Sources on College Students’ Sexuality and Relationships and the “Hook up” Culture
(Nov. 2007; From Karen Arnold, with research help from Katie Wartman)

General research on college student relationships and sexuality


Statistics on Sexual Behavior


National College Health Assessment
A NSSE sort of instrument that can be administered at individual institutions
College Hookup Culture Sources

*Hooking up* by Kathleen Bogle (Sociological interview study of 76 undergraduates and alumni)

*Sex and the Soul* by Donna Freitas (Sociological mixed-method study of spirituality and sexuality among undergraduates at different types of colleges)

*Hooking up* by Amber Madison (Popular press book on how to navigate the hook up scene)

*Unhooked* by Laura Sessions Stepp (Popular press book by journalist who followed high school and college women (from Duke and George Washington University) for one year)
This book talks about the actual culture of hooking up and the negative effects it can have.
Stepp is a *Washington Post* reporter who followed high school and college women (from Duke and George Washington University) for one year. Argues that hooking up is alienating and ultimately debilitating for most women, and that it does not prepare people to have the long-term relationships they say they want in the future.

*Go Ask Alice* - is Columbia University’s Q and A award-winning site.
[http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/Cat8.html](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/Cat8.html)

*Student Health 101* - resource for parents/ students.
[http://www.studenthealth101.com](http://www.studenthealth101.com)

*“Campus Progress” Newsletters* - available at CampusProgress.org (Website of “The Center for American Progress, self-described as a “progressive think tank”) Articles are followed by comments from readers.

See particularly:

Selected Empirical Research on College Student Sexual Behavior


**Abstract**

The term pluralistic ignorance refers to erroneous beliefs held by a group of individuals about the attitudes or behavior of others. In this study, we examined the degree to which college students in Singapore misconceive their peers’ sexual attitudes and behavior. The data for this study came from a web-based survey involving a random sample of 534 college students in Singapore. The results indicate widespread evidence of pluralistic ignorance; that is, students believed that their peers were significantly more sexually active than was actually the case. The data also suggest that the students formed such erroneous impressions of peers on the basis, in part, of the students’ media consumption and of the students’ own sexual attitudes.


**Abstract**

Research has suggested that women are prone to sexual regrets of action. In the present study, the authors examined "hooking up" as a predictor of sexual regret in 152 sexually active college women. Results indicate that two sexual behaviors were particularly predictive of participants' regret: (a) engaging in sexual intercourse with someone once and only once and (b) engaging in intercourse with someone known for less than 24 hr. Noncoital hookups (performing and receiving oral sex) were not significantly related to regret, indicating that college women may be underestimating the health risks associated with oral sex. Although hookups are a common feature of contemporary college life, the results counter the popular assumption that hookups are inconsequential for college women. The authors discuss the preventative health implications of their findings.


**Abstract**

This is the first study of unwanted sexual experiences in the collegiate ‘hooking-up’ culture. In a representative sample of 178 students at a small liberal arts university. Twenty-three percent of women and 7% of men surveyed reported one or more experiences of unwanted sexual intercourse. Seventy-eight percent of unwanted vaginal, anal, and oral incidents took place while—‘hooking up,’— whereas 78% of unwanted fondling incidents occurred at parties or bars. The most frequently endorsed reason for unwanted sexual intercourse was impaired judgment due to alcohol. The most frequently endorsed reason for unwanted fondling was that it happened before the perpetrator could be stopped. Of those affected by unwanted sexual intercourse or unwanted fondling, 46.7% and 19.2% reported unwanted memories, 50% and 32.7% reported
avoidance and numbing responses, and 30% and 26.9% reported hyperarousal responses, respectively. A preliminary model of unwanted sex and collegiate social dynamics is proposed to provide a heuristic for further research. (Done at Bucknell)


Abstract

"Hooking up"—when two people agree to engage in sexual behavior for which there is no future commitment—has become popular on college campuses. In this study we examined the extent to which pluralistic ignorance affects hooking up. One hundred thirty-six female and 128 male college students answered questions regarding their own comfort and their perceived peers' comfort in engaging in a variety of sexual behaviors while hooking up. We hypothesized and found that both women and men rated their peers as being more comfortable engaging in these behaviors than they rated themselves. Men expressed more comfort than did women in engaging in these behaviors, and both sexes overestimated the other gender comfort with hooking up behaviors. Pluralistic ignorance appears to apply to hooking up on college campuses, and we explore some potential consequences of pluralistic ignorance in this context.


Abstract

This study focused on a specific risky practice common among contemporary college students: the hookup. Hookups are defined as a sexual encounter which may or may not include sexual intercourse, usually occurring on only one occasion between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances. The aim of this study was to determine the relative importance of a variety of social and psychological predictors in understanding differences among undergraduate students who had never hooked up, those who had hooked up without sexual intercourse, and those who had hooked up with sexual intercourse. Analyses revealed that, as predicted, social, individual, and relational psychological variables helped to explain the variance among college students' varied hookup experiences. By examining the full range of sexual involvement characteristic of the casual sexual phenomenon of hooking up within a multivariate model, we were able to achieve a more differentiated understanding of college students' casual sexual experimentation.


Abstract

The authors and associates conducted a social norms-based intervention targeting high-risk sexual behaviors among undergraduate students at 4 college campuses. Social norms theory predicts that widely held misperceptions may encourage risky behavior in a misguided attempt to conform to perceived norms and that information correcting these misperceptions will lead to a decrease in such behaviors. Students overestimated their peers' levels of sexual activity, numbers of partners, incidence of sexually transmitted infections, and rates of unintended pregnancies, but underestimated rates of condom use. Rates of HIV test taking, however, were accurately
estimated. Although some components of sexual risk behaviors lend themselves well to social norms-based interventions, others, specifically inconsistent condom use and avoiding HIV tests, do not. Although no changes in reported beliefs or practices were apparent at the end of a 9-month intervention period, longer or modified interventions may be needed to make a fair assessment of the efficacy of this approach.

**Additional resources**

FROM Child Trends organization, cited at www.childtrends.org


**Additional Selected References from Research articles**


O. R. Watson, & A. Pawlowski (Eds.), Alcohol, immunomodulation, and AIDS (pp. 35-46). New York: Alan Liss.


Seal DW, Agostinelli G. College students' perceptions of the prevalence of risky sexual behaviour, AIDS Care. 1996;8:453-466.