

**What Happens in a Hook Up?: Young Women's Behaviors, Emotions, and Pleasures**

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Psychology and Women's Studies)  
in the University of Michigan  
2018

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Eileen and Dr. David Davies, whose unwavering support and endless sacrifices made this possible.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the incredible feedback and guidance given to me by my advisor and mentor, Dr. Sara McClelland, throughout my time at the University of Michigan, and especially during the dissertation process. Her immeasurable wisdom guided me through some of the most difficult phases of this process. I would also like to acknowledge the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Lilia Cortina, Dr. Monique Ward, and Dr. Terri Conley. Their advice and support contributed immensely to the quality and rigor of this dissertation. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with me.

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## Abstract

“Hook ups” are common among adolescents and young adults on college campuses. Prior research positions women as risking a lot when they hook up, including physical, emotional, and social costs, while they stand to benefit little from hook ups. Additionally, research shows that women do not often experience orgasms during hook ups, but little is known about women’s pleasure in hook ups outside their rates of orgasm. The current studies sought to better understand what women’s experiences in hook ups consist of in terms of behaviors, emotions, and pleasures. Study 1 (discussed in Chapter 3) asked young women (N=23) to perform a card-sort in relation to their *actual* and *desired* behaviors and emotions in their most recent hook up. Results from Study 1 show that women reported desiring more oral and manual sex and more orgasms from a variety of sexual activities. Study 2 (discussed in Chapter 4) asked young college women (N=23) to participate in in-depth interviews regarding their sexual pleasure during hook ups with men. Results from Study 2 revealed that women reported that they experienced a range of different pleasures in their hook ups with men, including but not limited to orgasm. Women in Study 2 also discussed how the norms of hook up culture impacted their ability to prioritize or pursue their own sexual pleasure, and how men violated the norm of reciprocity. Study 3 (discussed in Chapter 5) surveyed young college women (N=102) about their behaviors, emotions, and pleasures in hook ups. Results from Study 3 revealed that a typical hook up involved a range of sexual behaviors; women reported giving oral sex more often than they received it. Women in Study 3 also reported frequent positive emotions in relation to their hook ups and fewer negative emotions in contrast to prior research. Results from Study 3 also showed

that while a typical hook up included men's orgasm, women rarely experienced orgasm in their hook ups. Women who reported engaging in a greater number of hook ups in Study 3 were more likely to experience a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction and a greater likelihood of receiving oral sex from their partner. Across the three studies, women reported positive emotions in relation to their hook ups, but reported greater desire for more reciprocity, oral and manual sex, and orgasms during their hook ups with men. Results are discussed in relation to women's sexual freedom to prioritize their own pleasure amidst a sexual milieu that privileges men's pleasure during sexual encounters.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

There is a growing body of literature that documents the prevalent phenomenon of “hook ups” among college students (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Reay, 2014; Siebenbruner, 2013). Up to 72% of college women will hook up at some point during their academic tenure (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), and the literature paints an uneven sexual terrain that positions women as the consistent losers in the hook up exchange, risking a lot, and gaining little in return (Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2014; Kenney, Thadani, Ghaidarov, & LaBrie, 2013; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Lovejoy, 2015). Women are thought to face psychological, social, emotional, and physical costs, including a lack of pleasure, as a result of hooking up (Armstrong et al., 2012; Kenney et al., 2013; Fielder et al., 2014).

Given these documented high risks and little apparent benefit for women, it is important to gain a more complete understanding of women’s hook ups, including the behaviors, emotions, and pleasures they commonly experience in their hook ups. This research will help to highlight the apparent costs and benefits women face when they decide to hook up. Without a better understanding of what women stand to gain from hooking up, the body of literature remains partial and biased towards the position that women gain very little and perhaps are even in need of interventions or rescuing from hook ups and poor sexual decision-making (Kenney et al., 2013).

Are women risking it all when they hook up and gaining little benefit in return? Benefits might be different for different women, but could be as simple as feeling satisfied, or feeling good about oneself after the hook up is over. Three studies were designed to gain insight related

to women's hook ups and what women stand to gain from hooking up. Each study asks questions related to dimensions of women's hook up behaviors, emotions, and pleasures: (1) what are the discrepancies between women's actual and desired hook up behaviors and feelings; (2) what kinds of pleasure do women experience in their hook ups, and (3) what does a typical or average hook up include behaviorally, emotionally, and in terms of common pleasures women experience?

Gaining more information regarding women's hook ups, including whether women are having hook ups that align with their desired hook up scenarios, and what kinds of pleasures they experience will help to put into perspective why so many women hook up despite some of the other documented costs of doing so. Additionally, combining that knowledge with what a typical hook up includes for women, will give a more thorough picture of what women stand to gain or lose in the average hook up encounter. Without further exploring these dimensions of women's hook ups, the existing research on hook ups will continue to position women as poor sexual decision makers who need to be rescued from their own sexuality. Additionally, this information will assist universities in terms of supporting women's sexuality in ways that foster freedom to choose safe and pleasurable hook ups. Instead of asking how can we stop hooking up among college students, we should instead ask, how can we help them have more positive and fulfilling sexual experiences?

### **Dissertation Structure & Design**

The dissertation includes three studies that together address several different dimensions of women's experiences with hook ups. Study 1 (discussed in Chapter 3) assesses the discrepancy between women's actual and desired hook up experiences in terms of behaviors and emotions. These data helps to illuminate whether women are having hook up encounters that

align with their desired encounters. Study 2 involves in-depth interviews with college women regarding what they found pleasurable about their past hook ups and what kinds of pleasure they might look forward to or wish for in future imagined hook ups. Data from Study 2 (discussed in Chapter 4) shed light on what types of enjoyment women might be having in their hook ups given that orgasms are so rare for them in this sexual context. Study 3 asks what the typical or average hook up includes in terms of behaviors, emotions, and pleasures. Data from Study 3 (discussed in Chapter 5) provide a glimpse into what an average hook up includes, an important piece of the puzzle for understanding what women stand to gain or lose in a hook up. Each study is described in more detail below.

### **Study 1: Discrepancies Between Actual & Desired Hook Up Experiences**

Study 1 sought to understand the discrepancy between women's actual behaviors and desired behaviors, as well as their actual and desired feelings, in relation to their most recent hook up. Participants in this study completed four card-sorting activities that pertained to their most recent hook up. Women sorted cards according to the behaviors they reported they actually experienced, the behaviors they desired to experience, the emotions they reported they actually felt, and the emotions they desired to feel as well. Together, these card sorts provided insight into whether women are having the kinds of hook ups they desire to, an important piece of the puzzle when determining whether women stand to gain or lose when they choose to hook up with men.

“Hooking up” is a term used by researchers to describe sexual encounters that occur between non-dating friends or acquaintances, often at parties or social events, with no expectation of future involvement or romantic commitment, although some may hope that their hook ups will lead to a relationship, and at least for some women hook ups do develop into relationships (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Atkins, Blayney, Dent, & Kaysen, 2013;

Reay, 2014; Siebenbruner, 2013). The term “hook up” is vague, and often includes a range of sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to touching or having oral, anal, or vaginal sex (England & Thomas, 2006; Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2013; Lewis et al., 2013).

While it is known that individuals use the term “hook up” to cover a wide scope of sexual activities, there is not a wealth of information regarding what behaviors women commonly or typically experience in their hook ups, and how these may or may not diverge from what women desire to experience in their hook ups. Different sexual behaviors are linked to women’s pleasure and orgasm, and yet, women rarely have orgasms during their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). Given this, the question remains whether women are experiencing behaviors they desire to in their hook ups, or if there are behaviors they might enjoy that they do not commonly experience in their hook ups. Examinations of discrepancies between women’s *actual* behaviors and *desired* behaviors can shed light on whether women are enjoying their hook ups and what, if anything, they wish was different about their hook ups. While extant research suggests that women’s hook ups are not very enjoyable for women due to the lack of orgasms (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010), and that men’s pleasure is prioritized within the hook up encounter (Lovejoy, 2015), what behaviors are actually taking place and how women might wish they were different, is unknown.

While it is also known that women experience some negative emotions from their hook ups such as feeling confusion, embarrassment, shame, or depression (Kenney et al., 2013; Lovejoy, 2015), there is very little known about what kinds of positive emotions women experience in direct relation to their hook ups. Finally, while some emotions have been assessed, it is usually with regard to measuring specific emotional or psychological dimensions such as self-esteem or depression, as outcomes predicted by whether a woman hooks up or not across a

semester (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011).

Assessing the discrepancies that exist between women's actual and desired experiences on a range of behaviors as well as both positive and negative emotions, provides a more thorough assessment of women's reactions to their hook ups, as opposed to predicting one emotional construct as an outcome. Discrepancies between actual and desired sexual experiences concerning constructs such as sexual desire (Davies, Katz, & Jackson, 1999) or sexual closeness (Frost, McClelland, & Dettmann, 2017) have been shown to predict overall sexual well-being and relationship satisfaction. Using a discrepancy model to understand women's experiences with hooking up can speak to women's overall reactions to their hook ups better than a single measure of self-esteem or loneliness could, and provides information along a continuum of emotions rather than a singular emotional or affective construct, such as depression.

## **Study 2: Sexual Norms and Pleasure in Hook Ups**

Study 2 asked women to reflect on their past hook ups and their future imagined hook ups to describe their experiences with pleasure and aspects of their hook ups that have been enjoyable for them, or that they imagine might be enjoyable in their future hook ups. Study 2 was descriptive, no a priori assumptions or hypotheses were made about whether women were experiencing pleasure or what kinds of pleasure. Given this approach, interview methods were appropriate for exploring women's narratives of sexual pleasure in their hook ups. Interview methods provided a thorough, in-depth accounting of women's narratives of sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men, and gave women the ability to expand on any questions and add any detail or experiences they had that might have been more difficult to capture with a survey method. The types of pleasure women reported experiencing were also used to help inform the

survey used in Study 3, which measured the prevalence of these kinds of pleasure in the general population of young college women who hook up with men.

In addition to the negative emotional outcomes associated with hooking up, women are less likely than men are to have an orgasm during hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Certain behaviors can make orgasm more likely for women who hook up; women are more likely to have an orgasm during a hook up if they receive oral sex or direct clitoral stimulation (Armstrong et al., 2012). Women are also more likely to have orgasms with partners with whom they have previously hooked up, although even during subsequent hook ups with the same partner women still do not orgasm as often as men do (Armstrong et al., 2012). There is very little known about women's sexual pleasure in hook ups aside from these rates of orgasm (Heldman & Wade, 2010).

Although orgasms may be unlikely for women to experience in their hook ups, other research has shown that women experience sexual pleasure in different ways, including emotional, cognitive, and physical forms of pleasure (Goldey, Posh, Bell, & van Anders, 2016). Additionally, even though orgasms may be scarce for women who hook up, women often list pleasure as their primary motive for hooking up (Shepardson, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2016). Therefore, even if women are not experiencing orgasms very often in their hook ups, there may be emotional or cognitive types of pleasure that women may gain from their hook ups that have been relatively unexplored in the literature to date. What those kinds of pleasure look like and how often women experience them remain unknown.

Given that so much of the literature on hooking up documents the emotional, social, or physical costs that women take on when they decide to hook up (Kenney, Lac, Hummer, & LaBrie, 2014; Owen et al., 2010; Stinson, 2010), it is imperative to understand the diverse kinds

of pleasure women experience in their hook ups in order to have a more thorough accounting of what factors actually contribute to that exchange, and why women might continue to hook up in such high numbers despite these other costs they encounter. There may be emotional or cognitive kinds of pleasure that have been unexplored in the extant literature, such as having chemistry or intimacy with a partner, as well as physical kinds of pleasure that do not revolve around orgasm, such as cuddling.

In addition to assessing the diverse nature of women's pleasure in hook ups, the interview study sought to understand how the norms or rules of hook up culture impacted women's pleasure or their pursuit of pleasure. The norms of hook up culture, such as the sexual double standard, grant men more privilege to navigate the culture with ease and to prioritize their own pleasure in their sexual encounters with women (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). Women must negotiate their desire to have casual sexual encounters while also attempting to avoid the social stigma associated with hooking up (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015).

Study 2 asked how women navigated these implicit rules and pursued their own pleasure despite the norm that places men's sexual needs at the top of the pleasure hierarchy. Women provided thoughtful reflections on their ability to achieve pleasurable experiences while they also balanced the stigma that comes from hooking up, and they also described the obstacles that impeded their pursuit of pleasure. Findings speak to the norms that shape hook up culture and how these functioned to inhibit women's ability to freely pursue their own pleasure. By identifying these factors that hampered women's sexual pleasure, it is possible to highlight ways to increase women's freedom to pursue their own sexual pleasure in their future hook ups with men.

### **Study 3: Typical Hook Up Behaviors, Feelings, & Pleasures**

Study 3 included a survey that was administered to a sample of 102 young college aged women in order to assess what their typical hook ups include in terms of sexual behaviors, feelings (both positive and negative), as well as sexual pleasures in both their past hook ups, and their desired pleasure for future hook ups. The pleasures included in this survey were derived from the interviews in Study 2, in which women reflected on the enjoyable aspects of their hook ups. Study 3 gathered information on what an average hook up might include and whether women were experiencing more positive than negative emotions or how common these various emotions might have been for women. For example, while studies have shown women might feel regret over their hook ups (Lovejoy, 2015), how commonly was regret experienced, and how common was regret when compared to other emotions women might have felt? Having a broader measure of the various kinds of behaviors, emotions, and pleasures women experience in their hook ups provides a more thorough account of what a typical hook up includes and what women's reactions to their hook ups commonly look like. Study 3 sought to narrow down what behaviors, emotions, and pleasures occur in a typical or average hook up encounter for young college women.

It is important to get a sense for what a typical or average hook up includes in terms of behaviors, emotions, as well as pleasure, in order to get a sense for what the typical or average costs and benefits associated with hooking up might be. Without a more thorough assessment of what women might experience in their average hook up, research on women's hook ups will be partial, and will continue to reify the assumption that there are very few benefits associated with hooking up, and many risks, including significant negative emotional costs and social stigma (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Kenney et al., 2013; Owen et al., 2010; 2011; Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh,

2015). Documenting what a typical or average hook up likely includes does not mean that this will represent all women's hook up experiences; there will still be unique experiences that, while perhaps less common, are worthy of exploration and examination.

While there exists an overwhelming amount of research that documents these emotional costs to women in particular, we know less about the positive emotions women commonly experience, or if they experience more positive than negative emotions directly related to their hook ups. Most of the research on women's emotional reactions to hook ups has included measures pertaining to specific dimensions, such as depression or self-esteem scales (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Owen et al., 2010; 2011). It is important to understand what women's emotions are as they directly relate to their hook up experiences; positive emotions, such as a sense of emotional intimacy with one's partner, have been shown to be a source of both satisfaction (McClelland, 2014) and pleasure (Goldey et al., 2016) for women. It is certainly possible that women experience some of these positive emotions during their hook ups, and these emotions may even function as sources of pleasure for women. The existing research is so focused on the negative emotional outcomes for women, that very little has been asked concerning women's positive emotions, and how these positive emotions might be pleasurable in and of themselves (Kalish & Kimmel, 2011). Moreover, understanding what positive emotions women experience in their hook ups may shed light on the apparent imbalance between the costs and benefits associated with hooking up for them. Women may actually be experiencing more positive emotions and pleasures that can help explain why so many women hook up despite the emotional costs that some researchers have documented.

In addition to the negative emotional costs associated with hooking up for women, research has shown that hook ups tend to lack pleasure as well, given that research has shown

women rarely have orgasms in their hook ups with men (Armstrong et al., 2012). However, very little is known about how common it is for women to experience diverse types of pleasure, including emotional, cognitive, or physical pleasures that do not involve orgasm. Understanding the diverse kinds of pleasure the “typical” hook up includes can help illuminate why so many women hook up and list pleasure as a motive for doing so despite the low rates of orgasms they experience (Shepardson et al., 2016). Finally, discerning the pleasures women commonly desire to experience in their future imagined hook ups can also help explain why women may continue to hook up despite the costs of doing so, as women may imagine and long for even more diverse kinds of pleasure in their future hook ups than in their past hook ups.

While it is known that hook ups can include a wide scope of sexual behaviors, it is important to understand what the average hook up includes behaviorally. Sexual behaviors have been linked to both emotional outcomes and sexual pleasure for women who hook up (Vrangalova, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to understand all three aspects to hooking up, behaviors, feelings, and pleasures, as these components work in symbiosis with one another to shape women’s overall sexual experiences. Understanding what the typical hook up includes will provide a more thorough account of what women’s sexual pleasure looks like and how different types of hook up behaviors might influence women’s pleasure, or the pursuit of their own sexual pleasure, during their hook ups with men. Finally, having a more thorough account of women’s emotions as they relate directly to their hook ups, including both positive and negative dimensions, can further highlight the relative benefits and costs women encounter when they hook up with men. Not only is there little research on women’s positive emotions as they relate to hook ups but there is a paucity of research that compares women’s positive and negative emotions and offers a more balanced assessment of what women really stand to gain or lose from

hooking up. As the body of research on women's hook ups expands, it will be crucial to more thoroughly and fairly assess these risks and benefits in order to gain a more accurate scientific assessment of women's reactions to their hook up encounters.

### **Implications**

These three studies examine women's emotional or cognitive pleasures within their hook ups and investigate the prevalence of these pleasures among women who hook up. Additionally, the studies explore what kinds of pleasures women imagine or long to experience in their future hook ups and how the unique sexual milieu of hook up culture shapes women's sexual pleasure. While women may not experience orgasms commonly in their hook ups, other kinds of pleasure may be more common to experience, and may be more attainable for women who are encouraged to prioritize men's sexual pleasure in the form of an orgasm, during their hook ups. Finally, women's narratives of pursuing their own pleasure and the impediments to that process provide a roadmap for how structural or institutional systems can work to increase women's access to safe, supportive, and pleasurable hook ups.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

Nearly three quarters of women and men will hook up at some point during their undergraduate years (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Hook ups have become so common that some theorize that hooking up is more prevalent than traditional dating or relationships on college campuses (Bogle, 2007; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Reay, 2014). Research on the phenomenon of hooking up details the scope and prevalence of hook ups on contemporary college campuses, and the gendered rules that comprise the informal hook up culture (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Braithwaite, Coulson, Keddington, & Fincham, 2015; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Lovejoy, 2015). The rules and structures that make up the informal sexual system of hook up culture tend to privilege men's choices and restrict women's choices, while also prioritizing men's pleasure over women's, qualities that may not be supportive of women's fostering a sense of entitlement to their own pleasure or pursuing their own pleasure during hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012; Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). Additionally, much of what is known about hook up culture stems for sociological research on the norms and scripts of this sociocultural context (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Wade, 2017); much less research is done from a psychological standpoint, with the aim of understanding individual women's hook up experiences as embedded within a system of implicit rules and norms that function to shape her pleasure, and at times, undermine it.

Many young women are navigating this uneven terrain during a time of sexual development during their adolescence and young adulthood years, which suggests that the culture and experiences of hooking up may have long lasting effects on young women's

sexuality. Research on pleasure shows that women are not often having orgasms in their hook ups, although this leaves open the possibility that other types of pleasures might be happening in hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). Because researchers suggest that part of the reason hook ups are detrimental to young women is because they risk much and gain little, including pleasure, from their hookups (Kenney et al., 2013), the question of whether women experience any pleasure during their hook ups, and if so, what types of pleasures, remains a central and as of yet unanswered question in the hook up literature.

