you know that they do they nasty stuff, but nobody really knows about it except the people that are close to them"), so he seeks out girls who may be more sexually adventurous, but do so without gaining a reputation. He described his efforts to unearth information about potential partners ("the surveys I've done") by talking to their friends, enemies and former partners, all in the service of deciding how to interact with someone.

Ali is not the only one who admits to doing "research" on a potential partner. The women in the focus groups also spoke at length about looking for background information on someone with whom they are interested in hooking up. For these young women, they are looking for someone who is a good partner, and instead of talking to a potential partner's enemies, as Ali does, they speak to the person's friends, as well as their own friends. Where Ali is looking to unearth negative information, these young women instead are looking for positive information, but learning negative things about a partner is a factor in their decision making. In the excerpt below, the women's focus group was asked how they evaluate a potential partner. The initial answer was "by how

they are.” The ensuing discussion shows the process of looking for information, as well as how information about someone “acting crazy” is a deterrent for these young women:

Rachel: How do you know how they are?

Female Voice: History, background.

Multiple Voices: Research.

Rachel: What kind of research? That's what I want to know.

Female Voice: Ask around.

Multiple Voices: Mm-hmm.

Female Voice: Like your close friends— “You ever heard this person talking to this person, or do you ever see this person getting crazy?”

Female Voice: Yeah, because if I'm interested in you, I'm going to look at you like nah, you go with her, because y'all was a little too crazy in the party.

The females in the focus groups also spoke at length about differentiating a “man” from a “boy,” stating that they seek the former in a partner, and try to avoid the latter. The following exchange from the focus group explains how these young women view this difference, and it also implicates those cultural narratives about gender and sexuality, in this case, the effect of social media on young people’s partner-seeking behavior.

Rachel: So, what makes a difference between a man and a boy?

Female Voice: I feel like how they treat their women. They have a less sense of security. For example, I know when you go out with a man, it's not gonna be a problem if you have a conversation with another guy. He's not gonna track you down, or check your phone. And you can leave your phone anywhere, and it's all right. You don't have that sense of pressure.

Female Voice: I think they kind of endorse being boys because I saw something on Instagram the other day that was very true. It had a picture of a guy flashing money, and then the next box was, "Oh, she only wants me for my money." But if that's what you're flashing towards her, and that's what you want her to be attracted to, she's only going to want you for that.

So, I think that, to a certain extent, that's going to differentiate boys from men. If you're gonna sit there, and flash a shallow side of you, you're gonna attract someone who's shallow.

What is interesting in these excerpts is how what the young women are describing, “acting crazy,” or trying to entice a partner by showing material wealth, or “flashing a shallow side,” are actions that are in accordance with heterosexual masculinity. So their male peers may be acting in an appropriately gendered way, but this is perceived by potential female partners as an inappropriate behavior that they would not want in a partner, which causes complications for both males and females who seek relationships. For young women, a “bad hookup” is someone who is coercive, or controlling, or who will tell others about the hookup, as will be discussed below regarding the young women’s perception of trust. This characterization directly supports Hypothesis #8 regarding young women. The women in the focus group believe that “boys” are undesirable partners because they will “check your phone” or give “that sense of pressure” to their partners. These domineering behaviors can be considered by men to be appropriate expressions of masculinity; yet they are not well-received by female peers, who value their own independence and seek a “man” who is secure with it.

There are differences in males’ and females’ responses to the question, “Why do you hook up?” and these differences illuminate patterns regarding choice of partner, especially for young women. Males and females both discuss hooking up for pleasure or sexual enjoyment. Some of these students describe being “horny” or “having the urge” for sex. These sentiments were shared by eight females and ten males (n=18, 37% of total sample). When asked the question, “Why do you usually hookup?” Ashley, a 22 year old white female student athlete in her senior year, says, “Like I said before, it’s usually like a passion thing. I’m like, I really want that person at the moment. Like I have a strong lust for the person.”

This reasoning reflects the expectation for sex and intimacy during the collegiate experience as well as the normative view of hooking up as a part of college life. Some students also make reference to an essentialist explanation here as well, with comments

such as “A girl’s got needs,” (Mary, a 19 year old biracial student in her junior year) or “Because I like having sex” (Edwin, a 20 year old white student athlete in his freshman year). Similarly, other reasons provided to explain hookups are because the partner was “hot,” which was mentioned by one woman and six males, demonstrating the power of beauty standards for young women and the social rewards young men expect for hooking up with a “hot” girl, and supporting Hypothesis #7. This relates to the expectations for sex at college, but it also reflects the status boost that an attractive partner can provide, and it underscores the prominence of the peer group as the audience for sexual activity, especially for men. As Coco (a 20 year old bisexual African American male in his junior year) put it, in response to the same question, “He instigated and don’t get me wrong, he’s fucking hot, like when I saw him for the first time, everybody was talking about how good looking he was, which is kind of good because it kind of boosts your self esteem a little bit when you hookup with hot people, like oh I hit that.”

Some students attribute their hookups to boredom (one woman, three men), to their peers (three women and three men), or alcohol use (zero women, two men). As an example of how boredom and peers can impact a hookup, Scott, a 22 year old white male fraternity member in his junior year, describes the circumstances surrounding a recent hookup, and how it happened:

I was with my guy friends and we were chillin’ and there was nothing going on on campus, everybody went home this weekend, it’s the weekend before Halloween, there was absolutely nothing going on. Me and just three of my guy friends were just hanging out and having a good time bonding with each other, just hanging out watching a movie or whatever it was and just talking, bullshitting, drinking a couple of beers and like we had a couple cases of beers and then my friend was just talking and he wanted to invite these girls over and he’s like listen this girl’s friend.... and I was like alright just tell them to come over, but otherwise I would have just sat there...

Alcohol also plays a role in these circumstances as well, however an indirect one. The two male students referred to above attributed their hookups directly to alcohol



others demonstrate more complication in their motivation. Lola, a 20 year old white sorority member in her junior year, demonstrates such complication. She says, “For me personally, like I said, I don’t do it unless if I’m interested in the person, so for me it’s... I don’t know. As weird as this sounds, I guess it’s like you do it for him to like you....But I think that’s what it comes down to, if you think about it. Because I won’t be with someone unless if I am interested.” This is clear evidence of the relational imperative operating in the sexual decision making of young women within collegiate hookup culture. However, Lola’s quote also illuminates the ways young women struggle to engage with it.

Young women appear to be most comfortable enacting their agentic sexuality when doing so in the pursuit of an exclusive relationship. Additionally, as found in the literature (Bogle 2007; Hamilton and Armstrong 2010), the perception of some sort of relational tie to a partner provides comfort and validation to a young woman in seeking out sex. Even if they do not achieve a relationship, having feelings toward their partner encourages their sexual activity, as the relational imperative dictates. However, within hookup culture where the label of “slut” is still a powerful way to sanction behavior, and the double standard is still operative in the behaviors of both men and women (Risman and Allison 2012), young women may find themselves in a precarious situation where they try to maneuver to achieve a relationship, without doing anything that may earn them the label of “slut,” which could potentially exclude them from consideration as a potential girlfriend.

### Sexual Behavior

A number of men reported that hooking up provides them with confidence, a trait highly valued among men, and prized, as well, among women in a potential mate (Talbot and Quayle 2010). Twenty-four percent of the males interviewed (n=4) indicated they enjoy the chase or pursuit of hookups. Thirty-five percent of the males (n=6) mentioned that being successful in the pursuit of a hookup provides them with self-

assurance in other areas, such as work, and school. These young men specifically mentioned that hookups provide them with confidence or an ego-boost. Scott, a 22 year old white fraternity member, described why he hooks up: “I don’t know, I feel like I perform better with like work, school with everything when I am...when I am sexually active.” Interestingly, many of the males who mentioned confidence as a reason for why they hook up were higher-status males, fraternity members and athletes, so the confidence they feel is likely a product of their conformity to the expectations associated with the masculine role for a high status male.

When asked what factors into their sexual decision making, which involves not only the choice of partner, but also the sexual activities one engages in, the most common sentiment in the responses is trust. Nineteen of the students interviewed (39%) specifically mentioned the word “trust,” however, of those nineteen, all but one were female. While not mentioning the word trust, other students describe that it impacted their behavioral choices. Eighteen students (15 women, 3 men; n=18, 37%) mentioned that their comfort level, and how well they know their partner play a role in their choice of sexual behaviors. The amount of time that they have known their partner and the extent of feelings for their partner increase their comfort level, which encourages them to be more physically intimate. Many students indicate that their physical and emotional comfort are linked. Taylor, a 26 year old white male in his junior year, when asked how long before he is sexually active, states. “I don’t know of any good time period. I’d say just subjectively, however long enough it takes really to get comfortable with each other. It’s to that point where, ‘you know what? We’ve been going for so long and I just can’t stand it anymore,’ and you just kind of jump, or whether it’s just, you know, it’s like, ‘Okay, I’d be okay waking up next to this person.’” It is important to note that Taylor’s comment evokes a bit of the traditional view of male sexuality, in the sense that he will get to the point where he “just can’t take it anymore,” yet comfort is also important in getting to that point. Lisa M, a 22 year old Hispanic female in her senior year, also mentions corporeal comfort, and its impact on sexual activity. “I know how I feel when I don’t feel comfortable with somebody, and I won’t even let them, I won’t let them see me naked or anything. So I’ll kiss you, but I don’t even know. Even that, I don’t feel



comfortable. That's such a big thing to me. If I feel comfortable around you, then we'll see what happens. I don't go into anything planning, but other than that, no, I feel that it all goes together. I feel they're all so linked to each other." Both of these comments speak to the level of physical comfort between partners, but with a gendered difference. Lisa's comment reflects self-consciousness about her appearance and body image, which is common among women, while Taylor discusses comfort waking up next to the person, but he also mentions that his sexual decisions are impacted by "that point" where "you just can't stand it," which is reflective of the idea of a male sex drive that can be hard to control, so while he recognizes how comfort level can dictate his sexual behaviors, he also sees a more essentialist link to his sexual decision-making. Eventually, he just "can't stand it" and needs to have sex.

When looking closely at students' responses regarding "trust," another gendered pattern emerges, where trust holds different meanings for male and female students. The double standard and the relational imperative are woven throughout these differences. When males refer to trusting a female partner, they are specifically referring to her sexual health. Similarly to partner choice, the specter of the 'slut' is inherent in males' sexual decision making. When asked how he decides what he will or will not do sexually on a hookup, Iron Man, a 22 year old white male in his senior year, describes how he considers the role of trust in his sexual decision making. "Trust and interest. Like if I don't have enough physical interest in the other person, that'll limit me. And if I don't trust exactly what they've said to me, like if my personal belief is they aren't necessarily that clean, I'll just keep to making out. Whereas if I have better trust and if it's, say, a friend that I know personally and I know where they've been, I'd be a little bit more trusting of going further." We see here not only the importance of how long he has known his partner, but also a concern for "where she's been" and how "clean" she is. Clearly, a girl who isn't "clean" is seen as promiscuous, or slutty. When women discuss their sexual decision making, it appears that trust takes on many meanings, including trusting that their partner is healthy. However, there are additional considerations that are more prominent in women's sexual decisions, also impacted by the conflicting narratives regarding female sexuality, the double standard, and the relational imperative.

When women discuss trust, they are referring to exclusivity, confidentiality, and safety with their partner. These sentiments were not shared by their male peers, except insofar as exclusivity is linked to being clean, as demonstrated by Iron Man's comment above.

Exclusivity is important in shaping sexual decisions. Fourteen women and one man (31%) consider trust to mean that their partner is not talking to other people. In response to the question of what factors into her sexual decision making, Mary (a 19 year old biracial female in her junior year) offers the following: "I don't know. Once you feel like you trust them a little bit and they're calling all the time and kinda showing you you're the only one, it makes you kinda feel a little bit comfortable. A girl got needs, so..." While evoking a bit of the essentialism seen in Taylor's comment above, Mary's response demonstrates the link between exclusivity, comfort, and trust, where exclusivity and trust combine to increase the comfort with her partner and that encourages sexual activity.

