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The Gendered Way of Hooking Up among College Students

Part of the journal section “Essays, Studies, and Works”

Phyllis Baker, B. Keith Crew, and Kevin T. Leicht, “The Gendered Way of Hooking Up among College Students”

Abstract

This study explores gender differences in sexual socialization as a determinant of hooking up by college students. Survey results for 469 respondents show both generic (alcohol consumption and sexual socialization through pornography) and gender specific (gender-related attitudes) mechanisms that explain men’s higher rates of hooking up. Men engage in the generic behavioral correlates of hooking up more often than women. Women with patriarchal attitudes report more hooking up and men with rape supportive attitudes report more hooking up. Efforts by college administrators to reduce rates of hooking up should take into consideration alcohol consumption, pornography, and gender related attitudes.

There is considerable social scientific interest in the phenomenon of ‘hooking up’, defined as behavior where “...two people who are casual acquaintances or who have just met that evening at a bar or party agree to engage in some forms of sexual behavior for which there will likely be no future commitment” (Lambert, Kahn, and Apple, 2003, p. 129). Also called “friends with benefits” or “casual sex”, these relationships entail sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse when there is a no stated desire for commitment beyond the encounter. Lambert et al. (2003) note that one night stands and other types of uncommitted sexual behaviors have become normative among teenagers and college-aged students (p. 129). Research into hooking up has focused on its high prevalence, correlates, and gendered nature. To date, researchers have not examined the role that gender based sexual socialization plays in promoting or discouraging hooking up. Our analysis seeks to fill this void by exploring gender differences in sexual socialization as a determinant of hooking up.

PRIOR LITERATURE

In the late 1980s, the public began to focus on hooking up and social science researchers noticed. Most research has been conducted within high school and college-aged student populations. Students indicate that they are having sex with partners that they are not dating or with whom they are not otherwise committed. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Manning, Longmore, and Giordano (2005, p. 398) observed that a “substantial minority of teens have engaged in sexual activity with non-romantic partners.” When it comes to sexual intercourse, Manning et al. (2005) found that over one-third of teenagers had sexual intercourse with someone with

whom they were not romantically involved (p. 398). In a study using the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study, Manning, Giordano, and Longmore (2006, p. 468) found that "...many teenagers who have sex outside of a dating relationship reported doing so with a friend (74%)". However, within the last twelve months only 6% reported having sex with someone they did not know, indicating that teenagers' hooking up, though prevalent, is not necessarily of the "one-night-stand-with-strangers" variety (Manning et al., 2006, p. 470),.

Reports of U.S. college students indicate that 79-80% participate in at least one hookup while at college (Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000; Paul & Hayes 2002). Paul et al. (2000, p. 84) found that a third of their sample had had sexual intercourse with a stranger or brief acquaintance. Alcohol, psychological traits, and cultural perceptions are found to play a role in hooking up on college campuses. Alcohol and intoxication are directly linked to hooking up (Grello, Welsh & Harper, 2006; Paul et al., 2000; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Paul et al. (2000) studied differences between students who do not hook up, those who hook up without having intercourse, and those that hook up with intercourse (p. 84). Alcohol intoxication was a primary distinguishing variable between those that hook up and those that do not. Using survey and interview instruments, Vander Ven and Beck (2009) found that students perceive alcohol as disinhibiting thereby increasing the potential for a hook up to happen and then providing an excuse after it does. Certain personality and psychological traits also play a role in college students' hooking up. Extraversion, neuroticism, low openness to experience, low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness are all positively associated with hooking up (Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008). In one study Gute and Eshbaugh (2008) found that, when controlling for alcohol use, extraversion was positively related to hooking up and conscientiousness was negatively related (p. 26). "Individuals who had experienced hookups including sexual intercourse were differentiated from all other individuals by high impulsivity, low concern for personal safety, low dependency, their erotic or passionate approach to relationships, and their avoidant attachment style" (Paul et al., 2000, p. 85). Finally, participants in one study indicated that their own comfort level with hooking up was significantly lower than what they perceived their peers' comfort level for hooking up (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 131). College students perceive their peers as comfortable with the hooking up scene when they are less so.