### **Who is Hooking Up?**

Much of the research on hooking up has explored three key areas: 1) psychosocial predictors of hooking up, including the demographic characteristics of those who have reported hooking up, 2) emotional outcomes or reactions to hooking up, or 3) the reasons or motives that people report for engaging in hook ups. Research on the psychosocial predictors of hooking up includes such factors as demographics of individuals who are more likely to hook up (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Helm et al., 2015; Roberson et al., 2015; Wade & DeLamater, 2002), or sociocultural predictors of hooking up such as context or drug/alcohol use (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Seville, 2010; Claxton and van Dulmen, 2013; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Roberson et al., 2015). Still other research pertaining to hooking up deals with outcomes of hooking up such as negative or positive affect or well-being (Owen et al., 2011; Vrangalova, 2015a).

Researchers have largely characterized hook ups as potentially risky in terms of psychological, emotional, and social risks, particularly for young women (Armstrong et al., 2012; Fielder et al., 2014; Kenney et al., 2013; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Lovejoy, 2015; Vrangalova, 2015a). Much of what we do know about hooking up illustrates a precarious and risky sexual landscape for women (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Part of the reason that so

much research has focused on the potential consequences of hooking up is because adolescence and young adulthood is known to be a time in which sexuality is in development, and therefore, this time period remains an important, albeit not determinative one, for shaping sexual attitudes.

**Race, Ethnicity, & Pleasure.** Much of the extant literature on hooking up and its psychosocial outcomes or predictors, has been focused heavily on samples with white participants. The focus on white college students may be due at least in part to the fact that hook ups happen largely on college campuses within a specific hook up cultural context, and colleges tend to be largely white in composition. However, some research has specifically addressed the lack of diversity within hook up culture, and noted that this discrepancy may be more than just an issue of convenience sample characteristics (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017).

Allison and Risman (2014) noted in their in-depth interview studies with undergraduates that students of color participated in hook up culture less often, as they were more likely to be working during college and therefore had less spare time and less financial support from family that would grant them the ability to spend time at parties where hook ups typically initiate (Allison & Risman, 2014). Students of color were also more likely to live off campus, which positioned them outside the boundaries of hook up culture geographically, but also meant that they were less likely to travel into campus for parties that happened in fraternities or dorms (Allison & Risman, 2014).

Wade (2017), in her book *American Hook Up*, followed 101 students and their hook up experiences as relayed through journals they kept across a semester. Wade (2017) noted in her book that students of color felt less welcome in hook up culture, and felt they had less social capital to negotiate hook ups with desirable partners, as they felt they were less desirable partners within hook up culture. Wade also noted that survey data from the OCSLS reveals that Black

women hook up with less frequency than women of other races (2017). Referring to hook up culture as the “erotic marketplace,” Wade (2017) posited that white people in particular have more privilege or social capital to navigate the marketplace at will and choose partners who are regarded as more desirable socially, and these tended to be white partners.

These studies raise the question of whether women of color experience the same level of pleasure from their hook ups as white women do. It is known that men are more likely to receive than give oral sex in a hook up (Fielder et al., 2006), which suggests that women may encounter difficulty negotiating their own pleasure within a hook up, and potentially, that women of color may face even greater difficulty than white women in terms of negotiating their own pleasure within a hook up because of their marginalized status. Combined with the fact that women of color feel less empowered to pursue desirable partners (Wade, 2017) the question remains: Are there differences between white women and women of color in terms of their overall pleasure they derive from hook ups?

**Gender & Sex.** Both college men and women engage in hook ups at high rates: over 70% of them will hook up at least once during their undergraduate careers (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), with most hook ups happening during Freshman and Sophomore years and tapering off somewhat in later years (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015). While white men and women have more social ability to choose partners and have the hook ups they desire compared to students of color, it is equally true that white men have the most social power to hook up at will, without suffering the same social stigma as women do (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015; Wade, 2017).

**Sexual Orientation.** Hook up culture is largely heterosexual as well; there is a paucity of research on hook ups among gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer identified individuals, either on

campus or off (Watson, Snapp, & Wang, 2017). Some have questioned whether hook up culture is inherently heterosexual, or whether there is room for non-heterosexual people to participate in the culture (Wade, 2017). Some studies have used hook up terminology in their studies, and these have been solely focused on gay men (Watson et al., 2017). Wade (2017) followed 101 students' experiences with hook ups as relayed through journals they kept across a semester. Wade (2017) notes that while gay men also participated in hook ups, that this was less common than heterosexual men and women, and that the parties and social events where hooking up took place tended to be in fraternities or other events that felt structured around heterosexual social interactions (Wade, 2017). When gay men did hook up, it was typically not initiated at these popular hook up events, but rather, they met through other social interactions, mutual friends, or in classes (Wade, 2017).

**Socioeconomic Status.** Armstrong and Hamilton (2013), in their book *Paying for the Party*, followed 202 college women within a sorority across five years of their undergraduate experiences. The authors noted that the college system functioned in a way to support hook up culture and the associated party atmosphere that facilitated hook ups among students (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Students who had more privilege, such as those who did not have to work and who had more financial resources, were positioned in such a way that they could engage in the hook up culture without suffering as many repercussions as those who were less privileged. Thus, hook up culture is not only predominantly white and heterosexual, it is also set up to benefit mostly those who are of financial or socioeconomic wealth (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013).

## **Hookup Culture**

In addition to documenting the scope and prevalence of hooking up as compared to dating, there exists a body of literature that assesses “hook up culture” and the rules, scripts, and norms that make up hook up culture (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Braithwaite et al., 2015; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Lovejoy, 2015; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). “Hook up culture” is an informal sexual system that has become popular on college campuses within the last couple of decades as an increasing number of undergraduates engage in hook ups (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007). Researchers have noted that within hook up culture environments, sexual encounters carry a different set of rules and guidelines than traditional dating, including the expectation of no future romantic involvement or commitment, and “hook ups” are typically engaged in at parties or social events (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Lewis et al., 2013; Roberson et al., 2015).

In addition, researchers have noted that gendered rules proscribe appropriate sexual behavior within the sexual system and these rules are an important characteristic to understanding hook up culture (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). For example, Lovejoy (2015) has noted that dominant narratives within hook up culture include the sexual double standard, a narrative that praises men for sexual experiences and chastises women. The net effect of these gendered rules is that men gain status from greater engagement and number of partners in hook up culture, whereas women lose status for the same reasons (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Lovejoy, 2015; Reay, 2014), creating an uneven sexual terrain for women and men. Despite this apparent inequity within the hook up culture, high numbers of women still engage with it (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Siebenbruner, 2013).

Other research suggests that both men and women who are perceived to hook up often may experience a loss of respect from their peers (Allison & Risman, 2013). However, Reay (2014) notes that because men gain status via hooking up and women lose status, women may not feel free to act on their desires for fear of garnering a bad reputation. Finally, Bradshaw and colleagues (2010) note that the sexual double standard may contribute to women's feelings of guilt for having hook ups and may also lead to derogation of women who are having hook ups. Wade (2017) argues that women face stigma for hooking up, and one of the appeals of the term "hook up" is its vague connotations, which allows individuals to use it without denoting what sexual behaviors actually took place, a strategy that may offer some protection from some of the social stigma associated with casual sex.

Women's sexual decisions regarding hook ups are constrained by being labeled a "slut" (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Lovejoy, 2015; Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, Lachowsky, & URGiS, 2014), and women also appear to feel guilt over focusing on their own pleasure during hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). It is possible that because of these restrictions and sanctions that govern women's sexual decisions within hook up culture, that hook ups may not be sexual situations that are conducive to women's sexual pleasure, either because women feel concerned with their reputation, or because they feel guilty about pursuing their own pleasure.

Alternatively, the high participation rate of women in hook up culture particularly on college campuses, may be an indication that despite these negative consequences, both social and sexual, that there may be some type of pleasure women get from hook ups that is offsetting these costs or risks. Additionally, there may be other types of pleasure aside from orgasm that are easier for women to access in hook ups than orgasm. If so, women might be able to experience

some of these other types of pleasures without also experiencing the guilt that can come with prioritizing their own physical pleasure or orgasm.

### **Sexual Norms & Hook Ups**

Sexual norms are useful for thinking about hook up experiences, as well. Hook ups could include a wide range of sexual behaviors: some hook ups might be just kissing or making out, some hook ups could include mutual oral sex, and some hook ups might include all of the above plus intercourse. Given the very broad definition of a “hook up,” it is unknown if there is a “typical” or average hook up, however, some researchers have explored the types of sexual behaviors that might happen in a hook up (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; England, Shafer, & Fogarty, 2011). Brimeyer and Smith (2012) note that in a large-scale survey conducted by England and colleagues (2011) on “hooking up,” 31% of college students had “made out” and touched without genital contact, 16% had some measure of genital touching, 15% of the students engaged in oral sex, and 38% reported having intercourse during their most recent hook up encounter. Given the broad definition of “hooking up,” all of these acts would be considered some type of “hooking up,” and indicative of the wide reach of hook up culture on contemporary college campuses. These different types of hook ups may also hint at what pleasure looks like in a hook up, i.e., if making out is a “hook up” it would make sense that orgasm may not be the type of pleasure derived from that level of sexual interaction. It is possible that other types of sexual pleasure might be derived from these kinds of hook ups that do not involve sexual intercourse.

Clarifying the specific behaviors that are considered to be a part of hook ups norms is important, as certain sexual behaviors are linked to both women’s pleasure (Armstrong et al., 2012) and their emotions or feelings related to the sexual experience itself (Vrangalova, 2015). Certain kinds of hook ups, such as oral hook ups, have been linked to better psychological

outcomes for women, such as higher life satisfaction (Vrangalova, 2015). Comparatively, penetrative or vaginal hook ups have been linked to a host of negative outcomes such as depression or loneliness (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Owen et al., 2010; Owen & Fincham, 2011). Oral sex, or direct clitoral stimulation through touching, make orgasm more likely for women who hook up as well (Armstrong et al., 2012). Although some have suggested that mutual oral sex may be part of the typical hook up (Heldman & Wade, 2010), this remains speculative, as the average hook up behaviors are still vague. Therefore, understanding what kinds of behavioral norms are present in hook ups has importance for understanding women's emotional and physical forms of pleasure.

### **What is Sexual Pleasure?**

Pleasure is one of many possible motivations to engage in sexual activity with either oneself or a partner(s) (Goldey et al., 2016; Meston & Buss, 2007; Rye & Meaney, 2007; Shepardson et al., 2016). Adolescent and young women however, engage in sex for a variety of motives that do not center around pleasure, such as for love or connection, stress reduction, social status, and even as utilitarian motives such as revenge or wanting to gain intimacy with a partner (Meston & Buss, 2007). What motivates someone to have sex is different than how one perceives sexual pleasure, although the two constructs may overlap.

Sexual pleasure is frequently measured in scientific research via the presence or absence of an orgasm (Rye & Meaney, 2007). This decision to focus on orgasm may be in part because orgasm provides a discrete event that is (sometimes) more easily defined and measured, and also quantified for comparison to others, than other kinds of pleasure that are more obscure or diffuse. Rye and Meaney (2007) defined sexual pleasure as “the positive feelings that arise from sexual stimuli” (p. 30), and this may, or may not, include orgasm. Given this definition of pleasure, an

individual could experience pleasure from watching pornography, reading an erotic novel, masturbation, or even simply kissing someone (Rye & Meaney, 2007).

The root of the definition of pleasure given by Rye and Meaney (2007) can be found in the words “positive feelings,” which also hints at the role of emotion in the sensation of pleasure. Positive feelings, such as having a connection with one’s partner, have been found to be both a motivation for sex (Meston & Buss, 2007), as well as a source of pleasure in studies on women’s sexual pleasure (Goldey et al., 2016). Sexual fantasies or sexual thoughts have been found to be pleasurable in many studies (Goldey et al., 2016; Byers, Purdon, & Clark, 1998; Rye & Meaney, 2007). Masturbation, regardless of whether it results in an orgasm or not, has been described as pleasurable by women in a focus group study of heterosexual and queer women’s solitary and partnered pleasure (Goldey et al., 2016). In this study, women also described sensations such as touch or smell as sources of sexual pleasure.

Despite the fact that sexual pleasure has been found to encompass many dimensions and include abstract forms of enjoyment such as fantasies, smell, touch, and masturbation without release (Goldey et al., 2016; Rye & Meaney, 2007), the extant literature on sexual pleasure often privileges orgasm as the primary barometer of sexual pleasure (Potts, 2000). The orgasm imperative asserts that all sexual interactions are expected to eventually culminate in sexual release via orgasm. Orgasm has also been described as a male model of sexual pleasure, given that men are more likely to orgasm during intercourse (Jackson, 1984). The privileging of orgasm as the prime exemplar of pleasure, within both research and lay conceptions, advances male forms of sexual pleasure and positions them in a superior position within a pleasure hierarchy (Prause, 2012).

Defining pleasure via orgasm is problematic scientifically as it excludes a range of types of pleasure, but it also excludes young women's experiences with pleasure more than any other group. Young women in particular are less likely to experience orgasm than men or older women (Garcia, Lloyd, Wallen, & Fisher, 2014). Women who are less likely to have orgasms via intercourse and who may experience diverse kinds of pleasure have struggled with their orgasmic absence and find they need to justify it and explore ways to feel a sense of freedom from the orgasm imperative (Bell & McClelland, 2017). Even the extant research on pleasure within the hook up literature focuses solely on rates of orgasm (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). What pleasure looks like for women who hook up outside rates of orgasm is relatively unknown. Even if women are not having orgasms in their hook ups, that does not mean they are not experiencing pleasure. It is important to explore what these varied sources of pleasure might be for women who hook up, in order to have a more inclusive understanding of sexual pleasure within hook ups more broadly.

### **Hierarchy of Pleasure Within Hook Ups**

Some research on motives related to hooking up has inquired about the role of pleasure. While researchers suggest that pleasure is a common motive for women to have hook ups (Lovejoy, 2015; Shepardson et al., 2016; Wade & Heldman, 2012), other research indicates that women are not generally having orgasms during their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), suggesting that women may experience a variety of pleasures from hook ups aside from just orgasms, such as cognitive or emotional kinds of pleasure, or physical pleasure that does not revolve around orgasm. Moreover, since hook ups tend to be focused on the male partner's pleasure (Katz & Schneider, 2015), this may pose difficulty for young women to ask for their own pleasure or attend to their own pleasure during a hook up. If women are experiencing

diverse forms of pleasure, some of these may be easier to attain while also tending to a male partner's orgasm, for example.

Women may encounter difficulty in terms of navigating hook up culture and accessing a sense of entitlement to pleasure within the confines of the culture. The stigma women face for having casual sexual interactions alone might be enough to deter women from then further focusing on their own pleasure within hook ups, in other words, maybe hook ups are even more stigmatizing for women who prioritize their own pleasure over a male partner's pleasure.

Armstrong and colleagues (2012) suggest that these gender inequities within hook up culture contribute to the orgasm gap between men and women during hook ups. Moreover, they argue that women feel guilty about focusing on their own pleasure during hook ups, as one woman stated, "...I felt kind of guilty almost, like I felt like I was subjecting someone to do something they didn't want to do and I felt bad about it" (p. 457). This woman described how she experienced a sense of guilt about having her own pleasure met within a hook up, despite the fact that she did things to meet her male partner's pleasure. There appears to be a taken for granted quality to hook ups that guarantees male pleasure and leaves women's pleasure uncertain at best, and at worst, makes women feel guilty or "bad" about asking for their needs to be met.

Therefore, even when pleasure is granted to women in hook ups, for some women at least, this pleasure comes with the cost of guilt and negative feelings that may undermine her sense of entitlement to pleasure. If women are aware that pleasure comes with these costs, they may be less likely to pursue it, and instead, focus on their male partner's pleasure over their own.

Wade (2017) described how women experienced a lack of orgasm in their hook ups, and that this caused distress and frustration for women. One woman named Celeste, who had penetrative vaginal intercourse with several partners during the course of the semester, reflected

on how all of her partners had experienced orgasms while she did not experience a single orgasm, and her partners displayed a lack of concern or care for her own pleasure, Celeste proclaimed: “I am not a masturbation toy!” (p.158). Another woman named Ashlynn reflected on a recent hook up, and explained how after she gave her partner fellatio she got excited as he prepared to return the favor, but he only gave her a single, disappointing lick (Wade, 2017).

The women in Wade’s (2017) study regarded the lack of reciprocity in oral sex to be distressing, and this presented an obstacle to their sexual pleasure and orgasm in hook ups. Moreover, direct clitoral stimulation from oral or manual sex has been shown to greatly increase women’s odds of having orgasms in hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). Men’s willingness to receive fellatio in nearly all of their hook ups but their extreme reticence to give oral sex in return to their female partners underscores the pleasure hierarchy within hook ups, and how men’s pleasure is prioritized first, which then gives men the opportunity to deny women the same attention. Women have reported feeling the need to advocate for themselves in order to receive cunnilingus from their male partners (Backstrom, Armstrong, & Puentes, 2012; Wade, 2017), something that perhaps not all women feel empowered to do (Armstrong et al., 2012), given the stigma already attached to casual sex for women, and the norms of hook up culture that prioritize male pleasure.

England, Fitzgibbons, Shafer, and Fogarty (2007) conducted a large-scale study involving both a survey and interviews regarding sexual behaviors among college students. The survey included over 4,000 undergraduates from universities across the nation, and 25 in person interviews with undergraduates from Stanford University. Similar to other studies, the authors found that men had orgasms much more frequently than women did during hook ups. When looking at all hook ups regardless of the type of sexual activity involved, men had orgasms 44%

of the time and women just 19% of the time (England et al., 2007). When they had intercourse only, men had orgasms 70% of the time and women just 34% of the time, and when they received only oral sex men had orgasms 57% of the time and women 25% of the time (England et al., 2007). Men in this study also remarked that when they know they are hooking up with no intention of pursuing anything further with the woman they do not care if she has an orgasm, with one man remarking “I mean like if you’re just like hooking up with someone, I guess it’s more of a selfish thing...” (p. 565). The orgasm gap in hook ups remains large and well established, and yet, we know very little about women’s pleasure in hook ups beyond these rates of orgasm.

### **Sexual Behaviors & Women’s Pleasure in Hook Ups**

The sexual acts that take place within a hook up may also undermine a woman’s pleasure. The rise of hooking up has led to a reordering of the acts that take place within a sexual interaction such that now there is greater emphasis on oral and anal sex (Bogle, 2007; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Katz & Schneider, 2015). In fact, a hook up for a heterosexual couple may not include penile vaginal sex, given the emphasis on these other sexual behaviors (Heldman & Wade, 2010).