Similarly to knowing their partner is not sleeping with others, eleven women (22%) also state that sexual intimacy is furthered when they feel that their partner will not hurt them or use them for sex, indicating another meaning that trust holds for young women. Lisa R., a 21 year old white female athlete in her junior year, states, "I just like to see—I don't know. It's been different in the past. Probably now, I'd see if they really mean well, if they're not just using me to get whatever, and then just—I don't know. How well they treat me, how serious they want to be about it." While this specific comment alludes to Lisa changing her views based on her past experience, her sentiment is shared by many of her female peers. Sarah, a 19 year old white female in her first year of college says, "I am way more likely to have sex with someone if I think they are going to be sticking around." These comments attest to the power of the relational imperative (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009), where the idea of exclusivity is important in encouraging sexual intimacy, as women run the risk of scorn and slut-shaming for having non-relational sex, even within hookup culture (Reid et al. 2011). As Courtney, a 23 year old white female in her senior year, puts it, "I don't know, I mean, I think every girl has gotten a feeling where they've been screwed over."

The feeling of being “screwed over” can come from a perception of being used for sex, but for women within collegiate hookup culture, there is another way in which women can face scrutiny for hooking up, and this is another important factor in shaping their decisions: confidentiality and the danger of risking a bad reputation for hooking up. As was discussed above, males can earn status for their hookups, but due to the double standard, women risk stigma, or the more aptly termed “slut-shaming” for engaging in behavior that is encouraged in their male peers, specifically behaviors that imply dyadic participation. Eleven women (22% of the total sample) indicate that trust involves knowing that their partner will not tell others about their hookup. Among these women, there is also concern about reputation. Lucy, a 20 year old Asian sorority member in her junior year, states, “One of the things is that I know this campus, I know a lot of people talk on this campus, so I wouldn’t want to get involved that way with too many people, for my reputation and stuff. And I know how much news spreads, so I wouldn’t want to make a name for myself like that.” Lucy describes how the threat of a bad reputation leads her to curtail her sexuality. This concern is prominent even for students who are not affiliated with Greek organizations as well. Tiffany, a 22 year old African American in her senior year, discusses a similar process regarding her decision to engage in sex with a partner:

Rachel: What factors into the decision as to when you feel ready?  
What are some of the things that are important to you?

Tiffany: If I could trust them. Some guys run off and talk. I don’t like that at all. I’m a very private person, so if I feel like I could trust them, then I feel like, ‘Okay, maybe something could happen.’ Even if we don’t go into a relationship, I feel like, ‘Okay, I could still trust him not to run and tell all his friends.’

She later states, “If I’m not really feeling like I could trust him, I’m not going to do crazy things.” Tiffany’s statement also reflects how her interest in her partner, as well as potential interest in a relationship is an important factor to her, but the reputational threat takes priority.

Students also discuss how desire for a relationship, looks, or “game,” impact sexual choices, yet trust was the most commonly mentioned factor. In the exploratory

survey data, over half of the respondents (n=83, 58%) indicate that trust is the factor that determines how far they will go sexually. As mentioned above, there is a striking contrast between what trust means for men and women. Men see trust relating to a woman's sexual health, which is based upon a standard of female sexuality that is gendered, where a girl who has a lot of partners is not "clean" and therefore untrustworthy. For women, trust means that their male partner will not tell others and give her a bad reputation (leading to a characterization of her as dirty, unclean, and untrustworthy). Not only is the double standard operative in this distinction, but so also is the male-in-the-head, since both males and females consider a standard of sexuality that is based on a male perspective, and also empowers males to set the standard by which female sexuality is appraised.

### Discussion

Young men and women are able to act agentially regarding their sexual choices, yet these agentic behaviors are shaped by expectations about gender. Young males are most acutely aware of the approval of their peer group, and that is the audience they consider most when making sexual decisions. In this way, males are performing their sexuality for other males. Other males serve as the regulators of behavior for both males and females, as shown above regarding the characterization of girls as "dirty" or "slutty." The male peer group has the power to instruct young men that some girls are good for sex only, while others are more suitable to be girlfriends (Kalish 2013). The sex-only girls are then valued solely for their sexuality, and that sexuality is seen as a vehicle for the male's pleasure and status. This is extremely restrictive for girls who are told that they must have a relationship in order to be socially validated (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009) at the same time that they are told that their sexual adventurousness is the most important tool in getting and keeping a man (Bell 2013). Moreover, agentic choices for males can serve to turn females into co-conspirators, as they also abide by the double standard and recognize the power of the "slut" label, and this recognition is reflected in their own

behavioral choices. Sexuality is a dyadic experience, where two parties participate. When one party is able to act freely without concern for stigma, and the other party is not, the playing field is clearly not level. In this unequal setting, achieving sexual pleasure for young women becomes even more difficult, as they are made to feel bad about their choices when they do seek out sex, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Gendered expectations are also implicated in students' choices about contraceptive use, where young men are more concerned about preventing pregnancy and young women are concerned about both pregnancy and sexual health. This relates back to the ways young adults think about their college time as separate from the distant future. Pregnancy and children belong in the domain of the future, which is why many students discuss how they are not ready to be parents now, and as a result, use condoms to prevent pregnancy. Many of the young men, in accord with the masculine expectation to be a good provider, discuss how they want to be more set in their future before they become fathers, and many fear being "trapped" into a pregnancy, which makes them suspicious of their female partners. This is another example where males and females are positioned as adversaries, and gender stereotypes are implicated in this positioning.

Also involved in this dynamic are the gender differences regarding how students view trust. For males, trust means belief that the female is "clean" or not "slutty." Females have deeper concerns regarding trust. For the young women I spoke with, trust means much more. Females seek a partner who is clean and not "crazy" or promiscuous or immature. They also seek someone whom they can trust to not disclose details about their experiences. This is very important to young women, who are aware of how devastating it can be to earn the reputation as a "slutty" or "dirty" girl. In addition, for young women, trust also involves a sense of safety. They seek partners who will not pressure or coerce them, or use them for sex, which is in accord with Hypothesis #7. These young women are aware that controlling or egocentric sexual behaviors are condoned by the male peer group, yet they are careful in attempting to maintain their safety and bodily integrity. This is also reflected in the different ways that males and females characterize a "bad hookup": for males, a bad hookup is a girl who will not earn

them status with peers, while for a female, safety overshadows status. For young women, a bad hookup is one who can be violent, coercive, or unconcerned about confidentiality, supporting Hypothesis #8.

Another example of young women basing their behavior off of stereotypes about male sexuality is evident in the ways young women attempt to establish exclusivity in their hookups without scaring or pressuring their male partners. In this regard, the young women are trying to both live up to the relational imperative and to challenge the double standard. They seek exclusivity since that is the domain where they are able to be most sexually agentic without being seen as a slut (Bogle 2008a), yet they fear pushing their male partner away by being more forthright and asking for a relationship, so they are able to live up to expectations of femininity by seeking boundaries to establish monogamy, without the title of “girlfriend.” This offers the protection of the relational imperative and protects against the label of “slut.”

The double standard is clearly operative in the sexual decision making of American coeds, and it creates an environment where competition and status become more important than communication or concern for others. While some students were critical of the double standard, even those who recognized its existence will experience its power in shaping behavior. Hookup culture does not provide many avenues to challenge the double standard, and students are not as free to explore behaviors in hookups as they are in relationships, as we saw in the previous chapter.

## Chapter 6: Abdicating Sexual Agency

This chapter discusses the various ways students de-prioritize themselves in sexual encounters, or otherwise place the needs, desires, and feelings of someone else before their own. While there are some similarities in these patterns, the majority differ by gender. I begin with a discussion of young women, and then discuss young men.

### Young Women

A common trend was found where both males and females will abdicate their sexual agency during the actual act of sex. I am not implying that these encounters are seen as non-consensual; rather, the parties do not discuss the matter, or negotiate ways to achieve pleasure at all. Both male and female students describe situations where they willfully prioritize their partner's pleasure over their own. These behaviors have different, and gendered, motivations and outcomes. The one common outcome throughout is that in heterosexual encounters, both parties use a standard of behavior based on a male model, and this serves to elevate the male's pleasure, often at the expense of the female's. Additionally, this dynamic does not offer great opportunity for females to actualize their pleasure, nor does it afford the chance to re-construct norms to allow for a greater range of acceptable behaviors regarding female sexuality.

Many students describe sex that “just happens” (see Tolman 2002). They go into an intimate encounter knowing that sexual intercourse is a likely or expected outcome, and they just go along with the flow of events without doing anything to sway the outcome of events or the progression leading up to it. This relates to gender role ideology for both males and females. According to Judy, a 20 year old white junior student athlete, “What I’m thinking is if I want to have sex with him, because if you do, then you act differently—not more willing, but you just kind of go with the flow. But if you don’t want to, you have to make sure that you let them know.” Judy’s sentiment

directly relates to the gatekeeper aspect of gender role ideology discussed above. She recognized that it is her responsibility to deny consent if she does not want to engage in sex, but if she does desire sex, all she needs is to acquiesce to her male partner. Here we can see the enactment of Holland et al.'s "Male-in-the-Head" (2004). Judy, and others like her, know the male partner wants sex, as that is consistent with cultural narratives about masculinity and male sexuality, and by her silent acquiescence to his wishes, his pleasure becomes the goal, and her pleasure, if at all acknowledged, is subordinated to his. This is interesting in combination with the actions of males, who may "go along" with a sex act when they are otherwise indifferent, because they feel as if it is expected of them. Ironically, more males than females described "going with the flow" of a sexual encounter, which implies a willingness for young men to allow their partners to direct a sexual encounter.

Some young women engage in actions for the purpose of keeping their male partner interested. In the context of a vibrant hookup culture, where the threat of a male leaving one girl to find another who is more satisfying, this perceived risk is very powerful. Veronica Walker, a 23 year old white female in her senior year, mentions this when discussing whether she thinks hookup culture at college is a good or a bad thing: "I see it as 50/50. Ummm, college is like the best place to meet people definitely, you're constantly around people, you network. But it's also really, umm, discouraging. You compare yourself constantly to other girls." Such competition serves to encourage some young women to partake in activities in order to "keep" their male partner around. This sentiment was expressed by six of the women interviewed, or 18.5% of the female interview sample. Emily, a biracial 21 year old in her senior year, describes this: "I think it's because there's this pressure where, 'Oh, well, if you don't give him what he wants, he'll look elsewhere.'...And I think that girls do it because they wanna keep the guy interested and they wanna keep them around. And they're worried that if they don't, they're gonna lose that chance."

This creates a situation where the females see their sexual behavior as the sole thing that will interest a male partner, so that their sexuality ultimately becomes the domain of another, in some extreme expression of emphasized femininity. The females



rarely mention their own sexual pleasure, for instance, but many derive satisfaction from knowing that they have pleased another, and the ever-present threat of the young man going “elsewhere” emphasizes this. For example, when speaking about her current boyfriend and the period of time while they were hooking up before becoming exclusive, Mary, a 19 year old biracial female in her junior year, says, “I must’ve done something right, because he never left.” This is an interesting iteration of the relational imperative, in combination with the male in the head, because the emotion work a young woman may do becomes almost moot in comparison to her sexual adventurousness. Within contemporary hookup culture, for these young women, the cultural messages about being sexual resonate more loudly than the more traditional narratives emphasizing women’s nurturing and caregiving, resulting in a more sexualized display of emphasized femininity, one that is in accord with the media messages aimed at young women instructing them of the power of their sexuality (Egan 2013).