Reported reasons for hooking up are gendered. Women and men differ in their reasons for having sex regardless of what kind of sex it is. Men consistently report more hooking up and casual sex than women do (52% vs. 36%, see Grello et al., 2006, p. 263; Manning et al., 2005, p. 399; Manning et al., 2006) and men report that they prefer to hook up more than women do (Bradshaw, Kahn & Saville, 2010). "Boys more often than girls have non-dating sexual partners (Manning et al., 2006: 479). Citing Impett and Peplau (2003), Grello et al. (2006, p. 256) note that women hook up for emotional involvement and to meet partner needs while men do it to increase sexual experiences, status, and popularity. Bogle (2008) found that during their freshman year of college women and men want the same things from the hooking up culture but as time goes on women change their minds (p. 97). Hooking up becomes one way for women to find a relationship even though success rates for women getting what they want out of hooking up are low (Bogle, 2008, p. 125) because more women than men want a committed relationship.

Experiences during hooking up are also gendered in that women more than men feel uncomfortable and pressured. Men are more at ease with various types of hooking up behaviors than are women on all measures of sexual behaviors (e.g. petting above the waist, petting below the waist, oral sex, and sexual intercourse) (Lambert et al., 2003). Some women report that they follow through with hooking up and end up having sexual intercourse because they feel coerced and/or pressured (Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 654-655). Lambert et al. (2003) suggest that because of a pluralistic ignorance, women feel pressured to engage in intimate sexual behaviors because they feel they are unique in experiencing reluctance toward it (p. 132). Paul et al. (2000) suggest that traditional sex role expectations pressure women to make sure that men are sexually gratified even if the women do not want to do so (p.

85). Paul and Hayes (2002) report that sources of pressure for women to engage in unwanted sexual behavior include male aggression, alcohol use and intoxication, societal/peer/gender pressures, or personal weakness (p. 256).

Feelings after the casual sexual encounter also differ between men and women. Men express sexual regrets for not hooking up where women express sexual regrets when actually hooking up (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008, p. 79). Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) report that instances where women expressed the most regret were when they had sexual intercourse with a person only once and when they engaged in sexual intercourse with a person that they had known for less than 24 hours. Grello et al. (2006) report that women become more depressed as their rate of casual sex increases, which is opposite for men (p. 265). In addition to regret and depression, women are much more likely than men to fear that their reputation will be tarnished. This fear is well grounded. Bogle (2008) interviewed college students and found that the rules for hooking up were different for men than for women. For men, the number of sexual partners and the frequency of casual sex could only help their reputation but for women, too many partners and having sex too often meant they were not 'worthy of respect' (Bogle, 2008, p. 115) and produced a situation for women in which they had a hard time forming relationships with men on campus.

Given the importance that the role of socialization plays in social science research, peculiarly absent are investigations into the role of sexual socialization in adolescent and college-aged hooking up. Mass media are important socialization agents and a rich set of literature describes the sexual content of mainstream media. In a review of studies of the effects of exposure to sexual themes in the mainstream commercial media (television, music videos, and magazines) Ward noted that there is much evidence that the mass media are associated with "...the greater acceptance of stereotypical and casual attitudes about sex" (Ward, 2003, p. 347). While there is work on mass media and sexual socialization and attitudes, we know little about sexually explicit materials and sexual behavior. Recent concern is with the convergence of two trends in American society: a lack of sexual information provided through "...conventional social channels such as parents, schools, and religion" (Brown & L'Engle, 2009, p. 130) and the exponential increase in availability and accessibility of sexually explicit materials through the new digital technologies, especially the Internet.

The result is that sexually explicit entertainment media have become important sources of sexual socialization (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Zillman, 2000). Research has only recently examined pornography as a medium of sexual socialization especially in the United States (Brown & L'Engle, 2009, p. 130). Brown and L'Engle (2009) found that early exposure to sexually explicit materials correlated with less progressive gender attitudes, more permissive sexual norms, and earlier sexual experiences. Similarly, Peter and Valkenburg (2008) found that early exposure to pornography was associated with positive attitudes toward casual sexual liaisons. The Internet has given adolescents and young adults exposure to images, ideas, and behaviors that earlier generations never had, possibly implicating it in how adolescents and young adults think about and behave sexually. To our knowledge ours is the only study that specifically measures adolescent and young adult exposure to pornography as a source of sexual learning.