Heldman and Wade (2010) noted that during the time in which hooking up has become prominent, there has also been an increase in women performing fellatio in their sexual encounters, while men report lower rates of cunnilingus in theirs. A self-report study with a sample of 258 heterosexual undergraduates found that women were more likely to engage in behaviors that prioritized their partner’s pleasure over their own (i.e., giving oral sex; Katz & Schneider, 2015). In a qualitative study using in depth interviews with 43 college women, researchers found that women had mixed feelings regarding receiving oral sex especially during

hook ups (Backstrom et al., 2012). This same study found that men tended not to volunteer cunnilingus in hook ups, but if women wanted it they had to be assertive to get it from a male partner, whereas cunnilingus within relationships is more common and expected (Backstrom et al., 2012). However, both oral and manual sex significantly increased a woman's odds of having an orgasm in a hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012). In their survey, Armstrong and colleagues (2012) found that women who had received clitoral stimulation during their hook ups were more than twice as likely to experience an orgasm than women who did not experience direct clitoral stimulation.

These findings together suggest that the focus in casual sexual interactions tends to be on the male partner's pleasure, and Katz and Schneider (2015) corroborated this finding and cited Gavey (2005) who noted that women who did not provide men with orgasms were called "frigid" or a "tease" (p. 105). If the pleasure within hook ups is focused on the male partner and not the female partner, it suggests that a woman may feel guilty about focusing on her own orgasm, and it is certainly possible that some women do not experience any pleasure during hook ups, but still engage in them for other reasons or motives, such as peer approval. At the very least, these findings suggest that a woman may have to be assertive in obtaining her own orgasm in hook ups, or to go against the norms of hook up culture, both of which may be factors that inhibit a woman's ability to have pleasurable hook ups.

While the literature suggests orgasms, one type of pleasure, may not be happening equitably within a hook up, we do not know if women experience other types of pleasures in their hook ups. Research shows that women often report experiencing pleasure from different types of partnered sex, such as casual or committed sex, in a multiplicity of ways (Goldey et al., 2016), and this diversity in pleasure may also be true of women who are having hook ups. Much

of what we do know about pleasure in hook ups is derived solely from rates of orgasm (e.g. Armstrong et al., 2012), which is a problematic measure of pleasure that may be male-centered (Jackson, 1984). While studies show that women list pleasure as a motive for hooking up (Snapp, Ryu, & Kerr, 2015) or consider pleasure in decisions about casual sex (Conley, 2011), we do not know what kinds of pleasure they may be deriving from their hook ups or if they feel that they receive the pleasure they anticipate or are motivated to achieve.

### **Sexuality in Adolescence & Young Adulthood**

Research shows that younger populations such as college freshman or sophomores (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015) are more likely to have hook ups than older populations, with sophomores appearing to participate more often than students in other years in college (Brimeyer & Smith, 2014). Adolescence has been constructed in sexuality research as a time of development that will shape young women's future selves (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). While feminist researchers have critiqued the idea that adolescence is a unique time of development that cements sexuality, and put forth frameworks for understanding sexuality as fluid and non-linear across the lifespan (Diamond, 2008; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008), adolescence and young adulthood remain periods where individuals are just embarking on their sexual careers and exploring their likes and dislikes.

While adolescence and young adulthood may not be uniquely determinative for women's sexuality across their lifespan, it is a unique time period in so far as young women are often discouraged from exploring their sexuality (Bay-Cheng, 2010; Fine & McClelland, 2006; Frith, 2012; McClelland & Fine, 2008), and so having sexual wants and acting on them during this time can be fraught with difficulty. Moreover, adolescence and young adulthood is when young women are forming their sense of sexual self, otherwise known as sexual subjectivity (Horne &

Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). As women begin their sexual careers they must learn to identify their wants and desires and develop feelings of entitlement to those desires (Martin, 1996; Tolman, 2002). Many young college women are developing their sexuality within a culture that is less than ideal for exploring their sexual desires free from censure or reprisal. This means that it may be particularly difficult for young women to negotiate their own pleasure within a sexual milieu that is already constructed in a way that allots more power to the male partner, and more importance to his pleasure than hers (Lovejoy, 2015).

While hook up culture and its associated norms and implicit rules already set up a hierarchy of pleasure in which women are expected to prioritize male pleasure, and to downplay their own pleasure, the developmental time period of adolescence and young adulthood is also important for understanding young women's sexual pleasure within hook ups. Most hook ups happen within the hook up culture on college campuses, among freshman and sophomores who are typically between the ages of 17 and 20 years old. Sexual subjectivity is the ability to identify one's desires, feeling a sense of entitlement to those desires, and being able to reflect on the social forces that may prohibit young women from achieving or acting on their sexual desires (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). Young women in particular may find it more difficult to advocate for their own pleasure or to ask for things from a partner that may bring them pleasure, such as reciprocating oral sex, or asking for manual stimulation of their clitoris because they may not have had the chance to fully develop their sexual subjectivity at a young age.

Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2006) noted that adolescence in particular is a developmental time period that shapes beliefs and attitudes about sexuality, and these beliefs can have an impact on individuals' sexual lives throughout their adulthood (Martin, 1996; Tolman, 2002). While other theorists have asserted that sexuality is fluid and in development across the

lifespan (Diamond, 2008; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008), adolescence and young adulthood are important time periods in terms of shaping sexual belief systems and norms, even if sexuality is fluid and subject to change in later years (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). Given the importance of the developmental time period coupled with the popularity of hook up culture and the high rates of participation among college men and women (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009), it is crucial to understand the norms of hook up culture and how these impact women's ability to pursue their own sexual pleasure. The implicit messages and rules that govern hook up culture may have a formative impact upon a young woman's sexual belief systems, which may then shape her attitude and sense of entitlement towards her own sexual pleasure for years to come.

### **Women's Sexual Freedoms**

Fahs' (2014) theory of sexual freedoms stated that in order for an individual to have true sexual freedom, she must have both the freedom to pursue a certain activity, as well as the freedom from engaging in activities she does not desire to. Fahs' (2014) also stated that in the absence of having both avenues to freedom, a person is faced with a set of conditions in which a certain experience or outcome may ultimately transform into an obligation, rather than a true choice. For example, if a woman does not feel safe to pursue her own pleasure during a hook up for fear of her partner reacting negatively, then this indicates she does not have real "freedom to" pursue her own sexual pleasure or desires. Referred to as "freedom to" and "freedom from," Fahs' (2014) theory of the necessarily dualistic nature of sexual freedom provides a paradigm for understanding how young women negotiate their sexual experiences or desires, and sheds light on areas in which young women may need support or resources, in order to strengthen their ability to freely choose their sexual experiences and feel empowered to pursue their own pleasure, whatever that pleasure may look like.

Given the structure of hook up culture, in which the norms and the sexual scripts prioritize male pleasure, the question remains whether women are experiencing sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and whether women have the “freedom to” pursue their own pleasure, or prioritize their own pleasure despite these norms. The existing research concludes that hooking up is risky for young women, and offers few benefits (Armstrong et al., 2012; Fielder et al., 2014; Kenney et al., 2013; Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015; Lovejoy, 2015; Vrangalova, 2015a). Often, lack of orgasm is cited as a potential drawback for women who have hook ups (Heldman & Wade, 2010). However women’s pleasure is known to be diverse (Goldey et al., 2016), raising the possibility that women do experience pleasure outside of orgasm in their hook ups.

Much of the extant research on women’s pleasure within hook ups focuses primarily on rates of orgasm, which is just one type of sexual pleasure that women may experience. Moreover, the bulk of research on hook ups is done from a sociological standpoint (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Wade, 2017), which emphasizes the larger cultural norms surrounding the context in which hook ups take place. Less is known about how individual women feel about their hook ups, and how they interact with this culture in ways that may shape their sexual pleasure and emotions. Therefore, this study asks, do women experience pleasure during hook ups, and if so, what does this pleasure look like for them?

### **Intimate Justice**

McClelland’s (2010) intimate justice paradigm asserted that a person’s sexual satisfaction is greatly shaped by the expectations that they bring to their sexual experiences, and further, that these expectations are shaped by the individual’s sociopolitical power or lack thereof. Individuals who are socialized to feel entitled to pleasure and satisfaction have higher expectations and these then factor into their tabulations of satisfaction ratings. Similarly, an

individual who has been taught to not prioritize their own pleasure, but to please partners, or to be sexually submissive, as is the case with women, may have lower sexual expectations. When men's and women's ratings of sexual satisfaction are compared, women have often rated their satisfaction as higher than men's (McClelland, 2010; Sprecher, 2002) despite the fact that they often experience fewer orgasms, and their pleasure is less often prioritized in the way men's pleasure is. McClelland (2010) suggested that women may not feel deprived when they experience an absence of orgasm because they may not expect to have orgasms frequently, and this may explain why women report higher ratings than men on sexual satisfaction scales.

It is possible that, similar to these ratings of sexual satisfaction, women's sexual pleasure within hook ups is shaped by their relative expectations that they bring to their encounters. What women find to be pleasurable, as well as their ratings of overall pleasure, are likely informed by what they believe they are entitled to or can reasonably expect from a hook up partner. If orgasms are unlikely, and women do not feel entitled to orgasms, they may come to define their pleasure in ways that they feel they are entitled to expect from a casual sexual encounter. In other words, women may report highly pleasurable hook ups even without experiencing orgasms, if their expectations for other kinds of pleasure have been met. What those kinds of pleasure look like, and how women imagine their future pleasure, are explored in Studies 1, 2, and 3.

In Study 1 (Chapter 3), women's actual and desired hook up behaviors and emotions are explored, and the discrepancies between these two dimensions are elaborated on. How women imagine what they might expect or be entitled to from a hook up encounter, in terms of behaviors, emotions or pleasures, will greatly influence how they feel about their hook ups overall, and whether they find them to be fulfilling, satisfying, or generally positive sexual experiences. The intimate justice framework (McClelland, 2010) can help shed light on this

dynamic, as well as findings from Studies 2 (Chapter 4) and 3 (Chapter 5), wherein women's sexual pleasure is explored in depth. How women define sexual pleasure in hook ups, given that orgasm is known to be unlikely for women (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010), can also be understood through an intimate justice framework, and how women's sexual expectations shape their sense of sexual pleasure.

### **Systems Justification Theory**

Related to the theoretical paradigm of intimate justice is the social psychological theory of systems justification. Systems justification theory in essence describes how individuals come to justify and explain discrepancies in the way systems (e.g., education, health, employment, government) privilege certain groups over others. This justification is paradoxically most evident in those who are the most disadvantaged by the way the systems maintain inequality (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). While it may seem counterintuitive that an individual who experiences inequality via systemic injustice might come to support that systemic injustice, this can be better understood through the processes of cognitive dissonance. Individuals might experience cognitive dissonance if they were to admit that they were disadvantaged and simultaneously recognized that they did not possess the power (or will) to change the system that creates that inequality. In order to ease that cognitive dissonance, individuals justify the system as inherently fair or necessary (Jost et al., 2003; 2004). While systems justification theory is often studied in relation to institutional inequality, such as access to education, health care, social programs etc., it can be applied to sexual situations as well.

Hook up culture functions through a set of proscribed norms and sexual scripts that dictate what behaviors should take place, and these behaviors conveniently prioritize male

pleasure above women's. Hook up culture is not unique from other sexual cultures in this way, in fact, many types of sexual arrangements reinforce a sexual pleasure hierarchy, in which men's pleasure is prioritized ahead of women's, and women's pleasure is made secondary, if it is attended to at all. How women come to endorse or find value in hook ups and hook up culture, and whether they justify the systemic injustice inherent in the culture itself, can be understood through a systems justification theory framework.

## **Chapter 3 Women's Actual and Desired Hook Up Experiences**

### **Introduction**

Hook up culture has been well documented in the literature pertaining to hook ups, and the culture has come to be regarded as a crucial social atmosphere that shapes women's and men's sexual experiences during their college years (Bogle, 2008; Wade, 2017). While hook ups are very common, extant research has positioned women as risking a lot to gain very little by participating in hookup culture (Kenney et al., 2013; Owen et al., 2010). While it is taken as fact that women experience some negative emotional outcomes related to hooking up, we know less about what kinds of positive emotions they may be experiencing, and how their actual emotions might diverge from their desired emotions, if at all. Similarly, while it is known that women orgasm less than men do in hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), little is known about what the typical hook up includes behaviorally, and how the behaviors women actually experience in their hook ups may diverge from their desired behaviors. The discrepancies between women's actual and desired behaviors and emotions have important implications for their overall well-being and enjoyment in regards to their hook ups.

As hook ups have changed over the years from casual sex to a unique type of sexual culture predominant on college campuses, research has suggested that hook ups have developed their own unique implicit norms and rules (England et al., 2011; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Wade, 2017). Hook ups are known to include a variety of sexual behaviors ranging from kissing, to oral sex, and sometimes including penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI) for heterosexual couples. While researchers have theorized that hook ups have changed over the years to include mutual oral sex

as taking place before PVI (Heldman & Wade, 2010; England et al., 2011), there is little research on this aspect of hook ups. Given that the definition of the term “hook up” is vague and covers such a range of activities, it remains unclear if oral sex specifically is typically included in the umbrella term of “hooking up.”

Hook ups have also been characterized in the literature as risky for young women; a large body of literature assesses women’s psychological outcomes associated with hooking up, and finds that women often have negative reactions to their hook ups (Kenney et al., 2013). The current study sought to understand what types of sexual behaviors women commonly experience, and what behaviors women *desire* to experience, in their hook ups with men. Additionally, the current study asked, what feelings or attitudes do women actually experience and *desire* to experience in relation to their hook ups? Even though there is a relatively substantial body of research on the negative emotional outcomes associated with hooking up (Kenney et al., 2013; Napper, Montes, Kenney, & LaBrie, 2015; Owen et al., 2010), there is less known about women’s feelings or attitudes relating to their hook ups more generally, and what kinds of positive feelings women might also experience in regards to their hook ups with men.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on hooking up and hook up culture presents a precarious landscape for women; the emotional risks are documented at length, positioning women at risk of regret, embarrassment, confusion, and shame for hooking up (Kenney et al., 2013; Lovejoy, 2015; Owen et al., 2010). In addition to the emotional risks women face, it is presumed that they experience less sexual pleasure than men do, a conclusion that is supported by the low rates of orgasm for women who hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). The typical hook up is ambiguous; the term is so loosely defined that it covers a range of sexual behaviors

(Lewis et al., 2013). Some sexual behaviors that include direct clitoral stimulation, such as oral or manual sex, are more likely to lead to orgasm for women (Armstrong et al., 2012), and different kinds of hook ups, e.g., oral or penetrative, have been linked to positive and negative emotional outcomes (Fielder et al., 2013; Vrangalova, 2015). While this body of work has amassed knowledge on the range of behaviors and the risky nature of hook ups for women in particular, very little is known about what women desire to experience in their hook ups, either behaviorally or emotionally. The discrepancy between what women do experience in their hook ups and what they desire to experience is important for gaining a more thorough accounting of women's hook ups, and the emotional outcomes associated with hooking up for women.

### **Actual vs. Desired Discrepancies**

The difference between what an individual actually experiences and what they desire to experience is referred to as a discrepancy, i.e., in the case of sexual desire there may be sexual desire discrepancies between couples, or even within an individual (Frost, McClelland, & Dettman, 2017). The framework of actual vs. desired discrepancies has been used to understand several different phenomena, including sexual closeness or intimacy between couples (Frost et al., 2017), sexual desire discrepancies and the effect they have on sexual and relationship satisfaction (Davies et al., 1999), and closeness discrepancies in couples and the effect they have on well-being or mental health (Frost & Forrester, 2013).

Closeness or sexual intimacy discrepancies have been shown to have a negative impact on a variety of different dimensions including sexual well-being (Frost et al., 2017), and overall sexual and relationship satisfaction (Frost & Eliason, 2014; Mashek, Le, Israel, & Aron, 2011; Smith, Lyons, Ferris, Richters, Pitts, Shelley, & Simpson, 2011). Whether a person desires to feel more or less closeness than they already do appears to have less importance than the degree

of discrepancy that exists between their actual and desired experiences. Frost and colleagues (2017) examined discrepancies in sexual closeness between couples and the impact that this discrepancy had on sexual well-being, using a diverse sample of 619 men and women, who had an average age of 36 years (78% of sample were women). The authors followed participants for one year, and found that as the discrepancies decreased, that is, as individual's actual and desired levels of closeness came closer together, their sexual well-being increased as well. Similarly, as the discrepancies between actual and desired levels of closeness increased, the participants' reported levels of sexual well-being also decreased.

Other studies have found similar results in regards to the effects of discrepancies between actual and desired experiences. Davies and colleagues (1999) examined discrepancies between actual and desired levels of sexual desire in heterosexual couples who were dating. The sample included 72 undergraduate couples, who had been dating for an average of just over two years (26 months) and the average age of participants was 20 years old. Participants in this study completed several scales, including a sexual desire scale, relationship assessment scale, and a sexual satisfaction scale (Davies et al., 1999). Discrepancies in desire were calculated through a formula that compared self and partner evaluations. Results of the study showed that sexual desire discrepancies were correlated with lower levels of sexual satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction was correlated with relationship satisfaction, such that higher levels of both were positively connected (Davies et al., 1999). Therefore, experiencing discrepancies in sexual desire for men and women negatively affected their sexual satisfaction, which then negatively impacted their relationship satisfaction.

Frost and Forrester (2013) examined levels of closeness or intimacy and how discrepancies between actual and desired levels of closeness impacted their perception of

relationship well-being as well as their mental health. Participants in this study completed four waves of data, each wave was approximately one year apart, with 732 couples taking part in all four waves. The average age of participants was 34 years old, primarily heterosexual (86%), and the average relationship length was almost nine years long (8.74 years). The sample was also primarily female (78%). Participants reported information on levels of commitment, mental health, thoughts of breaking up, and inclusion of the other in self, which is a measure of the degree of relational closeness that a person feels with their partner. Results from this study showed that reduced discrepancies between actual and desired relational closeness were linked to greater relational well-being, mental health, and relationship stability over time.

Taken together, these studies provide evidence of the importance of the discrepancy between individuals' actual and desired experiences, whether those differences are in terms of sexual desire, relational closeness, and intimacy or sexual intimacy. Greater discrepancies between actual and desired experiences were linked to negative outcomes on a variety of dimensions. Whether a person is able to experience the kinds of sexual behaviors they desire to experience in a hook up may have importance for understanding their emotional reactions to hook ups, and may speak to the nature of hook up culture, as well. Therefore, the discrepancy between women's actual hook up behaviors and feelings as compared to their desired behaviors and feelings is important to assess especially considering the wealth of research that documents women's negative emotional reactions or psychological outcomes associated with hooking up. Given that research, are women's actual and desired experiences very discrepant, and if so, in what ways do they differ?

### **Hook Up Behaviors**

The term "hook up" is vague and could refer to a wide range of sexual behaviors (Wade,

2017). Research shows that the term “hook up” could denote various sexual acts such as kissing, cuddling, one person receiving oral sex, or two people engaging in penetrative vaginal sex (Lewis et al., 2013). The vagueness of the term “hook up” has the potential to conceal exactly what sexual behaviors took place during the encounter, therein providing some measure of privacy to the individuals discussing their hook ups (Wade, 2017). In one large scale survey (Lewis et al., 2013) of 1,468 undergraduate men and women (56.4% women), between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, the authors sought to understand what behaviors were included in the term “hooking up.” Findings revealed that the meaning of hook up differed depending on the sexual experiences of the person who is using the term; for some, a hook up denoted kissing or making out, for others it meant penile vaginal sex or oral sex. The authors suggested that the term hooking up remains ambiguous and relative.