This is just one of many trends of eschewing sexual agency among women. Many females indicated that they not only “go along” with sex, but in some circumstances they will engage in sexual acts that are unpleasant for them or at the least, undesired. These women engage in these acts because they feel that doing so will cement the bond with her sex partner. They may engage in certain acts because they think it will make their partner like them, or to maintain their partner’s interest in the face of a vibrant hookup culture. For young women, going along with sex because of a sense of duty is linked to feminine gender role ideology and further, it emphasizes a relational aspect for young women. They are told that they can achieve happiness by making their partner happy (Phillips 2000; Powell 2008). In this context, a woman may continue a sexual encounter to which she may be otherwise indifferent, but does so to further her relationship with her partner, or because she wants to give him pleasure. In light of cultural messages that instruct women that it is her duty to provide pleasure to a man (Bell 2013), this behavior would be seen as a rational deployment of gender role ideology, even if it is achieved by abdicating agency.

Lisa R.: Well, I think when they’re trying for a little bit more, and I think it’s a lot where if you’re with an older guy or a newer,

older popular guy, and they're kind of like, "Do this, do this," you feel kind of like you have to. I guess coercion. Not that they're pressuring you, like they're gonna make you do it, but I think a lot of girls feel to stay with this guy or look cool in front of this guy, they feel like they need to.

[When asked specifically about performing oral sex]: Yeah. I don't mean pressure. I just mean if he brings it up, it's kind of not pressuring, but just like, "Oh, do you want to do it?" And then I feel pressure to do it, not that he's like, "Oh, if you don't do this, then we're done." It's just kind of I feel pressure to do it more since he brought it up.

Rachel: But do you feel like you have a sense of control in that situation?

Lisa R.: Yeah, definitely, yeah. Yeah, it's never been like I felt uncomfortable or anything like that.

In the quote above, Lisa, a 21 year old white junior student athlete, specifically mentions aspects about the male partner that will influence her sexual decision making, such as if he is older or popular. Females "go along" with the progression of events because they feel that sexuality is something for their male partner, again echoing the ideology of "The Male-in-the-Head" (Holland et al. 2004). His pleasure is expected, to the point that it is seen as her duty, which explains why females enthusiastically engage in behaviors, such as fellatio, that are not typically pleasurable for them. A female expresses pleasure at making her partner happy, or, will feel a closeness emanating from the act, and she thereby derives pleasure from that. Other women engage in these acts because they feel it is expected of them. Some fear that if they do not engage in these behaviors, their partner will simply find another partner who will, as discussed above. In this circumstance, the act itself becomes less important than the outcome it produces, and as you can see from Lisa's description, she rationalizes her participation in this "unwanted" event by describing her behavior as somehow still within her control. Interestingly, this demonstrates the power of cultural messages about the subordination of female pleasure to that of the male, yet also shows the commonness of this practice --

Lisa shrugs it off, after all, as something “comfortable,” even when she [earlier] stated that she did not enjoy doing it. Her comfort is therefore generated from the sense of pleasing her partner, and more to the point, that she has met some important expectations for female sexual behavior.

The notion of women caring for their male partners is reformed within hookup culture so that women perform their sexuality for a male gaze. This is another way that women yield their sexuality in favor of another, and it was discussed by 7 of the women interviewed, or 22% of the female interview sample (it was also mentioned by one male, John Dobias, a 25 year old white male in his senior year, who said that his male peers take on an “objective view of women and see them as a means to sexual satisfaction more than a person”). Women notice this “objective view” as well, and it can impede the deployment of their sexual agency. Jessica, a 19 year old Asian female in her sophomore year, describes this, and offers an opinion on why it is so:

Jessica: I think its harder for a girl to say no, honestly.

Rachel: How come?

Jessica: Because of how we were raised.

[later in the interview]

Jessica: I think a lot of how I answered has to do with how, the difference of how males and females are raised. No matter what people say, women are more subordinate, just because that’s how we see each other. And we’re always just the object of affection, and not...

Other females are less pragmatic about this, but in the context of discussing their sexual decision making, it emerges nonetheless, such as described above by Lisa.

Some of the young women notice this trend, but are also aware of the tension that emerges in a context where they are instructed that their bodies, and the potential pleasure within, exists for another. Six females, or 18.5% of the females interviewed, discuss this. Some mention this as a form of criticism of their peers, and see the behavior of others impacting how they themselves are perceived. This relates to the idea of never-ending competition, but it also implicates the males, and it shows the impact of the relational imperative. Lola, a 20 year old white female sorority member in her junior year, describes this well: “So yeah, it’s just....well, people are having sex so often now

that it's like if one person is better in bed than another person, even if the person with less experience may be smarter and quote, unquote "wifey" material, she still might not be good enough."

Similar trends were also mentioned by the young women in the focus groups, but with some slight differences. These differences center on the nature of the relationship between the two parties, or their level of exclusivity. However, like Lola, the women in the focus groups also recognized the role of the male in some of these patterns, and the ability to see external causes is distinct from the majority of the women interviewed.

Many of the young women in the focus groups discussed engaging in sexual behaviors in order to keep their partner interested, and to keep her partner. For these young women, the potential for a male to "find someone else" is clearly understood, almost to the point of being an expectation. These women invoked a discourse popular within the African American community known as "the bottom bitch theory." This "theory," was popularized by a trendy Black comedian, and while intended as a joke, it resonates with these young women and their partners. As shown below, the "bottom bitch" is a partner that a male has who will always be there for him, regardless of the other women with whom he "talks" or hooks up:

Moderator: So, the boys were very open with me about how there are girls, there are boos, and then there are wifeys. Do you guys have that same—are there different boys? Do you interact with boys like that? What does it mean to you if you're a boo, or a wifey, or none of those things?

Female Voice: I feel like if you're a boo, then you're just somebody that I call on occasion—"I need some company; come over." But if you're a hubby, you're my number one.

It's called the bottom bitch theory. A guy, he'll be talking to three girls, but he'll have—out of those three girls, one's the bottom bitch. No matter what, she's always gonna be the main one. That's who he's always gonna come back to. She's the bottom bitch, and she's not going nowhere. And the other two girls, it's just occasionally, I need some extra attention when I'm through.

Moderator: So, who would you rather be—the bottom bitch?

- Female Voice: The bottom bitch still gets cheated on, though, with everybody else. She the one that's going nowhere.
- Moderator: So, how would you feel if you were one of those other girls, and you knew that there was a bottom bitch?
- Female Voice: They know, and because they probably have somebody else or whatever, they can do this, and that's it. But then some females don't know. Then when they do find out, it's a big thing.
- Female Voice: Some females just don't care, because they don't see them as the official boyfriend or the significant other; they just like their company, like being with them. So, it's not so much about the title; it's more of what we do when we're together.
- Moderator: And you might have sex with him?
- Female Voice: Yeah, it just so happens.
- Female Voice: I would have to somewhat disagree. It makes sense, but, nowadays, our generation, I feel like the females are the ones to have a bottom man. You know what I'm saying? The females nowadays are ridiculous.
- Female Voice: I feel like everybody cheats. I don't care. I feel like everybody cheats, regardless.

The popularity of this concept exemplifies the extent to which both males and females in the African American community accept and normalize concurrent sex partners, especially among men, although some young women may emulate that behavior as well, possibly as a pre-emptive strike to guard their feelings from getting hurt. This ideology can compel women into behaviors she may not want, but does to show how loyal she is to her man. However, this term is said to have emerged from “pimp theory,” and so in invoking this terminology, these young women are describing themselves and their peers in the language ordinarily used for prostitutes. According to the blog RealColoredGirls, “In Pimp Theory, a ‘bottom bitch’ is the one in the whore’s hierarchy who rides hardest for her man...The bottom bitch is a token who is allowed symbolic power...In pop culture, she represents the trope of the chosen Black female, loyal to her man and complicit in her commodification...What she represents is an appearance of power within

a structure of male dominance but in reality this ‘power’ is merely vicarious and not a positional power in and of itself” (RealColoredGirls, 12/15/2013, np).

In accordance with this, women discuss the idea of engaging in sex acts to keep their partner interested – to maintain a relationship. This leads some young women to feel as if they cannot refuse sex, even within a relationship.

Moderator: You had asked this young lady right here, "When you're in a relationship like that, would you really deny it?" I don't mean to put you on the spot, but do all of you guys feel that—because when I heard that comment, it made me feel like perhaps there might be pressure on you guys to do things when you didn't want to.

Female Voice: Right, yeah. I mean, I wasn't saying, personally, that I wouldn't, but I know a lot of people that are like, "I can't say no. He's my boyfriend. Why would I say no? It's like, "Because you don't have to do that." It could be your boyfriend's raping you if you really don't want to have sex, and you're saying no, but you just do it anyway. So, I don't know. Some people really feel like they can't say no.

Moderator: Do you know some of the reasons why they feel that?

Female Voice: One of them is because, "Well, if I'm not gonna have sex with him, he's just gonna find someone else."

Female Voice: Exactly. I think that's the leading factor.

Moderator: Do you think the guys know this?

Female Voice: Yes.

Female Voice: They do it on purpose sometimes.

Female Voice: They know.

Female Voice: That's why a lot of the guys don't like intelligent females. A lot of them do, but a lot of them don't, because if you know too much, you'll be like no to everything. When you're a freshman, okay.

In this excerpt, a difference between the women in the focus groups and most of the women in the interviews emerges, where the women in the focus group were able to recognize that the males are aware of this pressure on women and manipulate it to get the

females to comply. The recognition that the male may go satisfy his needs elsewhere helps some young women refuse to acquiesce to the male's pressure when she does not want to, however, this lesson is often one learned in retrospect.

Female Voice:           Actually, honestly, there was one time. It was freshman year. I didn't want to have sex with the guy, but I liked him a lot, and I felt pressured. And after I did it, I was so upset. And then my best friend told me, she was like, "You don't ever do something because you don't want to make them feel bad." And I feel like it's the best advice she ever gave me. She's like, "So, now you feel like crap." And it's so obvious and so simple. It was just something that was great, and I listened to that even until now, this day. "You want it? You'll be fine. You'll just go get it from somebody else anyway." And that's something I had learned from that experience.

These women are able to examine the behavior of the males more critically, which relates to their differentiation of boys from men as potential partners, as discussed in the previous chapter. The young men who would go look elsewhere are seen as "boys," and thus characterized as less desirable partners, especially for relationships. Some females even report withholding sex as a test to ascertain their partner's level of seriousness or maturity:

Female Voice:           I feel like if you're dealing with a man—like, a man—

Moderator:           As opposed to a guy?

Female Voice:           Yeah, or a little boy—he's gonna understand, "All right, I'm gonna wait for you." But if you're dealing with a little boy that just want to get his nut off, he's just gonna—"All right, I'm going to the next girl that's gonna be easy." It depends—the age difference, also.

This demonstrates a divergence from most of the women interviewed. The women in the focus groups were able to look to external causes of behavior, such as the other person involved. Where the focus group women would negatively characterize a partner who would "go elsewhere," the women who were interviewed were slightly less critical and more likely to point to their own shortcomings in explaining why a male would seek another partner. Women in the focus groups also recognized a tension between the cultural narratives that instruct women that their value as partners lies in their ability to

please males and their own desire for pleasure. Some of the women interviewed vocalized this tension as well, and were critical of the double standard. The women in the focus groups were also critical of how their male peers interacted with the double standard and how that impacted them.