In addition to the findings of social science research that alcohol consumption and psychological traits are linked to hooking up, we think that gendered sexual socialization plays a major role in the decision to hook up. The analysis interrogates three questions regarding the gendered nature of hooking up on college campuses: (1) are there significant differences in sexual socialization by gender that have implications for the gendered-propensity to engage in hooking up?; (2) do differences in sexual socialization (including patterns of media consumption) and gender differences in other gender-based attitudes help to explain gender differences in hooking up?; and (3) are there gender differences in the process of hooking up that are tied to sexual socialization and gender-based attitudes and behaviors?

Our analysis examines whether there are significant differences in sexual socialization by gender that affect hooking up behaviors. We also seek to examine whether differences in the process of hooking up are tied to sexual socialization and gender-based attitudes and behaviors. The first inquiry asks whether differences in reported hooking up are due to levels of exposure to different types of sexual socialization (“men consume more pornography than women”). The second inquiry examines whether there are differences in the processes that translate common experiences of sexual socialization into hooking up behaviors.

The data for this analysis are from questionnaires distributed to students at three state universities in three different states in 2005. Preliminary analyses (not shown) found no significant differences in survey responses across the three data collection sites, so they are treated as one sample here. Participants completed anonymous 137-item questionnaires that included a number of measures related to sexual attitudes and experiences. The final sample size consists of 469 usable questionnaires, 218 completed by men and 251 by women. Students were approached in public and semi-public areas such as dormitory lounges and game rooms, student unions, fraternity and sorority houses, and classes. The sample is a convenience sample of volunteers; hardly any refusals to participate were encountered.

The *dependent variable* in this study is pursuit of sex outside of committed relationships (see Appendix Table 1). The variable “hooking up” is a single item measure that asked respondents how frequently they engaged in this behavior, on a five-point scale ranging from “never” to “frequently.” The distribution is skewed towards the low end, with a mean of 1.64 and standard deviation of 1.04. The measurement skew suggests that the major difference is between men and women who engage in hooking up and those that do not, so the dependent variable was dichotomized for this analysis differentiating those who report hooking up sometime in the past year (=1) from those that have not (=0). Consistent with prior research, college men report higher rates of hooking up in the past year (56 percent) than women (21 percent, $t=8.33$; $p < .001$).

Differential Sexual Socialization

Participants were asked to estimate the relative amount of information about sex they obtained from each of ten sources when they “were learning about sex.” (see Appendix Table 1.) Respondents indicated on a five-point scale whether they obtained “none” (1) to “most” (5) of their sexual information from each of ten sources. The ten sexual socialization sources are: mother, other female adult, father, other male adult, siblings, religious leader, peers, school, mass media, and pornography.

There are significant differences in reported sources of sexual socialization by gender (see Table 1). Both genders (not surprisingly) report more sexual socialization from parents and adults of their own gender than parents or adults of the opposite gender. Young women report significantly more sexual socialization by clergy and significantly less sexual socialization via pornography than men do.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, T-test by Gender and Correlations with Hooking Up

Variables	Men			Women		
	Mean	SD	r _{hooking up}	Mean	SD	r _{hooking up}
Hooking up (=1)	.56	.50	-	.21**	.41	-
Learned about sex and sexuality from:						
Mother	2.12	1.01	.01	2.87**	1.19	-.02
Other adult: female	1.49	.86	-.01	2.27**	1.27	.05
Father	2.48	1.19	.06	1.59**	.90	-.04
Other adult: male	1.91	1.19	.10	1.43**	.88	.03
Your siblings	1.91	1.18	.02	2.03	1.34	.03
Your friends and peers	4.10	.92	.11	4.18	.95	.11
Schools and teachers	2.83	1.16	.02	3.02	1.11	.09
Religious leaders	1.40	.79	-.03	1.69**	1.02	-.05
Television/music/other media	3.63	.97	.20**	3.76	.96	.05
Pornography	3.16	1.24	.21**	1.67**	1.03	.14*
Alcohol consumption	6.41	2.57	.45**	4.97**	2.46	.37**
Low self-control	3.99	.82	.23**	3.49**	.71	.20**
Rape supportive attitudes	2.76	1.14	.25**	1.83**	.88	-.04
Patriarchal attitudes	4.31	.63	.12	3.89**	.73	.16**
N	218			251		