While hooking up may be an ambiguous term that differs depending on the person using it, researchers have noted a trending increase in the rates of both anal and oral sex that has coincided with the rise of hook up culture and the increased use of pornography (Dines, 2010; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Heldman and Wade (2010) theorized that the increasing rates of oral and anal sex happening outside of committed relationships means that the typical hook up now includes mutual oral sex that takes place before engaging in PVI (Heldman & Wade, 2010). However, it remains to be examined empirically whether mutual oral sex is a stable and consistent part of the typical hook up between women and men. Moreover, we know little about what the boundaries of hook ups are; in other words, what are the limits of what one might experience in a hook up? Do hook ups include anal sex or stimulation? Do they include watching porn together or using sex toys? While researchers are beginning to theorize about the behaviors within hook ups, what the “typical” hook up looks like, or if there is even such a thing as a

typical hook up, remains as uncertain as the term itself.

Additionally, while researchers have theorized that mutual oral sex is a part of the average hook up, research also shows that women are not having orgasms very frequently in their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). In an online survey study, coupled with in-depth interviews with 85 women, Armstrong and colleagues (2012) assessed women's experiences with hooking up including their rates of orgasm. The survey study was an analysis of the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS), and the authors analyzed responses from 6,591 women. Orgasms were rare events for women who had hook ups; only 11% of women reported having an orgasm in a first time hook up with a new partner, this increased in subsequent hook ups, such that 16% of women reported an orgasm in their second or third hook up and 34% of women reported having an orgasm in even later hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Because a very small proportion of women reported having orgasms in their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), and because oral and manual sex are much more likely to lead to orgasm for women than PVI is (Armstrong et al., 2012; Blair & Pukall, 2014; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994), the question of whether mutual oral sex is truly an established part of the typical hook up between women and men remains unanswered. Findings from Armstrong and colleagues (2012) showed that women who received direct stimulation to their clitoris, either manually or orally, more than doubled their odds of having an orgasm during a hook up. Women were much more likely (5-6 times) to report enjoying their hook ups if orgasm also occurred, showing that women highly value and desire to have orgasms during their hook ups. It would stand to reason that if women were receiving oral sex in most of their hook ups as part of an established set of behaviors, that more

women would likely be reporting orgasms from their hook ups with men. Therefore, the typical hook up remains ambiguous, and yet it is important to understand what the typical hook up includes behaviorally, and how that may differ or not from what women desire to experience, as the discrepancy between actual and desired behaviors may help shed light on women's overall enjoyment related to their hook ups.

### **Feelings & Attitudes About Hook Ups**

Some of the research that is focused on women's negative emotional reactions to hooking up suggests that women are motivated to hook up in order to find a long term committed romantic partner, and that when this outcome does not materialize, women become disillusioned and depressed (Owen & Fincham, 2011). Overall, the literature paints hook ups as generally negative experiences for women, and women's positive emotions or attitudes in relation to their hook ups have not been explored nearly as often, although at least one study has looked at women's positive emotional reactions to hooking up (Snapp, Ryu, & Kerr, 2015).

In Napper et al.'s (2015) study, 607 undergraduate men and women (309 men and 298 women) ranging in age from 18-26 years old (average 20 years), completed surveys related to mental health, hook up behaviors (number of hook ups, number of partners, unprotected sex), and a Negative Impacts of Hooking Up scale created by the authors. Findings showed that both women and men experienced an equal amount of negative emotional reactions to hooking up, and these negative reactions were positively correlated with mental distress, meaning those who had negative experiences experienced psychological distress following the hook up. Regret and embarrassment were reported as the most common negative emotions experienced. Additionally, more hook up partners were associated with more negative hook up experiences, but the frequency of hooking up was not, potentially indicating that having repeat hook ups with a

partner is less likely to lead to negative emotional reactions than is having many unique hook up partners is.

Fielder, Walsh, Carey, and Carey (2014) also assessed women's emotional reactions to hooking up in a one-year longitudinal study and found that hooking up was correlated with depression, sexual victimization, and contracting a sexually transmitted infection. In this study, 483 undergraduate women between the ages of 18 and 25 completed a baseline and 12 monthly follow up assessments. While hooking up was linked to depression, the authors note that romantic sex was not linked to depression, suggesting that relationship or romantic sex is more beneficial for women emotionally than is casual or hook up sex (Fielder et al., 2014).

A small amount of research has sought to understand women's positive reactions to hooking up (Snapp, Ryu, & Kerr, 2015), although this is notably less prevalent in the literature than that which documents the risky emotional outcomes of hooking up. In Snapp et al. (2015) study, 250 undergraduates (66 men and 204 women), ages 19-23, reported on their hook up motives, their sexual satisfaction, sexual self-concept and their feelings in relation to their hook ups. Findings revealed that overall both women and men reported more positive than negative emotional reactions to hooking, but women had more negative emotional reactions than men. Interestingly, women and men did not differ in terms of their reported levels of satisfaction stemming from their hook ups (Snapp et al., 2015). Therefore, while men are known to have more orgasms than women in their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2009; Heldman & Wade, 2010), it appeared that both men and women found their hook ups equally satisfying, suggesting that perhaps women find other aspects to their hook ups to be pleasurable or satisfying beyond orgasm.

Overall, the literature on women's and men's emotional reactions to hooking up shows

that they have experienced a range of positive and negative reactions, with women experiencing more negative reactions than men, and this accrues with the number of partners a woman has. Hooking up has been linked to depression and negative health outcomes, and to emotions such as regret and embarrassment (Napper et al., 2015). While the literature suggests women may experience some positive emotions related to hooking up (Snapp et al., 2015), these appear to be less prominent and prevalent than the negative emotions. However, the question remains whether this difference is due to women experiencing largely negative emotional reactions to hooking up, or whether there is simply less research that examines women's positive emotional reactions to hooking up.

Moreover, there is very little known about what kinds of emotions or attitudes women *desire* to experience in relation to their hook ups; do women want to feel different emotions than they are experiencing already, and if so, what emotions would they prefer to feel? Even if women experience some negative emotions related to their hook ups, there is no research yet documenting the discrepancy between what women actually feel and what they desire to feel in regards to their hook ups. Given that discrepancies between actual and desired experiences have been linked to sexual, relational, and emotional well-being (Frost & Eliason, 2014; Frost & Forrester, 2013; Frost et al., 2017; Mashek et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2011), it is important to ask whether women are experiencing discrepancies between their actual and desired feelings regarding their hook up experiences, as these discrepancies, if they exist, would likely have more predictive value of women's overall enjoyment than the experience of some negative emotions would.

In order to get a better understanding of what an average or typical hook up includes in terms of sexual behaviors, as well as what women's feelings or attitudes in relation to their hook

ups might be, the current study analyzed card sorts that young college women completed in relation to their most recent hook up. The behaviors and feelings women experienced in their most recent hook up, compared to those that they desired to experience, were examined to answer the question of what a typical hook up usually includes, and what behaviors women wish their hook ups might include or exclude. Additionally, this analysis shows what common feelings and attitudes women experienced in relation to their hook ups, and what feelings they desired to experience in their hook ups as well.

### **Card Sort Methods**

Card sorting methods have been used to study a range of phenomena including personality disorders (Reise & Wright, 1996), child attachment (Pederson & Moran, 1995; Posada, 2006), love relationships (Reedy et al., 1981), sexual interest in adolescents (Hunter, Becker, & Kaplan, 1995), sexual satisfaction (McClelland, 2014), and pain assessment (Reading & Newton, 1978). Card sorts have been used in a forced format in which participants must rank order the cards, and are called “Q-Sorts.” In the “Q-Sort” technique, participants are asked to sort cards containing feelings or behaviors in order of least to most important (McClelland, 2014; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2005). With Q-Sort methods typically a participant is asked to group the cards along a distribution, with only a few in the highly agree/disagree tails, and the most in the middle or neutral sections (McClelland, 2014; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2005). This type of sort is then analyzed with a factor analysis to get a sense for how well particular dimensions of a phenomenon hang together across participants (McClelland, 2014; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2005).

Sometimes Q-Sorts have been coupled with interviews such as with McClelland’s (2014) study in order to gain more insight and add context to participants’ narratives, and other times Q-

Sort data were collected in order to assess factor fit and design a survey for later use (Nahm, Rao, Solis-Galvan, Ragu-Nathan, 2002). Other times card sorts were used in what is called a closed format in which participants selected and grouped cards according to pre-determined groups that the researchers set up a priori. Finally, sometimes researchers used what is called an open format, in which participants sorted the cards together into their own groups in ways that made sense to them (e.g., Lewis & Hepburn, 2010).

Cataldo, Johnson, Kellstedt, and Milbrath (1970) analyzed the usefulness of card sorting techniques when used in an open format, that is, when there were no a priori assumptions about what groups should be found and more leniency is given to participants to define the placement of the cards. Cataldo and colleagues (1970) measured the validity and reliability of the card sorting techniques using two waves of data collection; no information was given as to the number of participants or their demographic information, however. The authors found that card sorts were a valid and reliable measure of behaviors and feelings, even when used in an open format. However, the researchers noted that by the time participants completed a 7<sup>th</sup> card sort (each sort contained 30 statements) there was noticeable “annoyance” expressed by the participants, indicating that perhaps fewer card sorts than 6-7 would be ideal, although they did not make specific recommendations for the optimal number of cards or sorts.

One study analyzed the food preferences and physical activity of adolescent African American girls, and researchers used a closed coding format in which participants indicated whether they ate certain foods or engaged in certain types of physical activity (Sherwood, Story, Neumark-Sztainer, Adkins, & Davis, 2003). In this study, 90 girls ranging in age from 8 to 10 years old completed a card-sorting task that included 64 foods and 34 types of physical activities. Participants ranked the foods into four basic groups: 1) I don't like it, 2) I like it a little bit, 3) I

like it a lot, and 4) I have never had/tried it. Participants ranked the activities in a similar fashion: 1) I have never done it, 2) I like it a little, 3) I like it a lot, and 4) I don't like it. This study used a very basic type of card sorting technique in order to assess the degree to which young African American girls engaged in certain behaviors or ate certain foods, and the degree to which they enjoyed those behaviors or foods. The card sorts were analyzed by assessing the percentage of girls who endorsed each group, and presented groups of least enjoyed/endorsed foods and activities and most enjoyed/endorsed foods and activities.

With the closed format Q-sort technique, participants are instructed to group cards along a distribution in order to analyze the data using factor analysis (McClelland, 2014; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2005). Reedy and colleagues (1981) used Q-sorts to assess components of romantic and sexual relationships with men and women ranged in age from 22 to 83, who were in committed relationships. In this study participants were grouped into young, middle aged, and older groups and were asked to sort 108 different components of love relationships according to what they found to be most important or central. Researchers found that different age groups had different components of love relationships that they prioritized as more important (Reedy et al., 1981). Younger couples prioritized passion and sexual intimacy, whereas older couples prioritized affection and feelings of intimacy. Across all groups however there was a similarity, and that was that all couples found emotional security to be an important component of a love relationship.

McClelland's (2014) study assessed varying definitions of sexual satisfaction and how gender roles and norms shaped these definitions, for a diverse group of young individuals. The study included 40 participants (19 women, 20 men, and one transgender person), who were also diverse in terms of sexual identity (18 identified as LGBTQ), as well as race/ethnicity (white =

21). The average age of participants in the sample was 22 years old. This study used a closed format Q-sort, in which participants were instructed to sort the 63 cards along a continuum of most disagree to most agree. One factor included femininity and relational connection components. Participants who endorsed this factor were both heterosexual and LGBTQ, and reported that their sexual satisfaction centered on feeling emotionally merged with their partner. Importantly, women who endorsed this factor felt that emotional connection with their partner was satisfaction in and of itself, that is, it was a satisfaction outcome. This finding suggests that positive emotions can be pleasurable for women in their own right. Another factor focused on the importance of pleasing a partner. Finally, a third factor defined satisfaction as largely centering around orgasm and especially in helping a partner have an orgasm. Importantly, while orgasm was a factor in this study, and many people do prioritize orgasm as a barometer of sexual satisfaction, for many women in this study orgasm was not central, and emotional security served as a route to pleasurable sexual experiences, as it allowed them to relax and explore their desires with their sexual partners.

While Q-Sort and card sorting methods have been around for some time and utilized in various lines of psychological research ranging from personality dimensions to sexual satisfaction and even food preferences, they have been used less frequently in sexuality research. The existing literature, however shows promise for using card sort methods to better understand dimensions of sexuality that are complex such as satisfaction, in relation to other constructs such as gender. Often times pairing the card sorts with another method such as interviews can add more depth and context with which to understand a particular phenomenon. While there is a large body of research on hook ups and the negative psychological outcomes associated with hook ups for women, there is very little research assessing what women's emotions or attitudes

might be as they relate to the hook up, as well as the types of behaviors that are commonly engaged in during hook ups. Using a card sort technique allows for participants to describe their hook ups and gain a more thorough assessment of the myriad behaviors that women might engage in during their hook ups, as well as what their positive and negative feelings or attitudes might be as they directly relate to their hook ups. Additionally, while some researchers suggested that participants who endorse opposing emotions or attitudes are showing a response bias (Cataldo et al., 1970), the current study was designed to allow women to simply endorse yes or no responses for each behavior and emotion, in order to allow for complexity and contradictions that may mirror lived experiences.

### **Current Study**

Overall, the extant literature regarding women's hook ups has suggested that women are having more negative emotional reactions to their hook ups than positive. However, these negative emotions have not been examined in relation to what women actually desire to experience, which can have more explanatory power in terms of women's reactions to their hook ups than a single emotional dimension, such as self-esteem. Additionally, the behaviors that may be happening in hook ups are vague, and also have not been explored in comparison to what women wish or desire to experience in their hook ups. Therefore, the current study asks: what kinds of emotions do women experience (either positive or negative) in relation to their hook ups with men, and how do these actual emotions differ from women's desired emotions? In addition to emotions, the current study asks what kinds of sexual behaviors do women experience in their hook ups and how do these actual behaviors differ from women's desired sexual behaviors?

## Methods

Participants who signed up to do an in-person interview about their hook up experiences also completed four card sorting activities prior to the interview procedure. The card sorts were part of a larger multi-method approach that aimed to gain a holistic understanding of women's experiences with hook ups through interviews and surveys. Before participants answered questions pertaining to their hook ups, they sorted cards containing sexual behaviors and feelings related to their most recent hook up.

## Measures

*Measures Development.* In total, there were 47 behaviors and 73 feelings or attitude cards that were given to participants to sort (See Appendix A for complete list). The list of behaviors and feelings were generated through a collaborative effort between 6 undergraduate research assistants (RAs) and myself. I met with the R.A.'s for 1.5 hours and described the study, the sample, and the research aims. Together, they brainstormed different sexual behaviors that they thought a hook up could potentially include, based off of their own personal hook up experiences, or those of friends or family with whom they had discussed their hook up experiences.

After generating a list of behaviors, they also created a list of different feelings or attitudes a person might experience in relation to their hook ups. Attention and care was paid towards generating opposite pairs of words, such as "relaxed" and "tense," or "empowered" and "disempowered." This was done so that participants had the ability to describe both complex and contradictory feelings (i.e., one might feel both empowered and disempowered at the same time), but also so that the lists of behaviors and feelings were not biased towards either positive or negative dimensions. In other words, a list that contained more positive than negative feelings

would mean that participants might report or reflect more positive than negative experiences that would in turn be a product of the options they were given.

After creating the lists of behaviors and feelings with the R.A.'s, I reviewed and revised this list, cutting it down to a manageable level such that participants would have both the time and attention to sort the cards in one sitting. During this process of revision, I removed some behaviors or feelings that seemed to be repetitive, and also made sure that most of the cards had a corresponding opposite, in order to provide a list of feelings that were balanced and not overly biased to one dimension or another. In other words, a list of feelings that had primarily positive valences would set up participants to report more positive than negative feelings and potentially skew the results.

Additionally, some behaviors or feelings were removed that seemed to be tangentially related to hooking up, such as whether a person was given a ride home by their hook up partner or forced to walk home. These are examples of behaviors that were described as being related to hooking up and may influence a person's feelings towards their hook up partner, but seemed to be less directly relevant to understanding the sexual acts that took place within the hook up. While these kinds of activities could have an impact on a woman's enjoyment during a hook up or even her feelings about the hook up later on, the decision was made to include only the sexual behaviors that were engaged in during the hook up itself, in order to limit the potential number of behaviors a participant would have to report on during the study, a decision employed by other card sort studies as well (Reedy et al., 1981).

After the list of behaviors and feelings were finalized, I created four stacks of cards, two identical stacks of behaviors, and two identical stacks of feelings or attitudes. These cards were created by cutting 3X5 notecards in half, and writing the name of a behavior or feeling on the

front, and listing a definition of that item on the back of the card. Actual behaviors were written on yellow cards, desired behaviors were orange cards, actual feelings were pink cards, and desired feelings were green cards. The color of the cards was used to track the participants' sorts, and to be able to discern which piles of cards pertained to which card sorting activity, and helped in the post interview checklist.

## **Recruitment**

Women were recruited for the study using flyers that were posted on college campuses that were in a mid-sized Midwestern city. Participants were also recruited using online volunteer ads through craigslist that were listed in the same city. Participants emailed the study team inquiring for more information, and were sent further details about the study and the location of the study, and were also given a link to a short screening survey to determine eligibility. Women who were eligible to participate were sent a link to my online calendar and signed up for an in-person interview lasting about 1 hour.

## **Sample**

The sample for the card sorts included 23 young women between the ages of 18-24 ( $M=19.4$  years), any year in college or university, and who reported having had at least one consensual hook up with a man in the past six months. A sample that was racially/ethnically representative of college students in the U.S. was intentionally gathered, so as to better understand sexual pleasure in hook ups for a group of diverse women. The racial breakdown was as follows: white (69%,  $n = 16$ ), Latina (4.3%,  $n = 1$ ), Black/African American (13%,  $n = 3$ ), biracial (4.3%,  $n = 1$ ), Asian American (8.6%,  $n = 2$ ). The sample of young women also reported having a range of different types of hook ups, ranging from kissing to sexual

intercourse, in order to represent the spectrum of sexual behaviors that are included under the umbrella term of a “hook up.”

## **Procedure**

Participants arrived their interview and met me in the lobby of a building and were escorted to the private room to take part in the study. After consent was gained I turned on the recording devices and explained the card sorting procedures. The decision was made to turn on the recorders at the start of the study instead of waiting until the interview questions began. This was done for two primary reasons; first, it gave the participants the opportunity to become accustomed to having the recorders on while they quietly reflected on their experiences. Second, it allowed any questions or comments the participants may have had regarding the card sort to be captured on the recordings. During transcription, this portion of the recordings was listened to for any comments that stood out as important, but there were no statements that pertained to the way participants completed their sorts. The occasional participant asked for clarification of a word and these parts of the recordings were not transcribed.