Some of the young women who are cognizant of the tension between cultural narratives and their own desires describe getting “caught up” in the contradictions. They describe enjoying the company of a young man, but within the romantic culture in which they live, they do not want to expend energy without reciprocity, nor do they want to “play themselves” by catering to a male who will not cater to them. This demonstrates another example of the compartmentalization often relied upon in college. These women describe the efforts they consciously make to avoid getting “caught up” and these techniques involve a more critical engagement with the two prominent intimacy discourses: the relational imperative and the double standard. These women eschew the relational imperative by trying to date multiple men to avoid establishing feelings for any one of them. Such behavior may also involve challenging the double standard; a young woman may then choose to be sexually intimate with the man she is seeing, because concurrent partnerships are more potentially damaging to a young woman’s reputation. Women are quite aware of the importance of their reputation, and how a reputation can impact behavior, as the following quote from a woman in the focus group demonstrates, “When you think about it, girls care more about that [reputation] than a man. If a female hear that she a ho, and you say it to them or whatever, they gonna feel bad. They gonna retreat, and stop doing some of the stuff that they was doing, like stop hanging out with certain people.” For these young women, discretion can potentially mitigate the double standard, and this is preferable to “playing” oneself by “getting caught up” in feelings for a male which are unreciprocated.

Female Voice:           When I was single, I mean, I had been intimate—or I was talking to more than one guy, because I feel I can do that. And, also, it stops me from getting caught up, too, because I feel that females that come from this, "Oh, I'm really talking to him. We don't have a title, but I'm still going to bring him food when I go visit. I'm



still gonna make sure he ate today. I'm still gonna—oh, he needs a ride. Okay, I'm gonna take him." No, mm-mmm.

That's how you're not going to be my main thing, because I'm not gonna get caught up.

Female Voice: If I'm bringing you food, and driving you around...

Female Voice: Yeah, and that's how you get caught up.

Female Voice: And especially since, nowadays—because I have a job, I have a car—the guy, he don't have much, so he can't give me much besides, I guess, a movie to watch. So, I make sure that I keep myself busy.

My boyfriend—at least he actually was a traditional guy. He's like, "Can I take you on a date?" It wasn't like the guys now—like, "Oh, let's chill." He actually came up to me, I went over, and then we was talking. He's like, "I'd like to take you out one day." I'm like, "Oh, okay." And he actually took me out and everything, and we talked for a whole year, and then we're finally together now.

So, it's like he showed me, also, a whole other thing—we talking high school stuff—and then it's like, yeah.

This young woman also points out expectations of gender, and that she surely is not relying on a male partner, and instead relies on herself. This exchange also attests to the prominence of these gendered expectations, even when being challenged: she says the male “can’t give [her] much,” which emerges as another reason why she wants to “keep [herself] busy” to avoid getting “caught up” with a male who she may see as an inadequate provider. This is another area that differs from the women in the interviews, who did not mention things a man could offer or provide (other than trust) as a deciding factor in partner choice. The women in the focus group describe doing things for a partner like “driving him around,” or “bringing him food,” which are more nurturing and care-giving behaviors. The women in the interviews did not mention similar behaviors as part of a relationship, especially during college. The fact that the majority of the women in the focus groups, and especially those describing these care-giving behaviors, were women of color suggests that this is shaped by different cultural and economic expectations for women. It also underscores the importance of self sufficiency for women of color, who make conscious effort to avoid getting caught up in feelings or

attachments to males who may not support her independence, or who may become dependent on her.

Many of the women in the focus groups described situations where women feel as if they cannot say no to sex, which is similar to the responses from women in the interviews who “go with the flow” of a sexual encounter. Some of the women interviewed, like Arianna, were able to refuse sex with a partner who would not use contraception. The topic of refusing sex came up in the focus groups, too, and there was great discussion about it:

Moderator: So, when you guys don't want to have sex with male partners, and you say no, how is that no taken by the male partners?

Female Voice: They get upset. They get angry, aggravated, because they feel, technically, "You should be performing for me," or that you need to be there to provide for that. They get all pissy, and want to storm out.

Female Voice: Well, that's just rude.

The women also mention how they feel they should not say no to sex, especially within the context of a committed relationship. They discuss performing sexually when they do not wish to, or a feeling of obligation to perform sexually. As we see above, at times the women feel this obligation even in the absence of reciprocity. Discussion around this topic was most lively when oral sex was brought up.

Female Voice: It doesn't matter if you're in a relationship, either, because my first partner, I wanted him to perform oral sex on me, and he said he didn't want to. And I lasted with him almost a year, and he didn't.

Moderator: Did you guys have a conversation about it? Did he say why?

Female Voice: He was like, "I just don't like it." He said he's never tried it, but he just doesn't want to try it.

Due to the relational imperative, this young woman seeks to cement the relational bond, and prioritizes the relationship over her own sexual enjoyment. That this woman described attempting to discuss her needs with her partner and was unsuccessful, underscores the lack of a genuine discourse about female sexuality, since it appears that

her partner was uninterested in her pleasure. Additionally, she describes performing oral sex on him, without it being returned. This is an example of compartmentalization as discussed earlier, but in this instance, instead of compartmentalizing time, these young women compartmentalize their emotions, to avoid getting hurt. They engage in behavior they do not want, see that as preferable to rejection and the hurt feelings that accompany it.

Relationship status was also important in shaping sexual decisions, especially the decision to perform sexually when one is not in the mood for sex. Some of the young women felt that it was their duty to perform, where others were very vocal in establishing that their personal boundaries were just as important as the male's sexual needs.

Female Voice: If I'm in a relationship with somebody like that, and—

Female Voice: I will tease.

Female Voice: —they want to have sex or whatever, and I really just don't feel like having sex, okay—but that's if we're together-together. I don't do whatever...

Female Voice: That's just like if you're in a relationship, and you're on your period, you still got a completion of the end, so you're gonna do something else.

Female Voice: See, that's not right because a lot of females think like that—like, "Oh, let me please my man before the other female do." But if he really, truly love you, he's not gonna cheat on you, even if you don't want to do it, or give him oral. He should not bother you.

Again, these women are able to see that they have the right to refuse sex, and if a partner does not respect that, they are vocal about re-evaluating the relationship.

The topic of performing for a partner when one does not want sex came up in the interviews as well. Many of the women indicated that when they were in a situation with a partner (regardless of the level of exclusivity), and the partner wanted sex and they did not, they would do something, such as oral sex, in order to give the male an orgasm. Women discussed doing this to solidify a relationship, for their partner to like them or stay with them, as seen in the sentiment above, "Let me please my man before the other

female do.” Some women, like Lisa, quoted earlier, discussed this in terms of doing it because they want to, even without reciprocity. Again, there were slight differences when this topic was discussed in the focus groups. The white women in the focus groups were more likely to discuss doing this than the women of color. Some women of color did describe this, often in discussion past experiences, but on the whole, Black women seemed less likely to subscribe to the ideology, and were more vocal about asserting their needs, or their desire not to have sex. Additionally, they did not see the value in a relationship with a male who ignored their wishes or needs, as we can see below where the young woman indicates that if her partner does not respect her boundaries, she would not want to be with him (“then they out”):

Moderator:           What if you really like the person, but, at that moment, you just don't really feel like having sex right then?

Female Voice:        I would tell them my poons is tired right now, leave me alone.

Moderator:           And they listen to that? And do they respect that?

Female Voice:        If they don't, then they out.

The OCSLS includes a variable measuring this exact topic. The survey asks, “Since entering college, have you performed oral or hand stimulation to “finish” a partner when you did not want to have intercourse but felt you needed to do something for your partner?” An affirmative response to this question indicates the respondent putting their partner’s sexual needs before their own. Interestingly, in the full OCSLS dataset, 25.1% answered affirmatively, 29.17% of women and 15.87% of men. The model was run using the full set of respondents, and again using only the subsample of females. Although a few males indicated engaging in this behavior, I am focusing on the female behavior, as that aligns with the theory of the male in the head I seek to test here. Results of both models were similar, but I am reporting the results from the females only. (Full set results available upon request)

To examine which factors are more likely to predict this behavior, I ran a binary logistic regression<sup>9</sup>. In Table 6-1, I present the binary logistic regression estimates of “finishing” a partner when you do not want to have intercourse. I include thirteen independent variables in the analysis, including demographic variables such as white ethnicity, variables related to the college experience, Grade Point Average (GPA), Greek affiliation, athletic team membership, and educational aspiration. I include four measures of sexual history: number of previous sexual partners, self reported attractiveness, having sex outside of a relationship, and history with rape. Finally, I include a series of variables measuring attitudes toward social issues. These variables measure attitude towards premarital sex, and being pro-choice. The analysis was performed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 21.

Let’s now consider the independent variables. Many of the variables reached a level of statistical significance. Of the demographic variables reaching statistical significance, the strongest effects were found for the race variable. As indicated in the interviews and focus groups, white women were more likely to perform oral or hand stimulation on a partner when they did not want to have intercourse but felt as though they needed to “finish” off their partner. This effect, that white women were 37.5 times more likely to finish a partner, reached a high level of significance ( $p < .001$ ).

Regarding the college variables, we see differing levels of impact. Grade point average was positively associated with “finishing” a partner, although the effect failed to reach a level of statistical significance. Educational aspiration also had a modest but significant effect, in a positive direction, where students with higher aspirations were 9.2% more likely to “finish” their partner sexually. Class year was also positively and significantly related to “finishing” one’s partner. It seems that as they spend more time in college, students are 15.2% more likely to engage in this behavior. However, of the

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<sup>9</sup> I calculated several diagnostic statistics to guard against potential violation of any of the assumptions of logistic regression. Variance Inflation Factors did not exceed a value of 2.0 for any of the variables, indicating no potential problems with multicollinearity. The mean Variance Inflation Factor score was 1.22. Clearly, multicollinearity did not pose a problem in this analysis (Allison 1999). Additionally, I detected no problems with outliers. There were no standardized residuals greater than two (Tabachnick and Fidell 2006).

Table 6-1  
Have you "finished" a Partner?  
OCSLS Women

<u>Variables</u>	
<i>College Context Variables</i>	
Year	1.159** (0.147)
Greek Affiliation (1= yes)	1.328** (0.283)
Athlete (1= yes)	0.888 (-0.118)
GPA	1.055** (0.053)
Educational Aspiration	1.02 (0.020)
<i>Sexual History Variables</i>	
Self-Reported Attractiveness	1.075** (0.073)
Number of Previous Sex Partners	1.045** (0.044)
Sex outside of a Relationship (1= yes)	1.752** (0.561)
Rape history (1= yes)	1.946** (0.666)
Want Relationship	1.178 (0.164)
<i>Individual Variables</i>	
White Ethnicity (1= white)	1.398** (0.335)
Premarital Sex	1.05 (0.049)
Pro-Choice	1.304** (0.266)
n	10397
Model Chi-Square	10645.224**
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.128

\* p<.05, ^ p<.01, \*\* p<.001

numbers listed are odds ratios, numbers in parenthesis are unstandardized coefficients

Source: On-Line College Social Life Survey, Data Collected 2005-2011

college variables, effects were found for Greek organization and athletic team membership. Members of sororities were 18.6% more likely than non sorority members to perform oral or hand stimulation on a partner when they did not want to have intercourse in a sexual encounter. Student athletes were less likely to do so, however, yet this relationship was not statistically significant.

All of the sexual history variables were positively and significantly related to sexually servicing a partner when one does not want to have intercourse. The number of previous sexual partners was modestly related, where more partners increases the likelihood of “finishing” a partner by 3.1%. Students who had had experienced sexual intercourse outside of a committed relationship were 61.5% more likely to perform oral or hand stimulation on a partner when not desiring intercourse. Students who indicated an experience of forced sexual intercourse, or rape, since entering college, had extremely high odds of “finishing” a partner. Students who indicated a rape history were 68.6% more likely to perform oral or hand stimulation on a partner when they did not want to have intercourse but felt as though they needed to “finish” off their partner. It is likely that experience with nonconsensual sex will encourage women to acquiesce in a sexual encounter to avoid another forced experience. She will “finish” a partner willingly, to feel as if the choice is hers, which allows her to feel empowered, or to cement the bond with her partner, while also protecting her from another forced experience that could result in physical or emotional harm.