*p < .05; ** p < .01 (two-tailed tests)

Risky Behaviors

We expect that picking up partners for casual sex goes hand in hand with problematic alcohol consumption and low self-control. Three questions related to *alcohol consumption* are formed into an additive scale with good reliability (see Table 1, $\alpha = .81$). The questions asked how often the respondent attended parties or went to bars where alcohol was served; how often they drank five or more drinks in a sitting; and how often they drank to the point of being drunk. Our argument is not that alcohol consumption per se leads to hooking up, but that participation by college students in a lifestyle centered on drinking is, not surprisingly, associated with sexual activity. There are significant gender differences in reported alcohol consumption with young men reporting significantly more problematic alcohol consumption compared to young women ([see Table 1](#)).

Low self-control has been hypothesized to account for risky behaviors analogous to crime in the sense that they feature short-term rewards but long-term negative consequences (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The questionnaire included Grasmick, Tittle, and Buesik's (1993) measure of low self-control (see Appendix Table 1), which has been found to correlate with a variety of criminal, risky, and otherwise problematic behavior. Persons with low self-control are described as impulsive, preferring physical over mental activities, careless of others' feelings, and quick-tempered. Although in the general theory, low self-control is considered in essence a long-term personality disorder linked to ineffective socialization, it is treated here as a set of pseudo-rebellious subcultural identities and attitudes that support disapproved and marginal behavior ($\alpha = .70$).

Gender Related Attitudes

Rape supportive and patriarchal attitudes are expected to play a role in the gendered nature of hooking up. Researchers suggest that hooking up behaviors and casual sex are associated with sexist and sexually aggressive gender attitudes and behavior (Brown & L'Engle, 2010; Yeater, Lenberg, Avina, Rinehart & O'Donohue, 2008). Rape supportive and patriarchal attitudes are illustrative of this general category. We measure rape supportive attitudes with an eight-item scale taken from Burt's (1980) rape myth acceptance scale and Ward's (1995) attitudes toward rape victims scale ([see Appendix Table 1](#)). The respondent is asked to agree or disagree to a series of statements about sexual consent ("When it comes to sex, women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'"; "When a woman goes back to her date's place, she implies that she is willing to have sex with him", etc., $\alpha = .87$). There are statistically significant differences in rape supportive attitudes with men reporting more rape supportive attitudes (mean = 2.76) than women (mean = 1.83, $t=9.98$; $p < .01$). Patriarchal attitudes generally value men over women, suggest that women are merely compliments of men, or that men should dominate and control women ([see Appendix Table 1](#)). Our scale of 19 items (items adapted from Attitudes Toward Women Scale [Spence & Stapp, 1973] and some items were original, $\alpha = .65$), also produced significant differences by gender (men = 4.31; women = 3.89, $t= 6.65$; $p < .01$). Like rape supportive attitudes, we expect patriarchal attitudes to be positively associated with hooking up.

RESULTS

Our results include correlation and multivariate analysis. First we examine relationships between sexual socialization, risky behavior, gender related attitudes, and hooking up. Then we use logistic regression to determine whether differences in sexual socialization, risky behaviors, and gender related attitudes help to explain the overall differences between men and women in reported hooking up. Finally, we present a logistic regression analysis by gender in an

attempt to see if different characteristics are associated with hooking up among men and women, and whether the mechanisms producing the decision to hook up differ by gender.