Participants were told to complete four card sorts while reflecting on their most recent hook up: actual behaviors, desired behaviors, actual feelings, and desired feelings. The first card sort contained a stack of small yellow cards and each card had a name of a sexual behavior on the front, and a definition of that same behavior on the back. There were 47 behaviors cards in total. The cards contained behaviors such as: “making out,” “I had an orgasm from oral sex,” or “cuddling.” Participants were instructed to read through the cards and create two stacks, one stack for those behaviors that they did do in their most recent hook up, and a second stack for the behaviors they did not do. Participants sorted the cards in this way so that when they were finished with each sort, I could put a rubber band around the yes pile and easily set it aside to be

recorded after the study was over. Following this activity participants repeated this card sort with an identical stack of orange cards, and the participants were instructed to reflect back on the same most recent hook up they had, and to sort the cards into two piles, one for behaviors they desired to do, and those they did not desire to do. A rubber band was placed around the yes pile and set aside for later recording.

For the third card sort participants were given a stack of pink cards containing feelings or attitudes they may have experienced in relation to their hook ups. There were 73 total feelings or attitudes, and they contained terms such as: “satisfied,” “feeling sexually skilled,” or “respected,” Most feeling or attitudes had a corresponding opposite card, so there were also “not satisfied,” “feeling sexually unskilled,” or “disrespected” for example. Similar to the behaviors, participants were instructed to reflect on their most recent hook up and to sort the cards into two piles, one for those feelings they did experience and a second stack for those they did not experience.

After this, participants completed the final fourth card sort and sorted an identical stack of green cards. For this activity, participants were instructed to reflect on the same most recent hook up and to sort the cards into two piles, one for those they desired to feel and a second stack for those they did not desire to feel. The card sorts were set aside until the interview was completed, and the “yes” piles had rubber bands around them and were placed separately from the “no” piles. Following the interview, I checked off the cards on a checklist to denote which ones the participants had indicated were “yes.”

### **Analysis**

The research questions that the card sort analysis sought to answer were: 1) What are commonly reported behaviors and feelings in women’s *actual* hook up experiences, 2) What are commonly reported behaviors and feelings that women *desire* in their hook up experiences? The

overlap or divergence between women's actual experiences and their desired experiences sheds light on what a typical hook up looks like, compared to what women would like the typical hook up to include, as well as their commonly reported feelings about their hook ups and whether these align with their desired feelings. Data were hand entered from the paper worksheets into an SPSS file, and frequency statistics were run using SPSS software to understand the most common behaviors and feelings women reported experiencing and desiring to experience in their most recent hook up.

Certain behaviors and emotions were grouped together in the analysis according to conceptual similarities, in a technique similar to a factor analysis. For example, emotions relating to self-confidence or self-worth were grouped together as they tapped into a similar dimension of emotional affect. This group contained emotions such as self-confidence, feeling comfortable in their body, empowerment, sexually skilled, etc. Behaviors were grouped in a similar fashion, according to their conceptual overlap. For example, behaviors relating to having protected and unprotected sex were grouped together and contained items such as giving oral sex with or without condoms, or having PVI with or without condoms. Results are discussed in terms of level of discrepancy women experienced between their actual and desired experiences within these groups.

## **Results**

Cards for the behaviors and emotions were formed into 6 groups each, groups contained behaviors or emotions that hung together (i.e., kissing behaviors, or feelings of trust). The behavior groups included: 1) undressing & touching behaviors, 2) kissing and making out, 3) women receiving oral and manual sex, 4) giving and receiving anal sex, 5) orgasms for both partners (data was collected on orgasms for women and their male partners), and 6) protected

and unprotected sexual contact. The discrepancies between women's actual and desired hook up behaviors were explored.

Groups were also created for the emotions women experienced or desired to experience in their most recent hook up. These groups included: 1) trust and emotional intimacy, 2) confidence and empowerment, 3) satisfaction and physical wellness, 4) emotional well being, 5) respect and self-worth, and 6) feelings towards her hook up partner. Discrepancies between women's actual emotions and their desired hook up emotions are explored.

### **Sexual Behaviors**

I grouped together certain behaviors and feelings that represented a larger construct, such as emotional intimacy, or kissing and touching behaviors, and then elaborated on the patterns within these groups in terms of women's actual and desired experiences. Together, these groups provide data about the difference or similarity between actual behaviors and the behaviors women wished would have taken place in their most recent hook up. In some cases, women's actual and desired hook up experiences had very little discrepancy, and in other cases there were large discrepancies. Groups that had very little discrepancy between women's actual and desired experiences included: touching, kissing, and anal sex behaviors. Women reported large discrepancies in terms of receiving oral sex, having unprotected sex, and having orgasms from different kinds of sex. The strict gender and sexual norms associated with hook up culture can help to explain this discrepancy between women's actual and desired hook up encounters in terms of these three behavior groups which are explored below. Complete tables for all of the behavior groups can be found on pages 74-85.

### **Women Receiving Oral and Manual Sex**

Overall, women gave oral sex far more often than they received it, and this was a large discrepancy for women between their actual and desired hook up experiences. Women's reports of experiencing a lack of oral sex and their desire to receive more oral sex in their hook ups suggests that extant theories about the typical hook up behaviors may be incorrect (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Recent research suggests that hook up behaviors have evolved over the years to include oral sex, such that now hook ups typically involve the giving of oral sex by both parties before engaging in penetrative vaginal sex (Heldman & Wade, 2010). The current study shows that this is only partially true. Women gave oral sex to their male partners almost every single time they hook up, and they only received oral sex in return about half the time, not often enough to be considered an invariable part of the typical hook up. This finding also explains why women are having orgasms so infrequently in this study, despite the fact that most hook ups include the male partner having an orgasm from at least one type of sexual stimulation. Oral and manual sex are much more likely to lead to an orgasm for women than is PVI (Armstrong et al., 2012). This finding was also confirmed in the interview study (see Chapter 4), in which women lamented the lack of oral sex, and described fearing negative consequences should they ask their partner to give them oral sex.

The high rate of unreciprocated oral sex reported in the card sorts speaks to men's privilege and ability to violate the norm of reciprocity (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003; Frith, 2013). Given that men's pleasure is prioritized above women's, such that women focus on their male partners and then wait for reciprocity that is frequently not returned, men then have the privilege of taking their own pleasure without then giving back to their partner. It is an uneven exchange that functions to undermine women's sexual pleasure, and when understood in relation to women's reported lack of feeling empowered, it is clear why women are left wanting more

than they receive from their hook up partners in the typical hook up. See Table 1 on page 74 for more details.

### **Rates of Orgasm**

There were significant differences in terms of orgasms between women's actual experiences and their desired experiences. This group of behaviors includes different types of orgasm, i.e. orgasm from oral sex, or orgasm from penile vaginal sex, or manual sex. This group of behaviors contains the largest discrepancies between women's actual and desired behaviors in the study, which do speak to other research that has found that women value orgasm as a measure of satisfaction (McClelland, 2014), and also speaks to the orgasmic imperative as well (Potts, 2000). Only 30% of women in this study reported having an orgasm via penile vaginal intercourse (PVI) in their most recent hook up; however 96% of the women reported desiring to have an orgasm through PVI, quite a large discrepancy. While 17% of women reported having orgasms from both manual/digital stimulation and oral sex, 78% of women reported desiring to have an orgasm from manual/digital stimulation and from oral sex as well, another large discrepancy between actual and desired hook up experiences. These findings speak to the fact that while few women reported they were having orgasms in their most recent hook ups from any type of stimulation, the vast majority of women reportedly desired to have orgasms. This finding reiterates the point made in other research that, despite the fact that orgasms are rare for women, they often value orgasms (Armstrong et al., 2012; Bell & McClelland, 2017; McClelland, 2014).

While women reported desiring to have more orgasms than they were actually experiencing in their hook ups, they were also very interested in making sure their male partners had orgasms, as more women reported wishing or desiring their partners to have orgasms than actually did. While 74% women reported their partner having an orgasm from penetrative

vaginal sex, 91% wished this would take place. Overall, women reported desiring and wishing for their male partner to have more orgasms from varied types of stimulation than they actually did, despite the fact that men's orgasms were nearly three times more common than women's.

When added up, women reported orgasm across a range of sexual activities a total of 11 times, whereas they reported their partners having orgasms from a range of activities a total of 28 times. It appears that in terms of orgasms, women's actual and desired experiences diverge quite a bit. Moreover, the findings speak to extant literature that shows that women's satisfaction often includes an emphasis on pleasing their partner, as well (e.g., McClelland, 2014). See Table 2 on page 75 for more details.

### **Protected Vs. Unprotected Sex**

The protected vs. unprotected group of sexual behaviors includes items from oral sex and PVI and whether these acts took place with condoms or without. Overall, women reported engaging in more unprotected sex than they desired to. While 26% of the women reported their partner ejaculated inside them with a condom, 57% of women desired this to happen, indicating more women desired to have protected sex than actually did. Twenty-two percent of women reported that their male partners ejaculated inside them without a condom, but only 9% of women reported desiring this to happen, indicating they desired less unprotected sex than they had. Not a single woman reported giving oral sex with a condom, but 1 woman (4%) reported they desired to use a condom during oral sex. Seventy-four percent of women reported giving oral sex to their male partners without using condoms, but only 52% of women reported desiring to do this, again indicating the desire for less unprotected sex. This pattern of results shows that when it comes to protected and unprotected sex, women's actual and desired experiences diverge quite a lot. See Table 3 on page 76 for more details.

Overall women in this study reported having more unprotected oral and penile vaginal sex than they would ideally like to experience. This difference may speak to women's concerns over sexual health and potential infection risks, or it may speak to women simply not being enthusiastic about giving oral sex despite the fact that the majority of women did give unprotected oral sex to their male partners. Whether or not women are able to negotiate condom use speaks to their sexual agency and empowerment, and also whether women were concerned that speaking up about condoms might cause a negative reaction in their partner that would come with some undesirable consequences.

Importantly, women gave more oral sex than they received. Men received oral sex commonly enough that it could be considered a relatively stable part of the typical hook up, that is, the vast majority of hook ups include men receiving oral sex from women, a finding that in part speaks to existing literature regarding sexual scripts (Heldman & Wade, 2010). However, the same is not true for women receiving oral sex from men. It appears that men's giving women oral sex during a hook up is more of an option, something that may or may not happen during a hook up.

### **Emotions**

Similar frequency statistics were run with regards to the emotions that women reported experiencing in their most recent hook up, and those they wished to have felt in their most recent hook up. As with the behavior cards, there were certain groups that had more discrepancies than others, and which speak to extant literature pertaining to women's emotional reactions to hook ups. These groups are: confidence and empowerment, emotional well being, and respect and self-worth. Complete tables for all emotion groups can be found on pages 74-85.

## **Confidence and Empowerment**

While some research has found that women associate feelings of empowerment with hooking up (Napper et al., 2015; Snapp et al., 2015), other research has shown that women occupy less powerful positions within hook up culture and possess less power to prioritize their own desires within this culture (Stinson, 2010). Therefore, women's feelings of self-confidence and empowerment are important to understand as they relate to women's overall ability to navigate hook up culture and pursue their own pleasure.

While relatively large numbers of women reported experiencing some of the positive dimensions in this group, even more women longed to experience these feelings, and in some cases large discrepancies existed between women's actual and desired experiences. For example, while 70% of women felt self-confident, 96% of women desired to. A majority of women (65%) reported that they felt sexually skilled, yet 96% women reported that they desired to feel skilled. Fifty-seven percent of women reported that they felt accomplished in their last hook up, but almost twice as many, 96% women reported they desired to feel accomplished. While 48% women reported they felt a sense of empowerment stemming from their recent hook up, more than twice that many, all 100% of the women endorsed desiring to feel empowered. It is possible that the idea of hook ups are imbued with a sense of self determination and sexual empowerment (Lovejoy, 2015), and so while many women reported having felt that way, it hovered around just half, all of the women reported desiring to feel a sense of empowerment.

Together, these dimensions of empowerment and self-confidence reveal that while women reported experiencing some of these feelings, it remains about half of women, whereas all women reported desiring to feel these emotions, indicating that perhaps they believe they *ought* to feel certain emotions pertaining to skill, confidence or empowerment in regards to their

hook ups. These gaps in women's actual and desired feelings of empowerment and self-confidence may also speak to women's gap in self-stimulation. It is possible that if women felt more empowered or self-confident that they would also feel more empowered to stimulate their own vulva during their hook ups and to prioritize their own pleasure in that way. See Table 4 on page 77 for more details.

### **Emotional Well Being**

Some literature on hook ups suggests that women experience very negative emotional outcomes from their hook ups, including feelings of regret or remorse over the hook up, or feelings of depression (Kenney et al., 2013; Owen et al., 2010). A very tiny percentage of women, just 13% reported feeling regret, indicating that the vast majority of women, 87%, are not reporting that they feel regret in their hook ups. Similarly, just 13% of women indicated they felt sad or depressed following their hook up, whereas 83% of women reported feeling happy. These findings certainly challenge the popular sentiment that hook ups are negative for women and that many women are experiencing regret or sadness as a result of their hook ups.

There were some discrepancies however, between women's actual and desired experiences in this group. Forty-eight percent of women reported feeling greater excitement, but 96% of women desired to. Thirty-five percent of women reported feeling tense about their last hook up, and none of the women desired to feel tense. Experiencing anxiety or tension does not necessarily mean it is a negative experience; women can experience tension or anxiety as a sort of anticipation of the hook up especially if it is with a new partner. Sixty-five percent of women reported having felt relaxed in their last hook up, and 96% of women reported desiring to have felt relaxed in their last hook up. Together, this group shows that women reported largely positive feelings related to their emotional well-being, such as being relaxed and happy, in

regards to their last hook up. Although even more women reported that they desired to feel these emotions about their hook ups than did, the findings do challenge extant literature that suggests hook ups cause women to feel depressed and regretful (Fielder et al., 2014; Kenney et al., 2013; Owen et al., 2010). See Table 5 on page 78 for more details.

### **Respect and Self Worth**

Glenn and Marquardt (2001) found that one of the most common feelings in relation to hook ups was feeling “desirable.” Owen and colleagues (2010) however found that women in particular felt negatively about their hook ups, including feeling hurt and confused, suggesting some mixed findings in extant literature. A positive finding from this group of emotions is that none of the women reported feeling worthless or unpopular in relation to their most recent hook up. While 57% of women reported feeling worthy, all 100% of women reported that they wanted to feel worthy, however, revealing a sizeable discrepancy between the two.

Another high-ranking item in this group is feeling desirable; 91% of women reported they felt desirable in their last hook up, and 100% of women reported wanting to feel desirable, confirming Glenn and Marquardt’s findings (2001). While 61% women said that they felt respected by their partner, 96% women indicated that they desired to feel respected, and only 9% of women said they felt disrespected. Interestingly only 13% women reported feeling popular in relation to their hook up but 52% women reported desiring to feel popular, another fairly large discrepancy between women’s actual and desired emotions. This aligns with prior research that suggests hooking up is a social phenomenon and that peers play a large role in hook up culture (Aubrey & Smith, 2013; Wade, 2017). Overall, women felt largely positive emotions in relation to self-worth and respect from their partners, which challenges the dominant narrative in the

literature that women are feeling hurt or disrespected by their hook up partners (Lovejoy, 2015; Owen et al., 2010). See Table 6 on page 79 for more details.

## **Discussion**

The card sorts illustrated what behaviors and feelings women reported they actually experienced and also desired to experience in relation to their most recent hook ups, showing both overlap and divergence. Some of the behaviors or feelings women indicated they desired to experience actually took place, and in this case women's desires and reality aligned. In other cases, women's card sorts showed that the behaviors and feelings they reported desiring to experience in their most recent hook ups did not map onto the actual experiences they had. Taken together, the results of the card sorts show that in some respects women are having the hook up experiences they desire to have, and yet other dimensions of their hook ups do not align with their desires. Where women's actual hook up and desired hook up experiences diverge can shed light on the importance of norms in shaping young women's hook ups, and how norms impact young women's ability to prioritize their own pleasure in hook ups with men.

### **The Actual Hook Up**

It appears from this study, that the actual college-aged hook up experience involves some sexual behaviors such as kissing, making out, taking each other clothes off, rubbing each other's bodies, as well as more sexually involved behaviors such as giving unprotected oral sex to men, rubbing each other's genitals, and having unprotected penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI). Finally, the actual hook up often includes the male partner's orgasm, usually from PVI. The actual hook up for women typically involves women giving men oral sex, and *maybe* receiving it, but most likely not. Some of the more common positive emotions women experienced included: Feeling relaxed, sexually skilled, feeling physically closer to their partner after the hook up, being more

attracted to and more interested in their partner, being excited to hook up with the same person again.

### **Discrepancies Between Actual & Desired Hook Up**

In many respects, women's actual hook ups align quite well with their desired hook up experiences, both in terms of behaviors and emotions. Women often desired the kissing and touching behaviors, as well as removing each other's clothes and giving oral sex to their partners and having PVI. However, some key discrepancies existed, notably that women desired to receive more oral and manual sex from their male partners, and they also desired to have more orgasms and to have more protected and less unprotected sex. The fact that women are not often receiving oral sex also explains why women are having orgasms so infrequently in this study, despite the fact that most hook ups include the male partner having an orgasm from at least one type of sexual stimulation. Oral and manual sex are much more likely to lead to an orgasm for women than is PVI (Armstrong et al., 2012). This finding is corroborated in the interview study (see Chapter 4), in which women lamented the lack of oral sex, and described fearing negative consequences should they ask their partner to give them oral sex.

In terms of emotions, women experienced high rates of positive emotions but longed for even more positive emotions. While 48% of the women reported feeling valued and empowered, and 61% reported feeling respected, nearly all the women reported wanting to feel these things about their hook ups. Certainly, 48% and 61% are significant proportions of the sample, when put in conversation with the literature on hooking up that paints the sexual landscape so fraught with risk and consequences for women (Kenney et al., 2013; Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). However, this also means that nearly half of women are not feeling valued, respected, or

empowered in their hook ups despite nearly all women reporting wanting to feel these emotions, and that is also a large proportion.

Women's lack of feeling empowered may also explain the fact that many women reported having unprotected vaginal sex despite the fact that they reported wishing they had protected vaginal sex in their most recent hook up. It is possible that if women felt more empowered in their hook ups that they would be able to negotiate more forms of protected sex as well. Moreover, these rates of empowerment may also help shed light on the fact that more women wished to self-stimulate their own vulva during the hook up than actually did. Similar to the discrepancies for the protected/unprotected forms of sex, it may be the case that if women felt more empowered during their hook ups that they would be able to negotiate more protected forms of sex and to feel comfortable self-stimulating during the encounter as well.

There were some large discrepancies in certain emotions such as feeling confused, physically satisfied, loved, used, and valued (see Tables at end of chapter on pages 74-85 for more details). While women do experience some positive emotions in relation to their hook ups, certain key emotions such as these reveal that women still struggle with finding a sense of empowerment and fulfillment from their hook ups, and long to feel respected by their hook up partners more than they currently do. In this case, women's actual hook up experiences do not align closely with what they imagine and hope they might experience emotionally speaking.