The effects of the attitude variables are quite interesting. The variable measuring attitude toward premarital sex was not statistically significant. The abortion variable was a dummy variable indicating an opinion in favor of abortion, or a pro-choice view. Interestingly, women who were in favor of abortion were more likely to finish a partner, by 33.8%. I used pro-choice opinion as a measure of feminism, and this indicates that those who have more “feminist” views are more likely to finish a partner, demonstrating that the exposure to feminism does not alleviate the tendency for young women to prioritize their male partners over themselves. This shows that feminism does not negate the effects of the male in the head. While exposure to feminism has been increasing, though, so have cultural discourses that have emphasized the sexuality of young women

as a commodity. Often referred to as the “pornification” of culture, scholars have asserted that this leads to self-objectification and thus can encourage hookup behaviors (Heldman and Wade 2010). It is possible that the exposure to the pornification of culture and the surrounding discourses outweigh the effect of the exposure to feminism or feminist ideals. Additionally, the discourses surrounding pornification may be more accessible to young females than the discourses of feminism, since feminism may still have a negative connotation in some circles (Siegel 2007). Additionally, the fact that many of these sexualized messages are couched within a framework of empowerment, serves to complicate things, as these messages are sold to women as if they espouse feminist ideology, yet they serve to alienate women from their own sexuality. In any event, this regression analysis shows that Holland et al.’s (2004) prediction that exposure to feminism would alleviate the effects of the male in the head has not yet been actualized. I find that a feminist orientation complicates the male in the head, and may further problematize sexual behavior for young feminist women. This is described perfectly by one of the women interviewed. Lola, a 20 year old white sorority member in her junior year, who identifies as a feminist, discussed this during her interview. She said, “As weird as this sounds, I guess it’s like, you do it for him to like you. And even coming from a feminist perspective, it’s really weird to be saying that. But I think that’s what it comes down to, if you think about it.” Feminism does not insulate young women from the male in the head (Holland et al. 2004), instead, the ideology of the male in the head complicates the evaluation of behavior for a young woman who views herself as a feminist. In this circumstance, feminism is almost disempowering for young women, since it illuminates for them the power differentials in their own experiences. In some sense, quite rationally, they do know that they are subordinating their own pleasure, but in the context of hookup culture, there are not many ways to mitigate these effects, and so these young feminists act in such a way as to be as empowered as they can, within a context that does not appear to value their sexual pleasure.

There are two patterns of females abdicating their sexual agency, or otherwise prioritizing the partners over themselves. While I consider this an abdication of agency because they engage in behavior that serves the pleasure of their partner rather than their



own, for some, such activity does have a clear goal, which may be seen as agentic. Isolating the element of sexuality only, these young women ignore their own sexual pleasure in favor of their partner, yet may derive happiness, some might even say a benefit, from the result of this action, perhaps at the cost of their own sexual satisfaction.

### Young Men

This trend of abdicating agency was described by both males and females, but with different motivations. In many cases, the by-product is the same -- pleasure for the male partner -- but the process by which this is achieved, as well as how it is internalized, differs by gender. For males, it is expected that they should seek out sex at every available opportunity. Refusing sex would seem rather non-masculine, since traditional gender role ideology dictates that it is masculine to seek out multiple sex partners. Because of this, it is unlikely that a young man will stop a sexual encounter if he is unsure about his desires. Instead, he will go along with it because “I’m not just gonna *not* have sex” (James, a 20 year old, freshman, white student athlete, emphasis his). Indeed, in the interview sample, males are much more likely to report that they hooked up with someone because their peers were hooking up too. The females rarely reported this occurring.

It is expected that males should seek out sex at every available opportunity. Refusing sex would be seen as non-masculine, since traditional gender role ideology dictates that it is masculine to have multiple partners, and to be ever-ready for sex, if not actively seeking it (Kimmel 2008). Because of this, it is unlikely that a young man will stop a sexual encounter if unsure about his desires. A young man who is feeling questionable about his participation in a sexual encounter may worry that his partner will question his lack of enthusiasm and thus scrutinize his masculinity. Additionally, as mentioned above, he may also worry that if his partner tells others about it, his reputation may suffer. Ricky, a 19 year old white student athlete, conveys this struggle:

Ricky: I'm thinking, I don't know. "Is this really what I wanna do right now, with her?" Usually not thinking too much instead of what's actually going on...

Rachel: Okay. I was gonna say, if you were thinking, "I don't really wanna do this." what would you do? Would you continue or would you stop?

Ricky: Probably continue. It depends. If I really didn't wanna do it, I'd probably make up some acceptable excuse.

Ricky indicates that he will continue a sexual encounter against his initial preference. But if he is going to stop it, he needs an "acceptable excuse" so as to not tarnish his reputation. His mention of an excuse indicates that he does not feel he can just stop a sexual encounter when he chooses. It is important to note that, even if undesired, he will abdicate his sexual agency and continue the encounter. The men in the focus group indicated they would stop a sexual encounter if the girl was unattractive, or if they were involved in a relationship.

Some men described continuing a sexual encounter beyond their better judgment in a different context. Contrary to their peers mentioned above, when describing what would happen if faced with the situation of being about to hook up with someone, but not having a condom, some students indicated that they would choose to have unprotected sex rather than curtail the sexual activity. In this situation, a young man will go along with a sexual encounter because he feels he has to, as James' quote above indicates. For some males, this experience is not as simple as James' sentiment implies. Jake, a 20 year old white male fraternity member in his junior year, describes his behaviors when faced with the same situation, "Once, I had no condom and she wanted sex, but I didn't. I did it anyway, and I felt bad about it. I regretted it and was worried for a while after." Jake later says, "I was disappointed in myself." This reflects the complicating emotions he feels when he places his partner's desires before his own, as well as his concern for safety. The act of continuing a sexual encounter without a condom was more common among the white men interviewed, and particularly the high status students like James and Jake.

Yet there is another reason why males may voluntarily act in a seemingly non-agentic way, and in this circumstance their abdication of sexual agency is achieved in such a way that their masculinity is uncontested – and even reified. Due to the high prevalence of sexual assaults on college campuses (Buchwald et al. 1995), there are events that draw attention to the problem of rape, so many college students are aware of the dangers of coerced or forced sex. The men in the focus group spoke about this: “What we're saying is that unless they give you verbal consent and is coherent, they can say you raped her, because they never gave you verbal permission to have sex with them.” Some campaigns specifically draw on notions of gender, promoting the idea that “real men” do not force sex on their partners (Denny 2007). Consequently, a pattern has emerged where otherwise agentic males abdicate their agency in favor of their female partners. There are different patterns and motivations to this abdication of agency for young men.

While not specifically abdicating their sexual agency, one group of men follows the traditional gender arrangements within heterosexuality, where the male pushes the encounter further and relies on his female partner to stop it. These men see their female partner as a “gatekeeper,” where it is her responsibility to curtail the progression of intimacy. They do this because cultural messages tell them that males are supposed to want sex at all times, and this behavior becomes gender-appropriate, since, “most people are generally looking to have sex, if you’re a guy” (Edwin, 20, white student athlete). Twenty-nine percent of the males (n=5) indicated this behavior in the context of hookups, as opposed to committed relationships.

Similarly, another twenty-nine percent (n=5) specifically reference rape, and separate their behavior from any type of forced sexual activity. These young men discussed obtaining verbal consent from a partner, but they also saw their partner as a gatekeeper. Some men said that not only would they not force sex on a partner, but they would not want to have sex with someone who did not seem engaged in the activity. They said that having a partner who was genuinely interested in them was a large aspect

of their arousal. Men in the focus groups also discussed not wanting to have sex with a partner who was too drunk, or unable to consent, due to fear of a rape accusation<sup>10</sup>.

Some men describe going along with sex, and allowing their female partners to “lead” the sexual activity. These young men are willing partners, but they do not initiate intercourse, allowing their partner to direct the progression of sexual behavior. Forty-one percent of the men interviewed (n=7) indicated this behavior. Tom, a 23 year old white junior, describes how a sexual encounter typically progresses, “It depends on her. I don’t force it. I always let it just go with the flow. I don’t think that’s really my option to consider.” Tom specifically differentiates how he attempts to progress sexual intimacy from any use of force. This shows his awareness of discourses about predatory male sexuality, and his choice to distinguish his behavior from that. He will “just go with the flow” that his partner establishes. He “initiates the feelings” but lets her steer the progression of sexual behaviors.

There is another group of males who also rely on these discourses as they abdicate their sexual agency to that of their female partners, but for these men, there is a different agenda. These men will purposely NOT put any sexual pressure on their female partners, in an effort to progress the intimacy to a higher level. Specifically, these males are furthering their own sexual agenda by abdicating their agency. They take a seemingly non-agentic act, but deploy it in such a way as to become an agentic choice since it furthers their sexual goals. Edwin, a 20 year old white student athlete, explains this pattern of behavior:

Edwin: I’d never ask the question [what do you want to do sexually], though. I’d always wait for the girl to...

Rachel: Is there a reason for that?

Edwin: I don't wanna pressure them into anything. I've always found that works more effective.

Rachel: What works more effectively?

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<sup>10</sup> Note again that their concern centered on being accused of rape, which is different from concern about not engaging in the act of rape.

Edwin:                    If you don't pressure them.

The twenty-nine percent of males (n=5), while small, who consistently fall into this category tend to have more status or sexual capital on campus, the student-athletes and the Greek organization members. For these students, this behavior is affected not only by discourses about sexual assault but also by the widespread belief that hookups are more prominent among higher status students (Lambert, Kahn and Apple 2003). In interviews, when asked who they think hooks up the most, the overwhelming majority of students identified athletes and Greek-affiliated students (which is reflected in their self report data, as well as in the OCSLS data). When students believe that certain groups of their peers act in a certain way, it can affect their own behavior to align with their peers, in a form of pluralistic ignorance (Reiber and Garcia 2010), but it also affects the behaviors of those students who are labeled. If these males are highly sought after sex partners, it is likely that their behavior will reflect that, as will the behaviors of their partners, which makes this behavior successful. These men's partners may be attracted to their status, and may be more willing to initiate sexual activity, which allows the men to reach their desired sexual goal without putting forth much effort.

### Discussion

The men were aware of the rape culture in which they live, yet the levels of their engagement in rape culture varied. One group of men demonstrated utter disdain for sexual assault, and specifically positioned themselves in opposition to it. They differentiated their own behavior from any use of force. These men showed awareness of rape and its prevalence, taking a stance directly against it, which is consistent with a growing movement among men to help eradicate rape (Denny 2007).

Another group of men interviewed were also aware of rape culture, and separated themselves from the use of force, yet they manipulated this to suit their own sexual desires: they acted as if they were not initiating the sexual behavior, with the specific goal of furthering the intimacy by allowing their partners to progress the sexual behavior.

They deployed a performance of abdicating agency in order to achieve pleasure, so what appears to be non-agentic, is actually an extremely agentic act, similar to other studies who found that men interact with women specifically in a manner that increases the likelihood of sex (Flood 2008).

The men in the focus groups demonstrated another form of engagement with the rape culture, perhaps shaped by race. These men were vocal about the necessity to maintain verbal consent from a coherent partner. While some appreciated the need for active and voluntary consent for sex, others referred to documenting consent to protect them from allegations of rape. The former group showed concern about the act of rape itself, while the latter demonstrated fear of being accused, with little concern about any coercive or forcible behavior on their part. Again, the latter group demonstrated vulnerability that positions women as adversaries: the women had the “power” to make an accusation, yet they were unable to appreciate the structural power differentials that facilitate rape in general (Buchwald et al. 1995). Additionally, these men of color were wary of rape allegations, due to a mistrust of the criminal justice system and perceived racism within the system against men of color (Hill Collins 2004).