Correlation Analysis

Sexual Socialization and “Hooking Up”—Table 1 presents correlations by gender between hooking up and our measures of sources of sexual socialization. Two of the sexual socialization sources are significantly associated with hooking up: mass media and pornography. Both men and women who report receiving significant sexual information from pornography also report hooking up in the past year. For young men, sexual socialization via media and television is also significantly and positively associated with hooking up. While the pattern of correlations is highly similar (both men and women who receive some or more sexual information from pornography report hooking up) there are significant differences in the frequency of this behavior. Two-thirds of the men in the study reported getting at least some of their sexual socialization from pornography, but only one-fifth of the women (19.9 percent) indicated that they obtained some or more of their sexual information from pornography.

Risky Behaviors and Hooking Up—There are also significant similarities between men and women in the relationship between gender-related attitudes, risky behaviors, and hooking up. As we noted earlier there are significant gender differences in problematic alcohol consumption but problematic alcohol consumption is strongly associated with hooking up for men ($r=.47$) and women ($r=.37$). Low self-control is also associated with hooking up for both genders (r men = .23; r women = .20).

Gender Related Attitudes and Hooking Up—Significantly, men with rape supportive attitudes are more likely to report hooking up ($r=.25$), and this correlation is not statistically significant for women ($r=-.04$). However women with patriarchal attitudes are more likely to report hooking up than men with such attitudes (r women = .16; r men = .12).

Multivariate Analysis (Logistic Regression)

Our multivariate analysis (logistic regression) examines whether differences in sexual socialization, risky behaviors, and gender-related attitudes help to explain overall differences between men and women in reported hooking up.

Table 2 presents logistic regressions combining men and women into a single sample. The purpose of this analysis is to see how much of the gender difference in reported hooking up is accounted for by differences in sexual socialization, risky behaviors, and gender-related attitudes.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Predicting Hooking Up¹ with Gender, Sources of Sexual Socialization, Alcohol Consumption, Patriarchal and Rape-Supportive Attitudes and Self-Control (odds, N=469)

Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gender (Female=1)	.209***	.300***	.342***	.403**
Learned about sex and sexuality from:				
Mother	--	1.07	1.17	1.22
Other adult: Female	--	.95	.92	.92
Father	--	.98	.87	.86
Other adult: Male	--	1.09	1.06	1.04
Your siblings	--	1.01	.90	.91
Your friends and peers	--	1.21	1.12	1.13
Schools and Teachers	--	1.13	1.16	1.19
Religious leaders	--	.90	1.08	1.06
Television/music/other media	--	1.11	1.10	1.06
Pornography	--	1.34**	1.25**	1.22
Alcohol consumption	--	--	1.47***	1.48***
Low self-control	--	--	1.48**	1.37
Rape supportive attitudes	--	--	--	1.20
Patriarchal attitudes	--	--	--	1.34

CHI-SQUARE/BIC

** p < .05; ***p <.01 (two-tailed tests)

Equation 1 contains only the coefficient for gender and reproduces the results of Table 1 – women are only 21 percent as likely as men to engage in hooking up. This figure represents the raw, unmediated gender difference in hooking up that we attempt to explain with the remaining measures in our model.

Equation 2 adds our measures of sexual socialization. The combined set of sexual socialization measures reduces the size of the gender coefficient by 23 percent and increases the odds of young women hooking up by nine percent, a significant reduction in the gender difference in hooking up behavior. Only the measure of pornography as a source of sexual socialization significantly predicts hooking up – college students who report receiving some or most of their sexual information from pornography are 34 percent more likely to hook up than respondents who do not report pornography as a significant sources of information about sex.

Equation 3 adds our measure of problematic alcohol consumption and low self-control. Alcohol consumption and low self-control reduce the gender difference in hooking up an additional four percent, and both are positively associated with hooking up behaviors. Those reporting problematic alcohol consumption and low self-control are 48 percent more likely to hook up than those who do not report problematic alcohol consumption or low self-control. Alcohol consumption and low self-control are by far the most significant predictors of hooking up behavior regardless of gender.

Equation 4 adds the remaining gender-related attitudes to our combined model of hooking up. Patriarchal and rape-supportive attitudes reduce the gender difference in reported hooking up an additional 15 percent and reduce the difference in the odds of hooking up across genders by six percent. However, none of these measures by themselves predict hooking up in a statistically significant way, and their addition to the model renders pornography consumption statistically insignificant. Only alcohol consumption remains as a significant predictor in the combined model and the effect of alcohol consumption is only slightly affected by the addition of the other behaviors and attitudes of interest here.