### **The Sexual Double Standard**

The discrepancies that exist between women's actual and desired hook up experiences are not accidental but instead manifest in certain patterns that speak to issues of women's empowerment and ability to negotiate their own sexual pleasure during their hook ups with men. The fact that women reported wishing for more oral sex and manual sex, as well as more

orgasms, together speak to the fact that women's sexual pleasure is not prioritized or taken as seriously as men's pleasure is. Women are more likely to have orgasms if they receive direct clitoral stimulation in their hook ups, something that is more easily achieved through oral and manual sex than through PVI (Armstrong et al., 2012). Hook ups are known to be vague and include a range of sexual behaviors (Lewis et al., 2013), yet, the fact that the average hook up involves mostly PVI rather than mutual oral and manual sex shows that male pleasure is prioritized above women's in the hook up. Men are more likely to have an orgasm from PVI than are women (Armstrong et al., 2012), and in a sexual scenario in which a wide range of behaviors might potentially take place, those behaviors that make his orgasm much more likely are the behaviors that happen almost invariably.

How did this set of behaviors come to be so common in a hook up? The term "hook up" has varying meanings and definitions, and has been used, at least in part, to provide some measure of confidentiality to those who use it, as people cannot be sure exactly what it means, (i.e., it might denote just kissing, or oral sex etc.) (Lewis et al., 2013; Wade, 2017). However, the hook up is a type of sexual context that took shape and arose from a sexual system that favors men socially; therefore it is not coincidental that hook up behaviors favor men sexually, as well.

Individuals who participate in hook up culture adhere to these strict, yet implicit, rules and norms, which help to then reify the structural inequality inherent to hook up culture. One of the prominent norms within this culture is that of the sexual double standard (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). The sexual double standard holds that men gain social status and power from having frequent sex with many women, whereas women are shamed for having sex, and the more casual sex partners she has, the more shame or social stigma she incurs (Trinh, 2015). This sexual double standard has been around for generations, and has roots within sexist ideology that

attributes sexual desire and drives to men, and sexual purity to women. Hook up culture might be relatively new, taking shape within the last couple of decades (Bogle, 2008), but it is buttressed by archaic sexual belief systems that then inform the sexual behaviors individuals engage in. If women are encountering social stigma for engaging in hook ups or other types of casual sex with men, perhaps one way to avoid some of this stigma is for her to have sex not for her own pleasure, but rather, for his.

Many women in this study reported not only desiring more orgasms for themselves, but also more orgasms for their male partners. Women also reported performing unprotected oral sex on their male partners very often, even though they said they desired to do it less than they did. It may be the case that women did not push for more reciprocity in oral and manual sex, or for more labor to be expended towards her own orgasm, because prioritizing her male partner's pleasure may have helped to shield her from the sexual double standard. Part of the stigma that attaches to women for having sex is the belief that they should not want sex as much as men do, or that they should not be as sexual as men are (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). By having sex that is more focused on his pleasure than hers, women can perhaps fend off the appearance of being overly desirous, or overly sexual. Should women have hook ups in which they orgasm and their male partner does not, they might be at risk for more stigma, and their hook up partners might potentially help fuel this stigma by speaking negatively of her within their shared social circles.

### **The Norm of Silence**

Trinh (2015) found that women receive mixed messages from their male and female friends about engaging in hook ups. On the one hand, they are encouraged to just have fun and hook up, and on the other hand, discretion is advised, and women are encouraged to be private and not discuss their hook ups (Trinh, 2015). These mixed messages encourage women to have

hook ups, that ultimately, may prioritize male pleasure, but at the same time, to keep it a secret because women are not supposed to be sexual (Trinh, 2015). These messages of silence and discretion may discourage women from speaking up about wanting more from their hook up partners. In fact, women in Trinh's study said that the messages they received from their friends rarely (18% of the time) acknowledged women's sexual desires (2015). The message women are left with is, enjoy it, but don't be too vocal about it.

Moreover, women in the same study were encouraged to hold off on sex until they felt they met someone they could have a future committed relationship with (Trinh, 2015), another message that undermined women's sexual desire or pleasure as a central reason for hooking up. All of these social messages and norms surrounding hook up culture may function to encourage women to prioritize their male partner's pleasure and to not speak up when they are not having the kinds of hook ups they desire to have. Women may also fear that if they speak up and ask for more kinds of sex or orgasms that this may offend or insult their partner's sense of masculinity or sexual prowess. A recent study revealed that men often viewed their female partner's orgasm as a masculinity achievement (Chadwick & van Anders, 2017). Other research has found that men feel a sense of responsibility towards their female partner's orgasms, as though they "give" their partners orgasms through an investment in sexual labor (Fahs, 2011). It is possible that women are concerned that asking for different things may be interpreted as a slight to their partner's sexual skill, and this concern may further encourage women to not verbalize things they would like more of. This norm of silence may have also encouraged women to accept more unprotected sexual behaviors than they desire, and to not ask for more protected forms of sex than they were having. Women in this study reported wanting to have more PVI and to give

more oral sex with condoms and also reported wishing to have less unprotected PVI and oral sex than they were.

### **Intimate Justice**

Women commonly reported feeling safe, relaxed, and happy about their hook ups. When analyzed through an intimate justice (McClelland, 2010) paradigm however, it may be that women reported high rates of positive emotions in relation to their hook ups despite these discrepancies between their actual and desired hook up encounters because their expectations for their hook ups may have been low to begin with. Given that women reported often desiring more orgasms, types of sexual stimulation, and protected sex, it would make sense if women reported more negative emotions than they did. However, if women have lower expectations about what they deserve or can expect from a hook up, that may help to explain why they reported some of these more positive emotional reactions to their hook ups despite these discrepancies.

In addition, these findings can be understood through a systems justification framework. It may be the case that in order to reduce cognitive dissonance that may come from acknowledging the discrepancies between women's actual and desired hook up experiences, that women instead emphasize positive emotions and regard their hook up experiences in a favorable light in order to justify the inequality associated with hook ups. Women reported their male partner having more orgasms than they did, and women reported desiring to have more orgasms from various types of sex, revealing some large discrepancies between their actual and desired pleasure derived from hooking up. Acknowledging this discrepancy could cause some cognitive dissonance for women, and women do not have the power to necessarily change the functional inequality of hook up culture. Instead of focusing on those discrepancies, perhaps women instead

emphasize positive emotional experiences in an unconscious effort to justify the structural inequality of hooking up.

When women are not having the kinds of behaviors they long to have, such as oral and manual sex, and more orgasms from a variety of types of sex, it may lead them to define their satisfaction in different ways. While orgasm is heralded as the gold standard of sexual fulfillment via the orgasm imperative (Potts, 2000), women are known to often define their own sense of satisfaction through their male partner's satisfaction rather than through their own orgasm or satisfaction (McClelland, 2014). If orgasm is off the table for whatever reason, how does one measure their own sexual pleasure? Perhaps these other kinds of pleasure become more important to women in the absence of orgasm, and they may also be more easily attainable for women to experience, which might help explain their overall positive feelings towards their hook up encounters. In Chapter 4, I explore how young women define sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men using in depth interviews.

### **Future Directions & Limitations**

The current study adds to the research on women's feelings and attitudes towards their hook ups and highlights positive emotions women feel which have been less explored in the extant literature. However, there are specific limitations of the current study that should be noted as well. While this study explored young college women's feelings and behaviors in their hook ups, and suggests that there may be certain activities that are typical of a hook up, this may only apply to young men and women who are in college and having heterosexual hook ups. Hook up culture is very prominent on college campuses, and this culture influences the behaviors that shape sexual experiences within a hook up (Wade, 2017). Whether or not the typical hook up looks the same for men and women who are having hook ups outside of college, or older men

and women remains unexplored. It is possible that older men and women who hook up outside of the very influential hook up culture may experience different behaviors or feelings, and may actually follow a different proscribed set of sexual behaviors. Given this, it is possible that mutual oral sex is in fact part of a typical hook up for different demographics even though it does not appear to be a part of the average hook up for young college women between the ages of 18 and 24.

Additionally, this sample was collected so as not to emphasize sexual orientation (i.e., women were eligible to participate regardless of sexual orientation or identity as long as they reported at least one consensual hook up with a man in the past six months). While some of the participants may have had diverse identities, these data were not collected, and therefore it is unknown if the sample was predominantly heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian or queer identified. That offers a unique strength, in so far as the study aimed to understand what the typical heterosexual hook up behaviors and feelings entailed, but it also serves as a limitation in terms of understanding if this norm is unique to a particular demographic. It is also very likely that the proscribed behaviors women follow in their hook ups with men look very different than the behaviors women would follow in hook ups with other women (Watson et al., 2017). The extant literature on hook up culture is overwhelmingly focused on heterosexual hook ups, and therefore, it would be impossible to extrapolate the norms of heterosexual culture to understand queer women's hook ups. This is a potential area of future research, and this line of work would need to begin with understanding how the norms of queer hook up culture function before beginning to understand what the typical hook up includes behavior wise. Moreover, it may be the case that queer women do not participate in hook up culture, but have casual sex that is not considered

“hook up” sex (Watson et al., 2017). That is a clarification that would also need to be fleshed out in future research.

### **Conclusions**

Overall, the current study provided an idea of what the typical hook up includes behaviorally for young women who are in college and having heterosexual hook ups. While the typical hook up includes some behaviors that align with women’s desired hook up behaviors, such as kissing, making out, touching, and having penetrative vaginal sex, there are some unique differences as well. It appears that women’s actual hook ups do not include mutual oral sex that takes place before PVI, contrary to past theorizations (Heldman & Wade, 2010; England et al., 2007), although it does include women giving men oral sex, which is frequently not reciprocated. By and large women reported longing for more varied types of sexual stimulation from their male partners, such as receiving oral or manual sex, and women continued to hope for orgasms, revealing their endorsement of the orgasmic imperative (Bell & McClelland, 2017; Potts, 2000). Importantly, women also reported desiring to have less unprotected sex than they were having in their hook ups, and they also said they longed to have more forms of protected sex than they were having, two important ways that the typical hook up diverged from women’s desired hook up.

Additionally, although women’s hook ups have been framed from a risk paradigm, with research highlighting the emotional and psychological risk women face in their hook ups with men (Kenney et al., 2013), the current study showed that women felt many positive emotions and attitudes in relation to their most recent hook up. Additionally, women reported desiring to experience more positive feelings than they did; all women reported wanting to feel empowered and desired. Women’s desire to feel more empowerment than they did may help explain the

finding that women were having more unprotected sex than they ideally would have liked to in their hook ups. It may be the case that women do not feel they have the power to negotiate safe sex, or negotiate their own pleasure in their hook ups with men.

In the next chapter, I explore women's sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men through in-depth interviews, and elaborate on the norms that influence women's pleasure and freedom to pursue pleasure in their hook ups with men.

## Tables

Table 1

Women Receiving Oral and Manual Sex

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Receive oral sex</b>	57%	91%	-34
<b>She rubs vulva</b>	17%	39%	-29
<b>Partner rubs vulva</b>	70%	96%	-26
<b>Receive fingering</b>	74%	87%	-13

*Note.*  $N = 23$ .

Table 2

Rates of Orgasm

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>She Orgasms PVI</b>	30%	96%	-66
<b>She Orgasms Fingering</b>	17%	78%	-61
<b>She Orgasms Oral</b>	17%	78%	-61
<b>They Orgasm Oral</b>	22%	43%	-21
<b>They Orgasm PVI</b>	74%	91%	-17
<b>They Orgasm Hand</b>	26%	35%	-9

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 3

Protected Vs. Unprotected Sex

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Came Inside Condom</b>	26%	57%	-31
<b>Give Oral Sex No Condom</b>	74%	52%	+22
<b>They Came Inside No Condom</b>	22%	9%	+13
<b>They came on her body</b>	22%	30%	-8
<b>They Came Her Mouth</b>	13%	17%	-4
<b>Give Oral Sex Condom</b>	0%	4%	-4

*Note. N = 23*

Table 4

Confidence and Empowerment

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Empowered</b>	48%	100%	-52
<b>Pride</b>	26%	78%	-52
<b>Accomplished</b>	57%	96%	-39
<b>Comfortable in Body</b>	65%	100%	-35
<b>Sexually Skilled</b>	65%	96%	-31
<b>More Self Confidence</b>	70%	96%	-26
<b>Less Self Confidence</b>	17%	0%	+17
<b>Disempowered</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Sexually Unskilled</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Uncomfortable in Body</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Ashamed</b>	9%	0%	+9
<b>Dominant</b>	17%	26%	-9
<b>Submissive</b>	43%	35%	+8
<b>Inferior</b>	4%	0%	+4
<b>Superior</b>	13%	17%	-4

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 5

## Emotional Well Being

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Fulfilled</b>	48%	96%	-48
<b>More Excitement</b>	48%	96%	-48
<b>Energized</b>	52%	96%	-44
<b>Tired</b>	52%	9%	+43
<b>Tense</b>	35%	0%	+35
<b>Relaxed</b>	65%	96%	-31
<b>Disappointed</b>	22%	0%	+22
<b>Happy</b>	83%	100%	-17
<b>Less Excitement</b>	17%	0%	+17
<b>Regret</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Sad</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Uncomfortable in Body</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Ashamed</b>	9%	0%	+9
<b>Inferior</b>	4%	0%	+4
<b>Physically Less Close</b>	0%	0%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 6

Respect and Self Worth

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Worthy</b>	57%	100%	-43
<b>Popular</b>	13%	52%	-39
<b>Respect</b>	61%	96%	-35
<b>Slutty</b>	22%	0%	+22
<b>Undesirable</b>	13%	0%	+13
<b>Disrespect</b>	9%	0%	+9
<b>Desirable</b>	91%	100%	-9
<b>Unpopular</b>	0%	0%	0
<b>Worthless</b>	0%	0%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 7

## Undressing and Touching Behaviors

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>They take own clothes off</b>	87%	52%	+35
<b>They take her clothes off</b>	78%	100%	-22
<b>She takes her own clothes off</b>	74%	52%	+22
<b>She takes their clothes off</b>	70%	87%	-17
<b>Dry Humping</b>	65%	74%	-9
<b>Watching porn together</b>	0%	9%	-9
<b>Rub partner over clothes</b>	96%	87%	+9
<b>Feel breasts over clothes</b>	91%	83%	+8
<b>Rub partner under clothes</b>	91%	87%	+4
<b>Partner rubs her over clothes</b>	91%	87%	+4
<b>Feel breasts under clothes</b>	96%	100%	-4
<b>Partner rubs her under clothes</b>	100%	100%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$ .

Table 8

Kissing and Making Out Behaviors

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Giving Hickeys</b>	26%	57%	-31
<b>Receiving Hickeys</b>	52%	65%	-13
<b>Kissing Breasts</b>	100%	91%	+9
<b>They Kiss Her Body</b>	91%	96%	-5
<b>Kissing No Tongue</b>	91%	87%	+4
<b>She Kisses Their Body</b>	87%	91%	-4
<b>Making Out</b>	96%	96%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$ .

Table 9

Anal Sex Behaviors

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Rimming Receive</b>	0%	9%	-9
<b>Rimming Give</b>	0%	4%	-4
<b>Receive Anal Condom</b>	0%	0%	0
<b>Receive Anal No Condom</b>	0%	0%	0
<b>Give Anal Condom</b>	0%	0%	0
<b>Give Anal No Condom</b>	0%	0%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$ .

Table 10

## Trust and Emotional Intimacy

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>More Trust</b>	30%	87%	-57
<b>Loved</b>	22%	78%	-56
<b>Emotional Comfort</b>	43%	96%	-53
<b>Valued</b>	48%	100%	-52
<b>Used</b>	43%	0%	+43
<b>Emotionally Closer</b>	39%	3%	+36
<b>Emotional Discomfort</b>	39%	4%	+35
<b>Safe</b>	83%	100%	-17
<b>Unloved</b>	17%	0%	+17
<b>Less Trust</b>	9%	0%	+9
<b>Emotionally Less Close</b>	13%	9%	+4
<b>Unsafe</b>	0%	0%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 11

Satisfaction and Wellness

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Clean</b>	26%	87%	-61
<b>Physically Satisfied</b>	48%	96%	-48
<b>Healthy</b>	65%	100%	-35
<b>Not Satisfied</b>	22%	0%	+22
<b>Satisfied</b>	78%	100%	-22
<b>Physically Closer</b>	74%	96%	-22
<b>Physically Well</b>	83%	100%	-17
<b>Turned On</b>	87%	100%	-13
<b>Turned Off</b>	9%	0%	+9
<b>Dirty</b>	17%	9%	+8
<b>Sick</b>	4%	0%	+4
<b>Physically Less Close</b>	0%	0%	0

*Note.*  $N = 23$

Table 12

Feelings Towards Partner

	Actual	Desired	Discrepancy
<b>Wonder if want to see you</b>	74%	25%	+49
<b>Nervous See Again</b>	48%	0%	+48
<b>Not Confused</b>	52%	96%	-44
<b>Confused</b>	43%	0%	+43
<b>Excited HU same person again</b>	70%	96%	-26
<b>Less Attracted</b>	22%	0%	+22
<b>More Attracted</b>	74%	91%	-17
<b>Curious</b>	39%	57%	-18
<b>Less Interested</b>	22%	9%	+13
<b>More Interested</b>	74%	87%	-13
<b>Anticipation See Again</b>	65%	74%	-9
<b>Excited HU someone</b>	70%	78%	-8

*Note.*  $N = 23$

## **Chapter 4 Women's Sexual Pleasure in Hook Ups**

### **Introduction**

The body of research pertaining to hook ups illustrates a sexual landscape that is full of risks for young women and comes with few potential benefits (Kenney et al., 2013). One of these costs is thought to be a lack of pleasure for women who hook up with men, a conclusion supported by research showing very low rates of orgasms for women who hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Despite this, many women list “pleasure” as the primary motive for hooking up (Shepardson et al., 2016). There is very little known about what women find pleasurable about their hook ups outside these rates of orgasm, including what kinds of cognitive or emotional types of pleasure they might experience in their hook ups. Given the wealth of knowledge about the rules, norms, and sexual double standard within hook up culture which are known to be more restrictive for women than for men, and that encourage women to prioritize men's pleasure above their own (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015; Wade, 2017), certain questions remain: What types of pleasure do women experience in their hook ups, and how might the restrictive norms of hook up culture impact women's sexual pleasure or their freedom to prioritize their own pleasure in their hook ups with men?

Some of the costs or risks that women are thought to take on when they hook up include sexual risks such as pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as emotional or psychological risks such as depression and anxiety, and social risks, such as sexual or social stigma that stems from having casual sex (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). These high costs underlie the premise that hook ups are negative for women, and that women should be protected

from these sexual encounters that are detrimental to their emotional and physical well being. However, little is known about what women find pleasurable about their hook ups with men, aside from the low rates of orgasm. Given that sexual pleasure is commonly listed as the primary motive for engaging in hook ups, it is important to more fully understand what that pleasure consists of, in order to have a more accurate assessment of the actual costs and benefits associated with hooking up for women.

The norms of hook up culture, such as the sexual double standard, grant men social status for engaging in hook ups, and functions to make women feel shame or negative social stigma for having casual sex (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). Within this culture, researchers have consistently found that men's sexual pleasure is prioritized as most important, (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015; Wade, 2017). How women interact with such norms, and how these norms have impacted women's ability to pursue their own pleasure, remains largely unexplored in the literature. It is important to have a more thorough account of women's sexual pleasure and the factors that impact women's ability to pursue their own pleasure during their hook ups with men.