The men interviewed demonstrated vulnerability, but differently. These men expressed pressure to continue a sex act even when they were ambivalent. They felt that they could not refuse sex without an “acceptable excuse,” without a mark against their reputation and masculinity, in partial support for Hypothesis #9. This struggle with choices is shaped by expectations that men are constantly seeking sex (Kimmel 2008), yet it complicates these stereotypes. This echoes Smiler’s (2008) work with adolescents, who found it “likely that boys may not have the vocabulary—or the belief—that they can ‘just say no’” (p. 28). The pressure to ‘say yes’ continues past adolescence into college, where peer group and status reinforce stereotypes of masculinity.

However, high status males are able to draw upon cultural discourses of masculinity to achieve sexual goals. On many college campuses, there is a vocal campus culture existing in opposition to forced or coerced sex (Denny 2007). This campus culture is experienced by men of color differently than their white peers. Men of color, especially in the focus groups, were explicit in recognizing the need to gain verbal

consent in order to avoid any accusation of rape. This may be in part due to the race bias of the US criminal justice system which affects their behavior, and specific stereotypes of African American male sexuality as predatory. They are aware of the disproportionate representation of young Black men in the criminal justice system as well as the persistent belief that Black men are sexually voracious and insatiable (Hill Collins 2004).

Simultaneously, many of the constructs of masculinities have changed over the past few years to be more inclusive of different forms that allow for more emotional connection and a less aggressive version of masculinity (Anderson 2011). These two discourses combine for young men in a way that allows them to abdicate their sexual agency in an effort to increase the level of sexual activity they can engage in with a partner, but this is amplified for white men. They then appear to engage in a behavior that is rather non-agentic, which allows them, then, to achieve sexual activity and sexual pleasure while maintaining their masculine status. In some circumstances, such an “abdication” of sexual agency can actually bolster their masculine status.

It is interesting that both males and females within hookup culture feel as if they cannot always refuse sex, males due to fear of losing masculine status, and females due to fear of being rejected or abandoned by a partner. The one thing that underlies both of these fears is an implicit understanding of the expectations of masculine sexuality, which supports Hypothesis #9. Males feel as if they must have sex, even when they do not wish to, as refusing sex would be seen as emasculating. Women expect that their male partner always wants sex, and she engages in certain behaviors to appease the male sex drive and keep her partner interested. Taking both of these patterns into consideration, it is likely that both males and females within collegiate hookup culture are engaging in unwanted sex. Reconstructing gender role ideology could mitigate this, as could educating both males and females about ways to negotiate bodily integrity.

Yet, there is another discourse existing on college campuses that also impacts hookups. The “pornification” of culture emphasizes and normalizes sexuality, and promotes the idea that young women exist as objects of sexual desire (Heldman and Wade 2010). This encourages self-objectification of young women and reinforces male entitlement, which is evident here in the young men’s lack of regard for their partners,

and their partners' feelings, as well as their reliance on the double standard, which is consistent with other studies using the OCSLS (Armstrong et al. 2012; England et al. 2008). For many of the young men, young women are vessels in which they find pleasure, or, as we see here, women become vehicles by which men pursue status, something college men appear to think about often and will act on in meaningful ways.

It is important to examine the experiences of young adults as they navigate the hookup culture as well as the rather untapped dialogue that men have regarding these encounters. Deployment of male sexuality is frequently assumed to be unproblematic; however, an examination of the process of decision-making for young men is certainly not uncomplicated. While there are a variety of outcomes of hooking up, it is important to recognize that the construction of gender as it exists on college campuses is implicated in students' sexual decision-making, and negative outcomes of hooking up are often linked to inadequate gender performance. Broader gender expectations could mitigate these negative consequences for both men and women, especially those associated with the sexual double standard.

Hooking up allows for the enactment of sexual agency for males and females, but it is imperative to recognize that their agentic sexuality is affected by gender role ideology first and the conflicting narratives about sexuality second, both so prevalent in our culture. While hook-up culture may be an example of previously marginalized behaviors moving back to the center, the "classic" double standard does still exist, and the consequences of this construction are acutely felt by young women. The women, perhaps more than the men, will find they must maneuver between expressing their own sexual desires -- and restricting them—in order to abide by stereotypical gender role expectations (Tolman et al. 2003; Allen 2003; Paul 2006). At the heart of so many of the female responses, this much was clear.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final chapter of this dissertation reiterates the main questions examined, as well as the methods used and the main findings. The major sections of this chapter summarize the results and discuss their implications in light of the extant literature. I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this dissertation and suggestions for future research.

### Statement of Problem and Methods

This study examined gender and the enactment of agency in college hookups and relationships, as demonstrated by sexual decision-making in each of these contexts. The main factor in sexual decision-making is gender, or rather, the desire to live up to expectations of gender. Peer appraisal is instrumental in guiding sexual decision-making and the enactment of sexual agency for young American coeds. The peer group evaluates to what extent young adults successfully meet standards of masculinity and femininity. Within the context of hookup culture (Heldman and Wade 2010), the models of gender emulated are heterosexual hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Currier 2013; Connell 1987; 1995).

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups. This data provided contextual information used to examine the nuances of sexual decisions made by collegiate men and women. In their own words, students were able to describe some of the things that factor into their sexual decisions, as well as their reasoning for choosing specific behaviors or partners. After coding the qualitative data and organizing it around the major emergent themes, I used survey data from the *Online College Social Life Survey* to quantitatively examine some of the findings from the qualitative data. By using this sequential design, I examine how the trends in the

qualitative data apply to the students in the larger OCSLS dataset. The use of multiple methods allows for comparisons between the students who were interviewed and the data from the large number of students across the country that filled out the OCSLS. I find both similarities and differences, and the multiple methodologies allows for more contextual meaning to emerge from the survey data alone. The sequence of using qualitative data to shape a quantitative analysis is distinct from other sequential mixed methods projects that use quantitative data to inform the qualitative analysis.

### Summary of Results

Young adults often consider the perceptions of their peers, and especially the male peer group in their sexual decision-making. Men often base behavioral and sexual choices upon how they expect such behavior to be judged by their peers, who shape notions of appropriate partners, and encourage participation in the hookup culture. Scripts of masculinity also impact behavioral choices, particularly around contraception and consent, albeit with results that vary based upon race and status on campus.

Peer appraisal is also important to young women, which results in women choosing behaviors which will not earn them a negative label or a bad reputation. For this reason, young women are much more pragmatic about their choice of partner and sexual behavior. This dissertation has shown that the male in the head (Holland et al. 2004) is still a significant factor in the sexual choices of both young men and women, where both rely on characterizations about their peers set from a standard that is based on expectations about males, or the generalized *male* other. Due to this, young men act in ways to earn status from their male peers, and young women act in ways to maintain a positive reputation among male peers. In this regard, young men have the ability to set the standards of behaviors for both men and women, yet these standards are often fraught with difficulty.

Research Question #1 asks how students view relationships, Research Question #2 asks who has relationships and who goes on dates, and Research Question #3

examines how those relationships form. As expected in Hypothesis #1, students do see relationships as time consuming, or a “distraction” from the demands of school and preparation for their envisioned career. For this reason, many see relationships as a part of their future. However, the large proportions of students in the interview sample, as well as the OCSLS, who do in fact have relationships while in college challenges Hypothesis #1. The students in later years of their education were more likely to be in a relationship, which may offer partial support for Hypothesis #1, as those students may form relationships as they get closer to graduation. This data supports Hypothesis #2a, which predicted that students nearing graduation will be more likely to have relationships. However, Hypothesis #2b, which predicted that students desiring a relationship would be more likely to go on dates, was not fully supported (see Table 4-1). Hypothesis #3 was also not supported, as the OCSLS shows that an extremely large majority of the students (88.9%-91.9%) have dated their partner prior to forming a relationship with them, as shown in Table 4-2. Hooking up and dating certainly coexist as ways to form relationships, since over 60% of the students in the OCSLS have both dated and hooked up with their partner before forming the relationship.

Research Question #4 examines how students view relationships in relation to hookups. Hypothesis #4 was partially supported; as predicted, as both male and female students view relationships as “work,” compared with hookups, yet both men and women expressed desire for relationships, which was not predicted. Also, I found that students view relationships to be more private than hookups, which was not expected. Research Question #5 examines the effect of hooking up on relationships. As predicted in Hypothesis #5, students rely on gendered stereotypes to gauge a partner’s motivation, but the qualitative data offers much more texture to this: men and women are both negatively affected by the relational imperative, which affects the way they view one another and make decisions. As Carlos pointed out, people may become desensitized within hookup culture, so they compartmentalize their emotions as a way to avoid getting hurt. As Carlos put it so aptly, this can make hookups a “relationship killer,” for those men who seek to start relationships with young women who expect their male counterpart only wants sex.

Research Questions #7 and #8 examine how students choose partners, and what makes someone a “good” or “bad” partner. As predicted in Hypothesis #7, males choose partners who are attractive or highly sought-after by others, demonstrating the power of the male peer group. Also as predicted, young women choose partners with whom they have a relational interest, yet many young women also mentioned attraction or “strong lust” for their partner, which was not predicted. The male peer group also emerged as a factor in the determination of a “good” or “bad” partner, especially in regard to young women; if she is attractive, or “hot,” she becomes a good partner. Men apply the double standard to deem a young woman a “bad” partner, by judging a woman’s reputation or sexual history. Young women consider trust in their determination of a “good” partner, as hypothesized.

Research Questions #6 and #9 look at sexual decision-making. As predicted in Hypothesis #6, male and female students seek pleasure in their hookup behaviors. Also, as predicted, the double standard is operative here, as women specifically make decisions to mitigate against a bad reputation, and reputation can take priority over pleasure. Hypothesis #9 predicted that men will try to accelerate the progression of a sexual encounter and that women will often take on the role of gatekeeper. This hypothesis was partially supported, since gender expectations operated in unexpected ways. Many young men did try to further the intimacy of a sexual encounter, but surprisingly, for those men who did not want to have sex, expectations of masculinity encouraged them to continue with sexual activity that was undesired. Additionally, many young women assumed the gatekeeper role, but women also engaged in sexual behaviors that were undesired, but did so to maintain relational ties with their male partners.

The next section of this chapter continues with a discussion of these results, contextualizing them within the expectations of masculinity and femininity at college.

## Discussion

This dissertation sheds a different light on hookup culture by examining students' sexual decision-making as well as students' perceptions of and experiences with hookups and relationships at college, and one of the more significant findings is that hooking up not only does not deter relationships, it is a common mechanism through which students establish exclusive relationships, supporting Hypothesis #3. Hooking up can be considered instructive for young American college students in that it illuminates for them what it is that they want out of an exclusive relationship that they cannot get from hooking up. Additionally, it is within the context of an exclusive relationship that young men and women are most comfortable exploring different sexual "scenarios." The comfort of a committed relationship allows them the freedom to experiment with sexuality. In this context, young men especially find pleasure in giving their partners the best sexual experience possible, and by doing so, many of these young men de-prioritize themselves in favor of their partner. This diverges from the expectations of hegemonic masculinity so prominently displayed in college. These young men focus on their partner, at the expense of their own pleasure, yet in "giving" pleasure to their partner, they feel validated in their sexual performance and their masculinity. Young men do not feel the same way regarding their partners in hookups, since the relationship status insulates men from any backlash they may get from deemphasizing their own pleasure. Additionally, peers are not as likely to comment on others' relationships, particularly the sex acts that take place within relationships, since relationships, while achieved publicly in college, are afforded more privacy. This privacy, or the imperative NOT to talk about sexual exploits with a committed partner, is another way that relationships are privileged over hookups.