Logistic Regression Analyses by Gender:

Differences in the Mechanisms that Produce Hooking Up

The gender-specific analysis looks for differences in the mechanisms that translate sexual socialization, risky behaviors, and gender-related attitudes into hooking up. Table 3 presents logistic regression results by gender. This analysis is an attempt to see if different characteristics are associated with hooking up among men and among women, and whether the mechanisms producing the decision to hook up differ by gender.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Predicting Hooking Up¹ with Sources of Sexual Socialization, Alcohol Consumption, Patriarchal and Rape-Supportive Attitudes and Self-Control, by Gender (odds, N=469)

Independent Variables	Men (1)	Women (2)	Men (3)	Women (4)	Men (5)
Learned about sex and sexuality from:					
Mother	1.15	1.05	1.19	1.21	1.30
Other adult: Female	.82	1.03	.86	.99	.86
Father	1.02	.87	.89	.80	.86
Other adult: Male	1.19	.94	1.22	.79	1.21

Your siblings	.97	1.03	.86	.96	.88
Your friends and peers	1.06	1.41	1.09	1.08	1.06
Schools and Teachers	1.06	1.30	1.13	1.22	1.16
Religious leaders	.95	.84	1.17	1.01	1.08
Television/music/other media	1.30	.88	1.37	.88	1.31
Pornography	1.32**	1.37*	1.20	1.37*	1.12
Alcohol consumption	--	--	1.51***	1.47***	1.54***
Low self-control	--	--	1.38	1.60	1.21
Rape supportive attitudes	--	--	--	--	1.56**
Patriarchal attitudes	--	--	--	--	.84

CHI-SQUARE/BIC

P < .10; ** p < .05; ***p < .01 (two-tailed tests); t = coefficients differ by gender at p < .05

Equations 1 and 2 contain the measures of sexual socialization. There are only two significant gender differences in coefficients that predict hooking up. The effect of men's socialization by their fathers is significantly larger than the effect of young women's socialization by their fathers (even though the coefficients are not significantly different from zero), and there are significant gender differences in the effects of mass media and television – young men are more likely to report hooking up if they report significant sexual socialization via the mass media and television (they are 30 percent more likely to hook up), while young women are significantly less likely to hook up than men if their socialization source is mass media and television (12 percent less likely). Neither coefficient is statistically different from zero.

While there are statistically significant gender differences in the likelihood of receiving some sexual socialization via pornography (see Table 1) pornography is significantly associated with hooking up for young men and women, there is no significant difference by gender in the effect, and the coefficients are both significantly different from zero.

Equations 2 and 3 add alcohol consumption and low self-control to our gender-specific equations. Alcohol consumption and low self-control are both positively associated with hooking up and the effects do not differ by gender (though the coefficient for women fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance). The addition of alcohol consumption and low self-control reduces the effect of pornography consumption on men's reported hooking up to non-significance, but does not have the same effect for women. Apparently, alcohol consumption and socialization via pornography are part of a similar process for men, but less so for women. Low self-control significantly affects women's odds of hooking up but not men's though the gender difference in coefficients is not statistically significant.

Equations 5 and 6 add our measures of gender-related attitudes to the models, and there are significant and interesting gender differences in mechanisms here. Young women reporting patriarchal attitudes are significantly more likely to hook up than men, and men with rape-supportive attitudes are significantly more likely to hook up than women. The effects of alcohol consumption and low self-control are unaffected relative to equations (3) and (4) and there are no statistically significant gendered effects of low self-control and alcohol consumption on hooking up.