### **Literature Review**

Several bodies of literature are relevant to understanding women's experiences with hook ups, and the factors that contribute to optimal sexual experiences for women. It is necessary to first begin by exploring the norms of hook up culture, as this particular socio-sexual context plays a significant role in shaping the sexual activities of men and women who hook up, and these behaviors can then have a large impact upon women's sexual pleasure. Women face stigma for participating in hook up culture, and the gendered norms of hook up culture encourage women to prioritize their male partner's pleasure above their own (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015; Wade, 2017). Little is known about women's pleasure in hook ups beyond their low rates of

orgasms. It is important to explore what women's sexual pleasure in hook ups looks like, and what factors can help facilitate women's pursuit of their own sexual pleasure.

### **Hook Up Culture & The Sexual Double Standard**

Hook up culture is a social milieu rife with its own implicit rules and norms for how women and men should navigate this sexual realm (Wade, 2017). Much has been written about the prevalence of the sexual double standard within hook up culture (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). The sexual double standard exists in many, if not all, social and dating contexts within American culture, and essentially grants men social or sexual status for engaging in and discussing sexual exploits, whereas women face social stigma for the same behavior (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015).

Lovejoy (2015) examined the way that hook ups functioned as a type of individualistic practice, which is to say that people engage in hook ups as part of a continual self-improvement ideology that is espoused within American culture. Lovejoy conducted 30 in-depth qualitative interviews with college women who came from diverse religious, class, and racial/ethnic backgrounds, between the ages of 18 and 22, and who identified as heterosexual. Lovejoy found that hook up culture was characterized by a set of norms that allowed individuals to pursue their own sexual interests free from concern for their partners, although women did face the sexual double standard for engaging in hook ups. One of the positive effects of this individualistic practice however is that women had the freedom to pursue their own sexual interests free from the constraints of a romantic relationship. It has been suggested that hook ups have become more common than traditional dating or relationships on college campuses, possibly in part due to the fact that casual sex typically requires less time investment than a committed relationship (Bogle, 2007; Reid et al., 2015; Wade, 2017). While both women and men are strongly encouraged to

participate in hook up culture, women must do so while carefully navigating the sexual double standard, and negotiating their sexual pleasure within a less than favorable sexual context (Lovejoy, 2015).

Similarly, Trinh (2015) found that while women were encouraged to partake in hook up culture, that they are expected to do so covertly, and doing so would assist women in avoiding some of the repercussions associated with hooking up such as the sexual double standard. In her mixed methods study with 451 undergraduate women between the ages of 17 and 22, Trinh (2015) examined short response answer that were coupled with survey responses to better understand women's experiences with hook up culture. One of the themes that arose from this qualitative analysis showed that women were expected to play the role of sexual gatekeeper, which means carefully deciding when and with whom to have sex, and delaying sex until a committed relationship has been established. Women received mixed messages about hooking up, both endorsing hook ups and sexual agency, and condemning women who were public about their casual sexual experiences. The expectation that women engage in hook ups, but not too loudly or too openly, may have implications for understanding how women negotiate their own sexual pleasure within hook ups. Hook up norms are gendered and simultaneously proscribe that women be agentic and passive, a confusing mix of roles for any woman to navigate.

Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) collected a longitudinal ethnographic and interview study with a group of 53 college women between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. The number of interviews varied by year, ranging from 35 to 43. The authors found that women did report gender double standards and fear of garnering a bad reputation (i.e., being labeled a "slut") by being involved in hook ups. However, the authors also noted that women found hook ups provided them with the ability to get the benefits of sex and intimacy without the time and

commitment that a more committed relationship typically requires. Similarly, Allison and Risman (2014) likewise found the sexual double standard in their study of hook up culture. The authors collected in-depth qualitative interviews with 87 men and women enrolled in a public college regarding their experiences with hook up culture (Allison & Risman, 2014). The authors reported that almost half of participants, and more men than women, lost respect for women who hooked up “a lot,” clearly endorsing the sexual double standard (Allison & Risman, 2014).

### **Hook Up Behaviors & Oral Sex**

Some research has explored the different types of sexual behaviors that may fall under the definition of a hook up (Lewis et al., 2013). In their study, Lewis and colleagues had 3,224 students who were primarily heterosexual (94%) between the ages of 18 and 25 years old (56% female) fill out a survey designed to assess both their definitions of hooking up and their views of the kinds of behaviors included in this definition. Findings showed that the definition of a hook up depended on the person using it, and their own personal experiences with hooking up (i.e., whether their hook ups included certain sexual behaviors). Additionally, while this study did ask about certain sexual behaviors, it was quite limited, and included only kissing, digital stimulation, oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex. It remains unknown what the typical or average hook up includes in terms of sexual behaviors, or if there is even a “typical” or average hook up, given the wide range of sexual activities that count as a hook up.

What kinds of behaviors take place in an average hook up has importance for understanding women’s sexual pleasure in hook ups. Some researchers have theorized that there is a mutual exchange of oral sex between partners that occurs before engaging in penile vaginal intercourse (PVI) as part of a typical hook up sexual script (Heldman & Wade, 2010). However, it is not known if mutual oral sex is really an established part of the typical hook up. Whether or

not mutual oral sex occurs in the average hook up is an important factor when it comes to women's sexual pleasure in hook ups. It is known that women are more likely to have an orgasm if they receive either oral or manual sex (Armstrong et al., 2012; Blair & Pukall, 2014; Kinsey et al., 1953; Laumann et al., 1994).

A few studies have assessed rates of oral sex in hook ups and found varying results. Kuperberg and Padgett (2015) used data from the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS) and included responses from 24,131 men and women who had opposite sex hook ups and same sex hook ups. The authors found that oral, vaginal, and anal sex were all equally likely to take place in same sex hook ups, but not opposite sex hook ups (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2015). Opposite sex hook ups were more likely to include vaginal sex and oral sex for women (i.e., women gave oral sex). Armstrong and colleagues (2012) conducted an analysis using the same data set (OCSLS) and looked at rates of orgasm and oral sex among 6,591 of the female participants who took the survey and reported having sex with men within either hook ups or relationships. Women in this study reported receiving oral sex in hook ups only 23% of the time, whereas women in relationships reported receiving oral sex 56% of the time, more than twice as often as women in hook ups.

In a study of sexual practices among adolescents, Halpern-Felsher, Cornell, Kropp, & Tschann (2005) found that almost 20% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students had engaged in oral sex (Stinson, 2010). While not measuring hook ups specifically, the rates of oral sex in adolescents appear similar to the rates of oral sex found in hook ups among college students, hovering around the 20% mark. Finally, Fielder and colleagues (2013) also measured rates of receiving or giving oral sex during hook ups. In their study with 483 women ages 18 - 25, women completed a baseline and eight follow up surveys. Results from this study showed that about 20% of women reported

receiving oral sex, and about 25% of women reported giving oral sex during a hook up, and 25% of women reported having a vaginal hook up. While these numbers are somewhat lower than the prevalence rates of hooking up that hover around 70% or more, the authors limited their sample to hook ups that included sex, and excluded kissing or making out hook ups, which narrowed down the definition of a “hook up” significantly (Fielder et al., 2013).

Not only is oral sex more likely to lead to an orgasm for women, but different kinds of hook ups, i.e., oral and vaginal, are linked to different psychological outcomes for women. Vrangalova (2015) studied different sexual behaviors within a hook up and psychological outcomes. This sample consisted of 872 undergraduate men and women (59% women), who completed surveys regarding their sexual behaviors and emotions at two time points. A total of 671 students completed both assessments. Findings showed that oral hook ups were linked to higher life satisfaction and higher anxiety for women (Vrangalova, 2015). Interestingly, men did not show the same pattern of results; men showed higher anxiety, as well, but also higher depression, and they did not experience higher life satisfaction as women did. Men who had genital hook ups expressed more anxiety, but women who had genital hook ups did not experience higher anxiety (Vrangalova, 2015). Together these studies show that oral sex is common in hook ups, although the studies consistently find that women receive less often than they give to male partners. Additionally, hook ups that include oral sex tend to predict both anxiety and life satisfaction for women.

### **Sexual Pleasure & Hook Ups**

When women receive manual or oral sex in their hook ups, they are more likely to experience an orgasm, which is just one type of sexual pleasure (Armstrong et al., 2012). Few women reported having orgasms during their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), and knowing

that oral sex greatly increases women's likelihood of having an orgasm during sex, it remains unclear whether oral sex is truly an integral part of the average or typical hook up behaviors. Additionally, the definition of hook up covers a range of sexual activities, meaning a hook up could include just kissing or touching. Exploring the kinds of pleasure women experience in a range of different types of hook up contexts is important for really understanding women's sexual pleasure in hook ups more generally. It is unlikely that orgasm is the only kind of pleasure women experience in their hook ups.

At the same time that women's pleasure is diverse and includes more than just orgasm, these pleasures are culturally constituted and are shaped by the norms of hook up culture. The norms that structure hook up culture prioritize male pleasure in the form of an orgasm, and this makes women's orgasm less likely, but also opens the door for her to define and experience other pleasures that are not centered around orgasm. These pleasures are important to understand because they factor into the motivations for women to hook up, even in the absence of orgasm. However, these pleasures are culturally constructed and likely made more frequent precisely because of the structural inequality associated with hook up culture and the priority placed on men's orgasms.

Armstrong and colleagues (2012) paired their quantitative analysis of the OCSLS data with 85 in depth interviews with women and men about their hook ups. Women reported that they were most likely to experience orgasms when they were with a partner with whom they felt cared for them, and whom they could communicate with about their likes and dislikes (Armstrong et al., 2012). Some women highlighted the importance of a partner's willingness to give her oral sex, with one woman reporting "...so he made sure I came before he came. And he was like okay with having sex, and then going down on me, so I came, and then going back to

having sex and then he came...” (p. 455). However, these experiences of receiving oral sex were much less likely to occur in hook ups than they were in relationships. The authors noted that in all references to oral sex, women were reflecting upon boyfriends and not hook up partners (Armstrong et al., 2012). The authors also noted that both women and men seemed skeptical of women’s entitlement to pleasure and orgasm in hook ups, but not in relationships, and women reported feeling a sense of duty to please their male partners during hook ups, and men reported that they tend to focus on only themselves during hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Lovejoy (2015) conducted in depth interviews with 30 women who were in college regarding their experiences with hook ups. Lovejoy documented both costs and benefits to hooking up, both of which were being facilitated by the individualistic practices associated with hook up culture, i.e., the tendency to focus on one’s own needs and to view partners as tools to achieving one’s desires (Lovejoy, 2015). The gendered inequality associated with hook up culture, specifically the sexual double standard, encourages women to prioritize their partner’s pleasure over their own. When combined with the individualistic practices of hook up culture, Lovejoy (2015) noted that women were positioned in such a way as to be taken advantage of while men had greater power to pursue or prioritize their own needs and pleasures during hook ups with women.

Together, these interview studies reveal that women are less likely to pursue their own pleasure during hook ups, and more likely to receive oral sex, and by virtue of this, experience orgasms, during relationships than they are during hook ups. What remains unexplored in the interview literature on hook ups and pleasure is the varied types of pleasure women might experience during hook ups. While it may be difficult for women to prioritize their own orgasm, one type of pleasure, during hook ups due to the gendered inequalities of hook up culture, other

kinds of pleasure may be more achievable for women who hook up, and easier for women to prioritize than orgasms during their hook ups with men.

### **Ideal Sexual Encounters**

Just what makes a sexual encounter ideal? For many women, it is presumed that relationship sex is better or more fulfilling than casual sex, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that relationship sex is more likely to lead to an orgasm for women (Armstrong et al., 2012). Trinh discusses how sex that takes place within romantic committed relationships between heterosexual partners is considered ideal according to traditional femininity norms, although this model diverges significantly from the prevalent hook up culture (Trinh, 2015). Within a hook up, however, the standard for ideal sex is somewhat vague and less well defined, in part, because the definitions of what counts as a hook up vary, and the culture itself is already outside the bounds of what is considered ideal for women's sexuality.

Trinh (2015) studied college women's (N=415) implicit and explicit messages from friends regarding the norms of hooking up. Women reported receiving mixed messages from friends; some advice included waiting for the right committed relationship that was clearly leading to marriage, whereas others emphasized waiting until they were ready to hook up and would not regret it, and still others emphasized the need to be secretive of their hook ups to avoid stigma (Trinh, 2015). Very few of these messages referenced the woman's level of desire or interest in the given sexual scenario. Ideal sex for many of the women in this study centered on the right timing in a general sense, and also called upon traditional romantic ideals (Trinh, 2015).

Researchers conducted interviews with 30 older men and women between the ages of 60 and 82, who had been in long term couples (25-52 years long) in order to understand what their optimal sex consisted of (Menard, Kleinpatz, Rosen, Lawless, Paradis, Campbell, & Huber,

2015). The authors found that letting go of negative beliefs about oneself or sexuality (such as restrictive religious messages) played a significant role in allowing participants to experience great sex (Menard et al., 2015). Additionally, participants in this study described great sex as hard work, taking dedication and commitment to work at it. Finally, having a strong relationship, and having knowledge of the partner's desires or likes contributed to the higher quality of sex for these couples (Menard et al., 2015). While certainly older than the average college student who hook ups, this study provided some indication of what might contribute to ideal sexual encounters for any individual; women who have repeat hook ups with the same guy are more likely to have orgasms in subsequent hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), indicating that familiarity with one's partner is conducive to pleasurable hook ups.

A second study aimed to understand what factors contribute to optimal sex and included interviews with 76 men and women who identified as LGBTQ (Kleinpatz, Menard, Paradis, Campbell, & Dagleish, 2013). This sample was also older than most college students, with all participants being over 60 years of age and in relationships of at least 25 years. Both male and female participants noted that while orgasms were pleasurable they were not necessary for optimal sex (Kleinpatz et al., 2013). Men and women also noted having to lose some negative messages about sexuality that they had picked up along their sexual careers, such as identifying and working to resolve sexual fears or insecurities (Kleinpatz et al., 2013).

Taken together, these studies provide some sense of what contributes to great or ideal sexual experiences, and also highlights what remains unknown. The assumption in much of the literature is that relationship sex is better sex, to the degree that even studies on great sex select for only long-term couples (Kleinpatz et a., 2013; Menard et al., 2015), as though great sex is not as likely, or even possible, among younger individuals who are in relationships or having casual

sexual experiences. Even among those women who hook up, messages they receive from peers center around romantic ideals and the inherent shame of hooking up that arises from the sexual double standard (Trinh, 2015). If great or pleasurable sex exists among those women who are hooking up, it has yet to be described, at least in part, because many presume it does not exist.

### **Current Study**

The current study sought to understand what kinds of pleasure women experience in their hook ups with men, and how these types of pleasure might be informed or shaped by the norms associated with hook up culture. While research has shown that women are largely not having orgasms during hook ups with men, we know very little about what women's pleasure in hook ups looks like outside these rates of orgasm. Women's pleasure is known to be more complex than just orgasm, and understanding the various kinds of pleasure that women experience during their hook ups with men, including but not limited to orgasm, helps shed light on why women continue to hook up in such high numbers despite the apparent costs of doing so. Additionally, this study will help shed light on how the norms of hook up culture help to shape women's pleasure in ways that makes orgasm less likely, but other kinds of pleasure perhaps more likely.

The current study used in-depth qualitative interviews with young college women to better understand their experiences of sexual pleasure in hook ups with men. Interviews provide a holistic picture of what women's sexual pleasure looks like in hook ups with men, gathering nuanced information and personal experiences from participants. Additionally, interviews provide the participants with the opportunity to include or relay information that may not have been thought of a priori, and therefore, interviews often give the ability to understand participants' experiences and how they exist within a larger social context.

## Methods

### Sample

The interview sample included young women who were in college (any year), who were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old ( $M = 19.4$ ), and who had reported having at least one consensual hook up with a man in the past six months. The purpose of this study was to understand what women's sexual pleasure in hook ups with male partners looks like, and therefore sexual orientation was not relevant, as women could be of any sexual identity or orientation and still have hook ups with men. In addition to these demographics, the sample was racially and ethnically representative of the U.S. population, in order to understand what the phenomena of sexual pleasure in hook ups looks like for a diverse sample of young women. The racial breakdown was as follows: white ( $n = 16$ ), Latina ( $n = 1$ ), Black/African American ( $n = 3$ ), Biracial ( $n = 1$ ), Asian American ( $n = 2$ ). Finally, women were recruited who reported a range of hook up behaviors, ranging from kissing to intercourse, in order to provide a sample that had a diverse set of experiences with hook ups. It is likely that if young women have hook ups that only involve kissing, that their pleasure might look very different from a woman who has a hook up that involves sex. Therefore, the sample was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity as well as in the types of hook ups women reported having experienced.

### Recruitment

Women were recruited using flyers that were posted on nearby college campuses in a medium sized Midwestern city. Participants were also recruited using online ads through Craigslist volunteer section posted in the same city. Participants emailed the study team requesting more information, and were sent a link to a screening survey to determine eligibility status. The screening survey asked participants to report their age, race/ethnicity their year in

college, whether they had a consensual hook up with a man in the past 6 months, and what types of behaviors they engage in during their hook ups. Women were sampled to select a racially/ethnically representative sample as well as to select a diverse sample in terms of sexual behaviors in hook ups. Women who were eligible to participate were sent a map and directions to campus, with a link to my online calendar. Participants signed up for an in-person interview lasting one hour.

### **Procedure**

I met participants and escorted them to a private room to conduct the study. I gave the participants a consent form to read over and sign. Following informed consent protocol, I asked participants if they had any questions, and then turned on two audio recorders. Participants completed four card-sorting activities before completing the interview (see Chapter 3). The card sorting activities asked participants to reflect on their most recent hook up and sort four stacks of cards containing sexual behaviors and feelings. Following the card sorting activities participant answered several questions about their hook up experiences. After completing the interview, participants were given \$25 cash for participation, or \$30 cash if they also paid for public parking.

The interviews followed four card sorting activities, which functioned to give participants time to reflect on their most recent hook up experience and the kinds of behaviors they engaged in as well as their feelings or attitudes about that hook up. Immediately following the card sorting activities, I asked participants a few general questions to gain some context pertaining to their most recent hook up that they were reflecting on when doing the card sorts. For example, participants were asked: “Was this someone that you have hooked up with once or more than once? Is this someone that you would like to have a relationship with should that develop?”

These smaller queries then lead into the larger interview questions. The interview questions were drafted carefully, with attention paid creating questions that would not influence participant's answers in one direction or another (see Appendix B for interview protocol).

The interviews were structured so that they began with less intrusive or personal questions, and participants were gradually lead to some of the deeper questions pertaining to sexual pleasure, to give them time to acclimate to the interview process, think about their prior hook ups, and build trust and rapport with me. The content of the questions were carefully crafted so that they discussed "enjoyment" and did not use words that might be leading or encourage participants in an artificial way. For example, the questions never used the words "pleasure" or "orgasm," but asked about what participants liked or enjoyed about their hook ups, or what they might like more of in future hook ups.

Examples of questions that participants were asked in relation to their hook ups included items such as: "Is there anything you would like more of when it comes to your hook ups? Do any of your past hook ups stand out to you as ones you've liked more than others? If so, can you say a bit about what made that one(s) better for you?" Additionally, the questions were phrased in such a way that participants did not feel compelled to answer in the affirmative to any question (i.e., pleasure was not assumed to have been present in women's hook ups), which allowed participants who may not have experienced any pleasurable hook ups to discuss their prior experiences as well. This was an important aspect to the interview protocol, as one of the guiding research questions was simply whether women are experiencing sexual pleasure in their hook ups, therefore it was crucial to not lead the participants in any way and to provide opportunities for women to discuss any relevant hook up experiences, regardless of whether they were pleasurable or not.