## Collegiate Context

One of the most interesting findings involves the role of the college campus in fostering hooking up. The college experience entails a great deal of preparation and

anticipation of a distant future. This, in combination with the increasing presence of technology in the lives of today's college students and the surveillance of their parents (Alsop 2008), serves to make hooking up appear to be a rational choice for American coeds. Hooking up allows for immediate intimate gratification without a great expenditure of time that students could possibly expend on other activities. This ideology is described well by Iron Man, a 22 year old white male in his senior year, who says, "Relationships while in college, while working and doing all sorts of things, it just---it can be an unnecessary complication. It can take away your focus from school, and that's kinda the more important thing at this point in time is to focus on the future and your career." Thus, hooking up becomes normative in college, as opposed to relationships which require time and effort, and this allows students to experience the party imperative of college without taking away their focus from school and their future. Hooking up thus becomes compartmentalized as a form of instant gratification, and relationships reside in a different compartment that is a part of an envisioned future. This shows support for Hypotheses #1, #2, and #4.

Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 1, studies using collegiate samples find the highest rates of hookups, while those using similar aged populations not in college find much lower rates (Fortunato et al. 2010). These differing findings suggest that the campus environment is important in hooking up (Bogle 2008a). My research expands on this, and demonstrates the hegemony of hookup culture (Heldman and Wade 2010) on college campuses, since students are unable to describe successful ways of forming relationships in the absence of hooking up, even though the OCSLS data shows that 3-5% of students in relationships from those relationships without experiencing a date or a hookup prior. This also emerged in differences regarding resident students and commuters. Resident students consider their peers who do not reside on campus as being free of many of the concerns residents have, especially regarding reputation. Because they are free of the "walk of shame" or the "stride of pride" returning to a dorm early in the morning after a late night hookup, commuters are considered to have more freedom to act how they please without concern about earning a reputation on campus. This was mentioned commonly among young women who worried about their reputation.

Another significant, if troubling, finding reveals that much of the sex that happens on campus may not involve freely given consent. This sex is not achieved by forcible compulsion and is not at all characterized by those taking part as rape or anything forced or coerced. Yet, the decisions made by students, both men and women, may not be made to achieve pleasure for themselves. My results in Chapter 6 indicate that both men and women are having sex when they do not want to, and while the thought processes utilized in making these decisions differ, the motivation for such activity is similar: men and women engage in sexual acts when they do not want to in an effort to ensure that they are liked and well regarded by others, in accordance with traditional expectations of their gender: men do so to display hegemonic masculinity, since refusing sex would be considered unmanly; and women have undesired sex to maintain a close bond with her partner, in a demonstration of emphasized femininity. This relates to Hypothesis #6, but in this circumstance, young people derive pleasure not (as much) from the sexual acts, but from the anticipated accolades they will get from their peers.

### Hegemonic Masculinity

Heterosexual hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987) refers to the idealized version of masculinity that emphasizes the social and sexual dominance of men over those who are not “men”: women and other males who perform inadequate masculinity. Because this dominance includes other males, there is great pressure on men to conform to these ideals, and to perform them publicly, so as to avoid any suspicion of effeminacy or homosexuality. This gives power to the male peer group to police demonstrations of masculinity by other males (Kimmel 2008) and elevates the status of the peer group as the evaluator of such gendered performances (Flood 2008; Kalish 2013).

In an effort to conform to norms of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987; Currier 2013), men engage in undesired sex because they feel they have to, and if they do not, their masculinity will come into question. College men engage in sex to maintain their masculine status in the eyes of both their female partners and their male peer group, and

the peer group figures much more prominently in their decision-making. This is centered on the belief that peers and dyadic partners share the assumptions, based on an expectation of hegemonic masculinity, that all males seek sex at all times, so that a refusal of sex would lead to negative ramifications for the young man. These assumptions restrict the chances for young men to seek out and achieve relationships, or to engage in sex at the pace of their choice, without feeling the pressure of the expectations of the peer group and collegiate culture.

The peer group also figures prominently in young males' choice of partner. Young men choose sex partners based on the accolades they expect from their peers. Regardless of the man's personal desire, if a potential partner would be characterized poorly by his peers (perhaps due to her sexual history or appearance), he is less likely to engage with her socially, indicating support for Hypothesis #7. Additionally, a young woman who is seen as a "good" partner, due mostly to her appearance, will be highly coveted as a partner in college hookup culture. The ability to attract such a highly sought after young woman will earn status for the young man, and the element of competition so valued in hegemonic masculinity provides him with more incentive to seek out such girls as potential partners. This is another example where the peer group can shape sexual choices, and at times, the opinions of a young man's group of friends can even supersede his own opinions, as demonstrated in Chapter 5 by young men like Scott, who indicates hooking up with a girl he doesn't actually like because she is attractive and his peers encourage the hookup. This supports Hypothesis #8.

Young men can also rely on expectations of hegemonic masculinity to help advance the progression of sexual behaviors during a hookup. Because hegemonic masculinity implies that orgasmic penetrative vaginal sex is the pinnacle of any sexual experience, young men can use this expectation to their advantage, as described by Edwin in Chapter 6. Because men understand that their partners anticipate their desires for sex, they can achieve more intimate sexual encounters with little effort. These young men, who have high status on campus and are therefore subject to stereotypical beliefs about their sexual appetites, are able to advance the intimacy of a sexual encounter by allowing their female partners to direct the progression of the encounter. Because the



females also share the expectations of hegemonic masculinity, they assume that the male wants sex and he is able to get it by not specifically asking for it. For high status males, this is even more profitable of a strategy, since there are certain beliefs associated with the sexual prowess of both student athletes (Benedict 1997) and fraternity brothers (Boeringer 1999; Boswell and Spade 1996). This is an example of the expectations of hegemonic masculinity combining with emphasized femininity to prioritize a male's desires in a sexual encounter, which offers partial support for Hypotheses #6 and #9, especially in regard to young men.

### Emphasized Femininity

Emphasized femininity involves deferment to men on the part of women. It values obedience, care giving and selflessness by young women, and often equates a young woman's worth with her appearance. Emphasized femininity praises and rewards women's acquiescence to men in social, as well as sexual, contexts (Connell 1987). According to Currier, "Emphasized femininity is often theorized as a reaction to hegemonic masculinity; masculinity writ large is still more highly valued than femininity in most cultures; and a specific iteration of hegemonic masculinity takes hold in 'core' social institutions that both reflect and affect gender norms of the culture at large" (2013: 706). This is evident on American college campuses, where women are subject to slut-shaming and the sexual double standard for engaging in behavior that is encouraged in young men. Women are socially rewarded for being compliant with the desires and standards set by male peers and partners.

The expectations of emphasized femininity encourage college women consent to sex acts to cement the bond with her partner and to make him like her. This is challenging for college women, who not only encounter the assumptions that their male peers are seeking sex only, but they also must contend with the power of the double standard, which allows those same male peers the power to bestow a label on young women who do acquiesce with what they believe their male partners want. This creates a

powerful double bind for college women, who want to achieve intimacy with young men, and feel that in order to achieve this, they must perform sexually, supporting Hypothesis #9. But they also wish to avoid earning a reputation as a slut, which would preclude them from being considered as a potential girlfriend, leaving a very narrow space within which they must maneuver. This is compounded by the pluralistic ignorance that exists regarding hooking up, and makes many college coeds believe that all of their peers have the same, sex-without-emotion based desires. As we see in Chapter 4, this is not an accurate appraisal of the beliefs of the college students I spoke with in interviews and focus groups.

Emphasized femininity encourages women to be both passive to men as well as to be chaste and sexually unknowing. Young women are thus made into gatekeepers, and this gives them a form of symbolic power in terms of directing a sexual encounter, but, since this power exists only in relation to a male partner respecting it, and the sexual boundaries set by the young woman, this power is fleeting, and rarely translates into larger scale agentic behavior. Young women achieved the most power and agency while acting as a gatekeeper of sexual health: they were most successful in negotiation of contraception use. Yet, contraception was also valued by young men, which may make such agentic maneuvering on the part of young women to appear successful, but can also be seen as acquiescence to male interests. Additionally, the gatekeeping behavior of curtailing a sexual encounter may be characterized similarly: a young woman establishes sexual boundaries to protect her reputation, yet the reputation is something that the male peers have the power to bestow, so again, her “power” is only symbolic. Like the “Bottom Bitch” discussed in Chapter 6, this power is symbolic, and is not likely to lead to an increase of sexual pleasure for young women, or an increase of sexual agency.

Others have studied the experiences of women who perform sex acts for the benefit of their partner. One author characterizes this as providing “sexual favors,” (Sohn 2012), yet the term “favor” implies that something is given in return, and for young American college women who perform sexually in an attempt to make her partner like her, this meets with varying levels of success. Kennett et al. (2013) refer to this as sexual resourcefulness, which suggests that it is a strategy used specifically to meet a certain

end. Others refer to this as sexual compliance (Impett and Pepleau 2003; Katz and Tirone 2009; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2010), and point out that gender is the factor most associated with these behaviors. My results suggest that not only is this compliance a strategy young women use in a resourceful way; it also demonstrates what Braksmajer (2013) refers to as sexual care work. Braksmajer argues that such care work is a “key part of the bodily enactment of femininity...that serves to reinforce hegemonic gender norms and is key to disciplining women’s gendered sexual identities. Women are often expected to sacrifice for the good of their partners or their families; thus, when a woman does so by engaging in sexual activity for the sake of maintaining her relationship, it is an additional signifier of femininity.... Such care work – which is ideally, but not always able to be invisible - is not seen as work; rather, it is seen as a reflection of what women are, not what they do in production of a gendered self” (Braksmajer 2013: 69).

Braksmajer studied sexual pain, so her subjects performed such care work in an effort to mitigate against a perceived failure of femininity, here it is done to conform to an idealized version of emphasized femininity. Performing sexual acts that are undesired is a form of care work in that it provides for women not only something to cement the bond with the male partner, it also gives the young male a sense of his own sexual prowess, so in engaging in these acts, a young woman not only helps to achieve a closeness with her partner, she also assuages any concern he may have about his performance, ensuring his emotional well-being, at the expense of hers. Ultimately, not only the male’s sexual pleasure, but also his emotional well-being and sense of masculinity, is served by the female de-prioritizing herself and her own desires, in a demonstration of emphasized femininity.

Emphasized femininity also operates in the contraceptive practices of young men and women, where men are more concerned with preventing pregnancy, and young women bear the brunt of protecting both themselves and their partners from STIs, since the young women are concerned with safety as well as pregnancy prevention. As hypothesized (Hypothesis #9), they take on the role of gatekeeper to restrict the sexual activity, but they also show concern for both their own and their partner’s sexual health by attempting to establish safe sex practices. As we see in Chapter 5, gender conformity

by both men and women complicates this, as some young men may prioritize the experience of intercourse over their own safety, and encourage a young woman to have unprotected sex. Young women show varying levels of effectiveness in negotiating condom use and often rely on themselves to prevent pregnancy and infection.

### Implications

Because young adult sexuality is a moral concern for many adults (Levine 2003; Elliott 2013), academic attention to hooking up, as well as journalistic or lay publications covering young adult casual sex are often the sources of widespread media attention. Without a structural analysis, which is often absent in journalistic and lay publications, but yet provided in this analysis, the public is often left with publications beset with fear mongering. As a result of this, much of the public hold certain assumptions about hooking up and college. These assumptions include the belief that college is a drunken orgy interrupted by sporadic class attendance, that all coeds hook up with strangers and that hooking up is an irresponsible activity resulting in an array of problems, the least of which is the inability to have relationships. These assumptions are shared by many college students, who feel inadequate when their college experience does not live up to these expectations (Allison and Risman 2014). This also contributes to pluralistic ignorance (Lambert et al. 2008) and encourages students to act the way they perceive others do. However, the results discussed here show that these characterizations of hooking up are not universal. The experiences of students regarding their committed relationships demonstrate their ability and desire to maintain such relationships. Yet, the ways in which these relationships are achieved within the context of hookup culture are nuanced and pioneering. Hooking up has emerged as a platform upon which students can establish exclusive relationships (Bogle 2008a), but the ways in which this is effectuated are colored by expectations of gender.