Taken together, the results suggest that there are some gender-specific mechanisms that produce hooking up and some generic mechanisms as well. The major difference between the two is due to (a) differences in the propensity of men and women to engage in behaviors associated with hooking up (alcohol consumption and socialization via pornography) and (b) differences in gender-specific mechanisms that lead to hooking up (women with patriarchal attitudes and men with rape-supportive attitudes). We investigate the relative size of each of these effects in our discussion and conclusion.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

There are both generic and gender specific mechanisms that produce the gendered differences in rates of hooking up for college students. The generic mechanisms are sexual socialization through pornography and alcohol consumption. Men report more hooking up because they engage in the behavioral correlates of hooking up (problematic alcohol consumption and sexual socialization through pornography) more often than women do. Women who engage in these behavior correlates report hooking up at the same rates as men. The gender specific mechanisms are tied to gender-related attitudes. Women with patriarchal attitudes report more hooking up and men with rape supportive attitudes report more hooking up.

It is not surprising that the use of pornography for sexual socialization is connected in some way to hooking up. In the fantasy world of pornography, sex occurs frequently, and without risks of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and troublesome relationships. If pornography is becoming a significant source of sexual socialization, one would expect these themes to appear in the attitudes and practices of young people.

The gendered attitudinal mechanisms raise interesting questions. It is not surprising that rape supportive attitudes by men are linked to hooking up because men with these attitudes are more likely to engage in “sexual conquest” behaviors (Kanin, 2003). But why do women with patriarchal attitudes hook up more often than women without patriarchal attitudes? Are women with these attitudes in sexual situations feeling pressured to have sex with men more apt to say ‘yes’ because they feel it is their ‘duty’? Are women without patriarchal attitudes less likely to fall to a man’s pressure to hook up?

Hooking up may be interpreted by some as a liberation from older restrictions on sexuality. However, the connection of hooking up to patriarchal attitudes (for women) and rape supportive attitudes (among men) suggests that the objectification and subjugation of women is implicated in these “new” patterns of sexual behavior. Women who hook up may not be committed to a lifestyle of casual sex. Given the connection between patriarchal attitudes and hooking up, it is likely that some, perhaps most, of the young women perceive hooking up as a necessary phase in the quest for a traditional romantic relationship. Alternatively, college may be construed by young adults as a “time out” from social expectations. They define risky sex, as well as alcohol consumption, as part of the college scene, things to be experienced before settling down into work and family roles. Alcohol consumption maybe used to help students participate in this kind of sexual ‘expected’ behavior.

Problematic alcohol consumption is a generic mechanism as well as the biggest culprit contributing to hooking up rates among college students. It is in the realm of alcohol abuse that student affairs offices could make the biggest impact on reducing rates of hooking up. Vander Ven & Beck (2009, p. 647) say that

Policymakers might organize their programs around identifying and encouraging the ways in which college drinkers can support one another. Clearly, social support systems have already been developed by drinkers to help traverse the sea of risks that can befall students during drinking episodes; however, these methods as well as others could be emphasized in precollege orientations and publicized on campus. Such a focus could complement policies that emphasize the harms of binge drinking by illustrating some of the informal harm-reduction practices already in use on college campuses.

By-stander programs that train students how to intervene when friends are doing risky drinking behaviors could be available or even mandatory for students. The use of pornography within sexual socialization also could be targeted. Strategies might well include sexual socialization practices that stress the disadvantages of pornography use among late adolescents and young men and women. Or, given the low rates of use by girls and young women, only boys and young men could be targeted.

The gendered attitudinal mechanisms are also something that student affairs and faculty affairs offices could address. Trying to reduce patriarchal and rape supportive attitudes is challenging. Programmatic intervention into college courses and first year student orientation has been shown to facilitate attitudinal change. Research on student attitudes and beliefs after exposure to college course content shows that racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes can change. Pettijohn and Waltzer (2008, p. 464) report that students who completed a Psychology of Prejudice class reduced their levels of “modern racism, modern sexism, old-fashioned racism, old-fashioned sexism, and negative attitudes toward homosexuals”. Similarly, Case (2007, p. 426) found that after taking a women’s studies course students had “...greater agreement with feminist and equalitarian attitudes, lower prejudice against women, and increased activism”. Mandatory general education courses or corner stone courses with content aimed at reducing patriarchal and rape supportive attitudes might be incorporated. Another strategy is to incorporate content and activities into first year student orientation aimed at reducing patriarchal and rape supportive attitudes.