Gender expectations remain quite prominent for young adults, even when they are not able to appreciate the power of them to shape behavior. The gender arrangement

most accessible to emergent adults on American college campuses is the sexual double standard, and it resonates quite loudly with both young men and women. Beliefs about appropriate expressions of gender factor into the sexual decision making of young adults, and at times supersede even their own desires, encouraging young women to curtail their desires to maintain a good reputation, and leading young men to make judgments about their female peers which may encourage negative treatment and slut-shaming of those young women.

Critics of hooking up have called for interventions to stop the problem of hooking up (Arnold 2010). Some of these interventions call for a return to same sex dorms or colleges, or a ban on alcohol on college campuses. Alcohol is known to figure prominently in hookup culture (Fortunato et al. 2010) yet its impact on hooking up is mixed: Fielder and Carey (2010) find that a high proportion of their sample was intoxicated during their last hookup, and Flack et al. (2007) report that their sample attributes hookups involving intercourse to alcohol use. However, Gute and Eshbaugh (2008) found that alcohol consumption was not related to the likelihood of intercourse during a hookup, and another study reported that only 4% of the participants had sex during their last drinking episode (Ven and Beck 2009).

Same sex dormitories are unlikely to deter hooking up, as scholars have reported hooking up being prominent at clubs and non-residence locations (Ronen 2010). Additionally, many colleges do have dormitories where only one sex resides, with little effect on hooking up. Furthermore, single-sex dormitories may hearken back to earlier time periods, where gender was more policed, and women's behavior more monitored. This would reify the stereotypical gender arrangements that make hooking up an unequal playing field.

If college officials seek to change the elements of college culture that foster hooking up, they would be better served by ensuring that all students have education regarding gender and the myriad ways it structures our lives, in college and beyond (Bell 2013). Additionally, knowledge about the variety of preferences among men and women would help to dispel some of the myths about male and female sexuality, and loosen some of the mores that encourage students to apply the double standard to each other.

This would alleviate the pluralistic ignorance about hooking up (Lambert et al. 1998) and allow students more freedom to experience relationships and sexuality at the pace of their choice, unfettered by gender expectations or stereotypes instructing them on normative behavior.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this research draws attention to college students' relationships in ways that have rarely been studied, it is limited by a few factors. The convenience sampling method used limits the generalizability of the results. While the inclusion of large scale survey data helps alleviate this, the results discussed here may not apply to the entire national college population; yet it is still important to examine the experiences of young adults in regard to sexual decision-making during their hookups and relationships. The college campus itself emerged as a significant factor in shaping students' experiences with hooking up and relationships. For this reason, future studies may want to investigate differences among various campuses. Frietas (2008) found that the religious affiliation of the college shaped students' engagement with hookup culture, and the results here suggest differences between resident and commuter students, so future studies of hooking up should examine students' involvement into the campus culture and its impact on hooking up. Additionally, studies of hooking up on community college campuses would likely yield different insight into the matter. Another related limitation of this dissertation is that the qualitative data are focused on one geographic area: the Northeast US. Future studies on hooking up would be well-served by expanding the geographic areas so that the regional location of the college can be included as a unit of analysis. It is likely that these behaviors may be confined to schools on the coasts of the US, or concentrated at larger universities with a reputation as party schools.

High-status students, especially Greek-affiliated students and student-athletes, engaged with hookup culture differently from their peers without such affiliation. Yet, these high status students also saw their behavior as a standard to which other students

aspire. For these reasons, future studies may want to investigate the role of status on campus, and examine the effect of the representation of Greek-affiliated students or student athletes. It is likely that the effect of Greek involvement, for example, would not be as strong on a campus where the majority of the students are so affiliated. An examination of different types of campuses, such as community colleges or technical colleges, would likely strengthen an inquiry into these differences as well. Measures reflecting a student's level of investment into campus life would certainly enrich future studies on hooking up, and add more nuance to the effect of other variables like race or fraternity involvement.

Another limitation is the heterosexual bias. Future research should attempt to include the voices of bisexual, homosexual and transgender students, since the construction of gender is clearly linked to sexual decision-making, and the experiences of students who are gender-nonconformist would add a great deal of texture to our understanding of sexual decision-making in college. Furthermore, students who have peer groups comprised of gender-nonconformist students are likely to be affected by their peer groups in different ways, and this would be an interesting and timely area of study.

Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) found that social class was a decisive factor in students' experiences with hooking up. I find that race also impacts students' decisions about hooking up and relationships. Future studies should look more closely at the differences relating to class and race, and investigate how peer group or investment into campus culture will affect the role of race or class. For example, studies of hooking up characterize it to be more common among white students (Ray and Rosow 2010), but among my sample, there was a variety of ethnic and racial diversity among students reporting hooking up. Asian students are thought to be less likely to hook up, but I found that Asian students who were members of Greek organizations were not different from their non-Asian peers, suggesting that Greek involvement or peer group diversity can mitigate effects relating to race.

## Conclusion

College offers students many opportunities for education, social engagement and fun. For many American undergraduates today, hooking up is considered part and parcel of the college experience (Allison and Risman 2014). College is a time when students can experiment with different peer groups and experience a glimpse of adult life absent parental supervision. However, college is also an atmosphere where status markers such as gender can become illuminated, and this is clearly evident in the context of hookups and relationships. At the same time as many students learn about the meanings of gender for the first time, they begin to appreciate the ways it affects their lives. For this reason, college can be a stage—and place---where change regarding these gender arrangements can be effectuated.

The hint of such change is evident in students' discussion of sexual altruism within committed relationships. In this context, young men derive pleasure from giving their partners a pleasurable sexual experience-- and as more men engage in such behavior, it will become more commonplace among college students. High status males have the ability to create larger change, as many look to them to model appropriate behaviors. This is important, since there is a great variety of behavior described by high status males; men in fraternities seem to have more availability to engage in such altruistic sexual acts, while among the athletes, there was more discussion of objectifying women and thus, more progress to be made.

Athletes I interviewed described talk amongst their peers about “passing” a young woman to a friend. Here, the young woman is objectified to the point where she is no longer seen as a person, but instead a disposable object of pleasure to be shared among teammates. Male athletes also described standards where they would expect monogamy from their female partners without being monogamous themselves, and in their opinion, it is their sought-after status as athletes which makes the young women agree to such an arrangement. Other athletes describe the extent to which they care for their girlfriends, demonstrating that it is possible to change some of the misogynist attitudes among athletes. In order for this to occur, women need to be valued in all realms, and by figures



at various levels of the university. Females need to be appreciated as athletes, students, people, and partners, by their coaches, teachers, administration, and their peers and partners. When this occurs, intimate relationships can be re-imagined at college to allow students ways to achieve the fun lifestyle associated with college, and simultaneously break down gender barriers for both men and women.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening: Interviewer introduces herself and the project.

“This interview will ask you questions about social life on campus, this will include questions about sex and dating. Even if you do not participate in these activities, I would still like to hear your thoughts on it. Please remember, you can skip any question at any time for any reason. And if you would like to stop the interview at any time, please let me know. And if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.”

Interviewer will read consent form with subject and obtain informed consent.

Have subject choose a pseudonym.

I: OK, just to get us familiar, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Where do you see yourself on the “social scene” on campus?

Who do you hang out with?

What do you do for fun?

Have you been involved in an exclusive relationship with someone since you have been at SB? IF YES, Can you tell me about that from the first point you two met until you became exclusive or official?

IF NO, do you have a friend who is in a relationship where you know a bit about how they got together that you can tell me about?

In your experience, do you think there is a difference in which people want relationships?

Probes: Men/women

Race?

Frat/sorority/athlete

How do you think relationships differ from hook ups?

How soon into a relationship do you decide to progress intimately, if you do decide that?

How does this usually progress?

What factors into this decision?

Does being exclusive with someone make a difference in your choice of how far to go sexually?

Do you use birth control in relationships? Which types?

Do you have discussions about birth control and STI’s? Who initiates?

What else can you tell me about relationships?

Do you go on dates?

What is a date? Describe a couple of dates that you have been on for me.

Who goes on dates?

When people go on dates, do you think that means something about their interest in a relationship?

Have you noticed if some groups of students go on dates more than others?

Have you been in a situation where you weren't sure if the other person thought it was a date or not? Tell me about it. {probe for who asked whom, who paid, etc}

How would you define a "hookup"?

What specific activities are included in hooking up?

How do you decide what you will or will not do sexually on a hook up?

When your friends say they hooked up, what do you believe that means they did?

Have you seen cases, in your experiences or your friends' where two people hooked up but they had different ideas of what that meant and it caused problems?

How do hookups fit into the general social scene on campus?

How is it different from high school?

Who do you think hooks up the most (open-ended to see how they interpret this)?

Why do you think this?

Have you ever hooked up?

If respondent has NEVER hooked up:

Why don't you hook up?

Do your friends hook up?

What do they say about hooking up?

Do you ever feel any pressure to hook up?

Who/what do you feel that from?

How do you deal with that?

What do you think about people who hook up?

Positives and negatives

If the respondent has hooked up:

How old were you the first time you hooked up?

Can you tell me about that experience?

Who did you do it with?  
What made you decide to hook up with this person?  
How did you feel about it afterwards?  
Before the hook up, had you had any interest in a possible relationship with this person? How did you feel about that after the hook up?

How many people have you hooked up with?  
Past week  
Past month  
Past year

On your last hook up,  
WHY did you hook up with this person?  
Probes: Pleasure  
Peer pressure  
Alcohol  
Self-esteem  
Hoping to start a relationship

Where did you hook up?

Who did you hook up with?  
Friends vs. Strangers  
With people of same/different race?  
Opposite or same sex?  
How did you meet this person?

Did you plan on hooking up that time?  
What did you do to “plan” for it?  
Did you have someone in mind to hookup before you went out?

Did you talk about STD’s, STI’s, AIDS?

Did you use birth control?  
Why or why not?  
What kind?  
How did that discussion come about (who initiated that discussion)?

Did your relationship change after the hookup?

Can you tell me about a time about a time when you were going to hook up with someone and there was a disagreement about the use of contraception?



How much do people talk about hookups?

Their own/

Other people's?

What do they talk about ?

Who do they talk to?

Are there differences between men and women in how much they talk about or what they say about their own hookups?

How often is alcohol involved in hookups?

How much/to what extent?

Tell me more about this

WHY do you hook up?

Have you ever hooked up because your friends are hooking up with other people?

If so, explain

Have you ever hooked up hoping to start a relationship?

Have any of your hookups led to a relationship?

Do you think your friends hookup hoping to find a relationship?

What is the least amount of time you knew someone before hooking up with her/him?

What is the most amount of time you knew someone before hooking up with her/him?

Did you feel differently about these hookups?

Do you have one person who you usually hook up with?

Is that considered a "hookup" or something else?

Can you tell me about a time that you went out with the intention of finding a hook up, but not with a particular person in mind?

{probe for why they wanted to hook up, did they succeed, how did it happen? Did anything come of it later?}

Some people think the hook up scene at college is a fun and good thing, and other people think it really isn't a good thing at all. Tell me your view of it? How did you come to feel this way?

Do you think hooking up impacts the ability to form relationships?

What else about hookups do you want to tell me?

If people do not want to hook up, and they are not in a relationship, what are the options for hanging out socially on campus? Finding romantic partners?

How do you think the commonness of hooking up affects what people do romantically?

Closing/ Debrief:

How do you feel about the topics we have just discussed? Do you have any concerns, questions, etc?

{Discuss referrals for on and off campus resources; provide and go over resource list}