When it comes to college students and hooking up, alcohol consumption, pornography, and gender related attitudes can be addressed by university and college administrations. Efforts to reduce rates of dysfunctional and dangerous behaviors among college students should take into consideration both generic and gendered mechanisms. These changes would improve the sexual climate on college campuses and steer students toward healthier sexual relationships.

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APPENDIX Table 1. Measures Used in Analysis of Hooking Up

Variable	Measurement
Hooking up (=1)	How often do you go to parties or bars in order to “hook up” with someone? (1=Never; 2=Rarely, less than once a month; 3=One to three times a month; 4=Once or twice per week; 5=More than twice a week)
Sexual Socialization	We are interested in where people learn about sex and sexuality. Indicate how much of your information about sexual matters you got from each (1=none;2=a little; 3 = some; 4=a lot; 5=most)
Mother	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Other adult female you were close to	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Father	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Other adult male you were close to	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Your siblings (brothers/sisters)	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Your friends and peers	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Schools and teachers	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Your religious leader(s), Priest or pastor	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Television, movies, music and other media	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)
Pornography	(none) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)

Go to bars or clubs, or attend parties where alcohol is served?

(1=Never; 2=Rarely, less Than once a month; 3=One to three times a month;4=Once or twice per week; 5=More than twice a week)

Have four or more drinks (alcohol) in one sitting?

(1=Never; 2=Rarely, less Than once a month; 3=One to three times a month; 4=Once or twice per week; 5=More than twice a week)

Drink to the point of being drunk?

(1=Never; 2=Rarely, less Than once a month; 3=One to three times a month; 4=Once or twice per week; 5=More than twice a week)

(Alpha = .81)

Low Self-Control see Grasmic, et.al (1993) Read each item and circle a number to indicate how well that item describes you on a scale of 1 to7, 1=you are not at all like that, and 7=you are very much like that.

You believe that excitement and adventure are more important than security

You will take a risk just for the fun of it.

You are impulsive

When you are angry, you often take it out on anybody who happens to be around

If you friends dare you to do something, you usually do it.

You put a lot of thought and effort into preparing for the future. (reverse coded)

You tend to do whatever brings immediate pleasure now, even at the cost of some future goal

If you had a choice, you would almost always rather do something physical than something mental

You have a higher need for activity than most people your age.

You usually plan ahead, because you believe that planning ahead makes things turn out better (reverse coded)

You often act on the spur of the moment, without taking time to think.

When you are angry, you usually let people know without losing your temper (reverse coded)

You are not very sympathetic to other people when they are having problems.

You try to look out for yourself first, even if it means making things difficult for other people.

If things you do upset other people, you feel that's their problem, not yours

You are willing to break some rules in order to be popular with your friends.

(alpha = .70)

Rape-Supportive Attitudes

(1=Strongly disagree; 2=mostly disagree; 3=disagree

somewhat;

4=neither agree nor disagree; 5=agree somewhat;

6=mostly agree;

7=strongly agree)

If the husband is paying the bills, he has the right to have sex with his wife whenever he wants.

When it comes to sex, women often say “No” when they mean “Yes.”

Many rapes happen because women lead men on

If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.

A women who gets drunk at a bar or party has no right to complain if a man takes advantage of her sexually.

When a woman goes back to her date's place, she implies that she is willing to have sex with him.

Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex willingly and “changed their minds” afterward.

Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.

(alpha = .87).

Patriarchal Attitudes

(1=Strongly disagree; 2=mostly disagree; 3=disagree

somewhat;

4=neither agree nor disagree; 5=agree somewhat;

6=mostly agree;

7=strongly agree)

No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for “equality”.

In a disaster, women ought not necessarily be rescued before men.

Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

Women are too easily offended.

People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of either sex. (reverse coded).

Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men (reverse coded).

Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.

Women should be cherished and protected by men.

Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.

Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

Men are complete without women (reverse coded)

Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

When women lose to men in a fair competition, they usually complain about being discriminated against.

A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.

There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming to be sexually available and then refusing male advances. (reverse coded)

Women, compared to men, tend to have superior moral sensibility.

Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. (reverse coded)

Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

(alpha = .65)



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