## **Analysis**

### **Frameworks**

Hook up culture has its own unique set of norms that are arguably different than the sexual norms that exist within a dating or established exclusive relationship (Bogle, 2007; Heldman & Wade, 2010). For example, while the sexual double standard exists within all types of dating or sexual contexts, it is more pronounced within hook up culture as a result of the casual nature of the sexual experiences. Women must pay special attention to this double standard and navigate the hook up culture carefully so as to downplay or diminish the potential for incurring negative social stigma (Heldman & Wade, 2010; Lovejoy, 2015).

In order to understand the role that sexual norms play in women's pleasure within a hook up encounter, my analysis paid special attention to women's descriptions of engaging with the expectations, rules, or norms of the hook up culture, and what, if any, impact these norms have had on women's subsequent pleasure, or ability to seek pleasure, within their hook ups. This analysis included coding for women's references to norms or expectations of certain behaviors, or mentions of how these behaviors (or absence of behaviors) have impacted women's enjoyment. For example, some women said that they tend not to ask for oral sex but instead focus on giving their male hook up partner fellatio as it just felt "expected" of them to do so, which is a reference to an implied hook up norm. Such explanations were also references to a double standard in which women feel obligated to tend to their male partner's pleasure and also downplay the importance of their own pleasure at the same time. Therefore, this analysis sought to understand women's engagement with the norms of hook up culture and how these norms impacted women's sexual pleasure.

## **Coding, Theme Generation & Refinement**

Analysis of the interview transcripts was done using thematic analysis strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2015). Thematic analysis is a particular type of qualitative analysis that looks for themes or patterns in the data, which help to characterize broad trends among participants' experiences or narratives. The process included reading interview transcripts and applying codes, which are short descriptive labels, to an excerpt or selection of text to capture an idea. Once all excerpts were grouped together according to their code labels, the codes were then revised through an iterative process of reading the corresponding excerpts and reflection. In this stage of the process, some codes were combined together as a result of significant overlap between the codes, and some codes were divided to form two or more codes as there were multiple distinct ideas captured within the excerpts. After code generation, application, and refinement, different codes were grouped together to form larger patterns or themes within the data. Themes contained several types of codes that all captured different dimensions of a particular phenomenon, such as actual pleasure or future pleasure, for example.

Once the themes were generated, they were read and refined in an iterative process until the theme descriptions and corresponding excerpts captured the nuance of overarching patterns in the interviews while also remaining distinct from other themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Farvid & Braun, 2017). Theme refinement included reading the theme descriptions and the theme excerpts to make sure all types or dimensions of a particular theme were captured in the theme description, as well as comparing themes to one another to see how well themes go together. Once a theme captured all the distinct nuances of the excerpts contained within, while also remaining distinct from other themes, the theme revision phase of the analysis was completed.

Themes should be distinct from one another while also being able to tell a story about women's sexual pleasure when themes are put in conversation with each other. Theme revision and refinement included this last step of reflecting on the way themes combined to tell a larger story about women's sexual pleasure, and the themes were revised in an iterative process until a narrative developed both between and within the themes. If the themes did not combine in a way that told a compelling or cogent narrative about women's sexual pleasure, then the revising and refinement of themes continued until this narrative developed from the combination of themes held together.

### **Coding Decisions**

I conducted the coding process and thematic analysis without assistance. Some research teams utilize inter-rater reliability scores as a way to gather statistical evidence of their agreement regarding interpretation of the coded excerpts between two or more researchers. However, this is not a necessary process for every qualitative analysis, and some qualitative and feminist researchers firmly believe that inter-rater reliability upholds a positivistic epistemology that undergirds much of the dominant quantitative methodology within social science research (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinmen, Marteau, 1997; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morse, 1994; 1997).

One argument against the use of inter-rater reliability comes from Morse (1994; 1997) who asserted that all scientists bring subjectivity to their analyses and inter-rater reliability only gives the impression of objectivity, when objectivity is not necessarily the goal. Morse also pointed out that each researcher brings a certain level of subjectivity to every step of their analysis, including the way they read and interpret scientific sources or research to help build their argument. Therefore, subtracting that subjectivity at the level of data analysis is inconsistent with the process of meaning making in all science but especially in qualitative methods, wherein

subjectivity is valued rather than regarded as a detriment to the rigor of the research results (Morse, 1994; 1997).

In one novel study aimed to understand how similarly researchers interpreted qualitative data when coded independently, results showed that researchers came up with very similar themes, but it was in the way these results were packaged and given context that they differed somewhat (Armstrong et al., 1997). The authors concluded that this is the same level of agreement one might expect to achieve should they have used inter-rater reliability in theme generation and application, and therefore, recommend that the use of reliability scores in qualitative research is not necessary, but more of a personal choice. They also acknowledge the inherent subjectivity in this process, but similarly to Morse (1994; 1997) regard subjectivity as a strength rather than a flaw to the research process.

There has been a certain level of subjectivity throughout the research process, which aligns with both Armstrong's and Morse's arguments regarding the inherent subjectivity involved throughout the scientific process (Armstrong et al., 1997; Morse, 1994; 1997). I have read the research and synthesized the literature in a way that brings a question to bear on women's sexual pleasure in hook ups as per my own subjective interpretation of the extant literature. Morse (1997) makes the argument that multiple coders do not possess the same background knowledge that the primary investigator does, and therefore the primary investigator possesses a subjectivity that is well informed and perhaps better suited to carry out analyses than multiple coders who do not possess the same background. This inherent subjectivity is not a detriment to the rigor or merit of the scientific process or the results, but rather, is strength, and a specific scientific lens through which the literature and results are understood (Armstrong et al., 1997; Morse, 1994).

In light of this, I chose not to use inter-rater reliability or multiple coders as I regard the consistency in subjectivity that comes from being the sole investigator and interviewer to be a strength rather than a detriment (Armstrong et al., 1997; Morse, 1994). Moreover, embracing the inherent subjectivity that comes with interpreting and coding data without inter-rater reliability and without multiple coders supports my own relationship to positivism; I do not regard participant narratives to hold a singular truth that needs to be revealed via agreement or negotiation with other researchers, or through the use of statistical measures. My interpretation of the data will be but one that is possible among many, not the only interpretation that then needs corroboration for accuracy.

### **What types of pleasure do women experience in their hook ups with men?**

The first research question aimed to understand the various types of pleasure women experienced in their recent hook ups with men and the types of pleasure they hoped to experience in their future hook ups with men. This analysis focused on the manifest level of what women said in regards to their pleasure (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An iterative process of coding, reflecting on, and refining themes was carried out in order to identify common patterns in women's narratives regarding their types of pleasure. Given that prior research has focused singularly on women's sexual pleasure in hook ups in terms of the presence or absence of orgasm (Armstrong et al., 2012), this analysis sought to discover the wide variety or dimensions of pleasure women gained from their hook ups with men.

Coding for this information included looking for reference to any types of enjoyment the women described in their hook ups, such as saying that they liked or enjoyed certain behaviors, or that they thought something "felt good" or "fun" or "nice" or "exciting." For example, some women stated that they found the anonymity of a hook up to be "exciting" or "thrilling," and

some described a variety of other pleasurable activities, such as emotional intimacy, cuddling, friendship, relaxation, stress relief, and greater self or sexual confidence. Certain questions such as, “have you had any hook ups that stand out to you as one’s you’ve liked more than others, and if so can you tell me what made it good?” also yielded responses from women regarding current types of pleasure they have experienced in their hook ups.

Additionally, this question aimed to understand the kinds of pleasure women reported that they desired to achieve in their future hook ups. One question in the interview asked women if there is anything else that they would like their future hook ups to include, and responses to this question included references to some types of pleasure women reportedly have hoped to achieve someday, such as orgasm, or more cuddling or emotional intimacy. Other questions from the interviews may have also prompted these discussions from women, such as the question, “What would be a best imaginable or ideal hook up for you?” Women stated such things as wishing to have more cuddling time, or wishing to spend time with their hook up partner outside the hook up, and some women stated that they really long for reciprocity in oral sex, all different types of pleasurable activities that they desired their future hook ups to include. These descriptions of current and future pleasure were stated more clearly within the interview transcripts and referred to directly by the women, especially in regards to certain questions that are designed to tap into these constructs specifically, and therefore this research question was able to be analyzed on a more manifest level.

### **How do social norms impact women’s pleasure?**

The second research question was: How do sexual norms impact the types of sexual pleasure women experience in their hook ups? The iterative process of identifying and refining themes looked for latent meaning in participants’ narratives, that is, the thematic analysis went

beyond what was expressly stated and searched for implied meaning or any underlying beliefs, values, or assumptions that guided participants' narratives and experiences within hook up culture. This analysis was guided by a social norms framework (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). A social norms framework holds that there exist shared cultural rules or implicit norms in terms of what should transpire within a given situation, who should engage in specific behaviors, or what can be generally expected to occur based on shared cultural understandings (Lovejoy, 2015; Allison & Risman, 2014).

Women's descriptions of engaging with the norms or rules of hook up culture, and the perceived effects of these rules on their pleasure, were interpreted in the analysis through a social norms framework, as the informal rules and norms of hook up culture proscribe a set of rules about what the actors within the hook up should do or not do. Coding for this information included looking for references women made to feeling as though certain behaviors or acts are just expected to happen or not happen within the hook up. These references implied that the women were engaging with implicit norms and rules of hook up culture, and adhering to these norms or not adhering to them.

Additionally, the coding looked for any references women made in regards to communicating about their sexual likes and dislikes with their partner, or alternatively, describing any difficulty in communicating their wants to their partner as a result of these norms or rules of hook up culture. These descriptions indicated that how women engaged with these expectations or rules impacted their pleasure or ability to pursue pleasure within the hook up. These descriptions were ultimately interpreted through a social norms framework, which shed light on how the norms of hook up culture influenced the types of behaviors a woman engages in during a hook up, or the types of pleasure that are made possible by these behaviors.

Some women stated directly that certain behaviors directly impacted their pleasure in certain ways, but it was also implied through the women's narratives of navigating the norms or rules within hook up culture and how this negotiation of norms indirectly affected their pleasure. For example, some women stated that while they really wanted oral sex, they would not ask for it but instead they focused on their male partners' pleasure as it just felt expected of them to do so. This was an example of a reference to a norm of hook up culture that prioritizes male pleasure over a woman's pleasure, and shows how this norm inhibited women from asking for something that they really desired.

Another woman stated that she really was hoping her partner would give her oral sex, but she refrained from asking for it directly as she worried about how he might react to this request. Both of these examples show how women engaged with the implicit rules or expectations of hook ups, and how these rules subsequently impacted their pleasure or what types of pleasure were made possible as a result. All interviews were coded for references to rules or norms of hook up culture, expectations about what should or should not happen in the hook up, references to wanting or hoping for things that are not expected to happen already, and concern over the consequences of hooking up or going against the norms and expectations of hook ups.

### **Combining RQ1 & RQ2: Can norms help explain types of pleasure?**

The first research question aimed to understand the various types of pleasure that women either experienced or hoped to experience in their hook ups with male partners. This question coded for any reference to such pleasurable or enjoyable activities, and was analyzed on a manifest level, as these discussions were more direct and clearly stated within the interviews. Following that analysis, a second research question sought to understand how the norms of hook up culture impacted the types of sexual pleasure women experienced in their hook ups. This

question was analyzed on a latent or implied level. While the first research question sought to document a range of types of pleasures both experienced and wished for, the second research question took a more critical approach and aimed to understand how these types of pleasures were informed by hook up norms. The first question made it possible to discern what types of pleasure women reported experiencing in their recent hook ups, and which types they hoped or wished they might experience in their future hook ups.

The distinction between current types of pleasure, and pleasure that was hoped for or wished for, can be better understood when put in conversation with the more critical analysis of hook ups made possible by the second research question. While some women downplayed the importance of their own pleasure, they also emphasized the importance of pleasing their partner as a result of norms that prioritize male pleasure during sexual activities. These findings consider women's experiences and their descriptions of pleasure or types of pleasure they hope to have, while also keeping in mind that hook up norms position women's pleasure as less important than men's pleasure, and women expressed varying degrees of endorsement of these norms. Some women downplayed the importance of their own pleasure, while also emphasizing the importance of her partner's pleasure, and these findings indicated greater endorsement of hook up culture norms or internalization of these norms in a way that encouraged women to place less importance on their own pleasure.

## **Results**

The first research question was designed to answer whether women were experiencing sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and if so, what forms that pleasure took. Findings reveal 3 themes related to pleasure: 1) Factors that facilitate pleasure; 2) Affective types of pleasure; and 3) Imagined future pleasure: orgasm and reciprocity. The second research question aimed to

understand how sexual or social norms of hook up culture functioned to influence women's freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and this analysis yielded two themes: 1) Feelings of obligation and 2) Lack of reciprocity. The three themes for the first research question and the two themes for the second research question are presented separately, as they had different analytical approaches, one on a more manifest level, and the second on a more latent or implied level. Together, the five themes speak to the norms of hook up culture and to how these norms influence the types of pleasure women experience, or do not experience, in their hook ups with men.

### **Factors That Facilitate Pleasure**

The norms associated with hook up culture, i.e., that hook ups occur in social or party context, that they are often between two acquaintances who may not be very familiar, can negatively impact women's freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in hook ups. The factors that women described that could help them have greater freedom to pursue sexual pleasure were non-sexual in nature, but included topics such as having a hook up in a safe location, having clear consent for all activities in the hook up, or having communication about what each person enjoyed, or expected of the hook up (i.e., only hooking up once, or wanting to pursue a relationship together). Women also described how being familiar with a hook up partner could help them feel more relaxed, and more able to trust their partner to treat them with care and respect.

Women discussed how having good communication with their hook up partner functioned to increase their ability to pursue sexual pleasure by discussing their likes or dislikes, or their expectations for what they wanted to come from the hook up (i.e., hooking up just once, or more than once). Given the casual nature of hooking up, and the social or party context

associated with hooking up, good communication is not always present in many hook ups. When it is, women reported having more pleasurable experiences. Mary reflected on this dynamic saying:

We had an understanding of like what we both wanted at the beginning of this. Um, and then when there were times where I was like “oh I would date him” or whatever, it was like, I wasn’t ever confused, about like “oh but maybe this could happen if I did this” or like you know like, I was never like unsure. And like in myself, does he not want me or does he just not want this situation? Like it was very clear which was helpful [19, White woman].

Having clear expectations for what each person wanted from the hook up helped Mary to know what to expect and what not to expect, which contributed to her sense that she had a positive experience with that partner.

For some women, increased communication could backfire depending on the partner. Bianca reflected on a time when she tried to communicate her likes and dislikes to her hook up partner, and he reacted very negatively:

...But he was piissseed. I was like yeah, ‘cause he was fingering me really hard, and I didn’t like it you know it was, it was like, it hurt, and I told him, he was like “it doesn’t hurt,” and I was like “how are you gonna tell me it doesn’t hurt?!” No, he was trippin! [19, Black/African American woman].

In this example, Bianca explored how crucial having clear communication was for her own sexual pleasure, and having the ability to feel safe and comfortable and the other persons’ willingness to be receptive to that communication was also imperative. In her experience, she attempted to share that a certain sexual behavior was not pleasurable for her and in fact caused

her some physical discomfort, and her male partner reacted with anger and even denied her own experience telling her she was not in fact having discomfort.

Another factor that could contribute to women's ability to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups pertained to the context or location, such as feeling comfortable, or having their hook ups in a safe place that they were familiar with, typically either their place or their partner's place. For some women, having a hook up in their own home allowed them to feel safe and in control of the interaction. For many women however, they preferred to have the hook up in their partner's place as it allowed them the ability to leave at any time they felt uncomfortable, whereas they felt if he were in their home, they had to wait for him to leave of his own volition. Katie reflected on this dynamic, saying:

I would rather it be at his house because I would rather, like if I wanted to not be there and I didn't feel like emotionally connected... Yeah I can get up and leave. Whereas it's hard for me to be like "okay it's time for you to go now! [laughs] like get out" [20, White woman].

Katie felt that it was safer to have a hook up in her partner's place as she had the ability to leave whenever she felt like it, and reflected on her discomfort at asking a partner to leave her own home if she wished them to. While women in this theme described different factors that could help facilitate their pleasure, in the next theme women described the pleasure they experienced in their hook ups as being diverse.

### **Affective Types of Pleasure**

In addition to describing the different factors that could provide them with more freedom to have pleasurable sexual experiences, women reflected on the diverse forms of pleasure they experienced in their recent hook ups. Women described feeling a sense of accomplishment at

being able to give their male partners pleasure. Women also reported feeling positive feelings in general, or feeling positively when a partner complimented them or said something kind to them. In addition, women enjoyed it when they felt a strong sense of connection or chemistry with their hook up partners, reporting that they liked the flirtatious banter or rapport they had with a partner. Many, if not most, of the women in this sample described how important it was for them to feel safe and comfortable during a hook up or with a specific hook up partner.

Women reflected on feeling a sense of accomplishment, pride or satisfaction in their ability to help their male hook up partners have a pleasurable experience. Theresa remarked, “I felt like accomplished like ‘Oh I made him feel so great,’ and that made ME feel great” [22, White woman]. This sense of pride or accomplishment at being able to bring her partner sexual pleasure increased Theresa’s feelings of emotional contentment, “mostly the whole like oh he’s telling me it was so great and that just made it even better for me emotionally.” Another participant, Taylor, reflected on how bringing her male partner pleasure functioned to make her feel good emotionally, and simultaneously reduced her feelings of stigma or shame attached to having causal sex:

If I can tell that he was really into it, um, and usually if it’s someone that I’m more like emotionally close to I like feel better about it afterwards. I mean there’s like social stigmas of being slutty or like I don’t know, stuff like that if you do it with people you don’t know, so even if you don’t want that to affect how you feel it still does to an extent [21, White woman].

In this complicated negotiation of sexual pleasure, Taylor felt a sense of pride or achievement in bringing her male partner pleasure but focus on her partner had the added bonus of shielding her from more social stigma that could arise from being associated with hook up culture. When

pleasure is coupled with a dual function such as this, it raises questions of how much freedom women have to define sexual pleasure on their own terms. If women experience sexual pleasure that does not directly benefit men, this pleasure might not come with the added layer of protection from social stigma that women obtain from pleasing their male partners.

Women also reported that having a strong sense of chemistry or attraction with their hook up partner was a source of pleasure for them. This sense of getting along well with, or enjoying the company of their partner was one of the ways that women judged a sense of overall enjoyment with the hook up. Jasmine remarked,

I think like even if I'm like hooking up with someone it's like if I'm like talking to them or something and they like make me laugh that's definitely a plus. Like it can just be like a one-night stand or whatever, but like when you like talk to them and like they can like make you laugh and you're just like having like a good time then like I think that also really just adds to the experience [19, Asian American woman].

Jasmine felt like having a good sense of rapport with her hook partner greatly added to her overall sense of enjoyment for the hook up, even if she never saw that person again. Another participant, Esther, echoed this sentiment about the importance of having good chemistry with her hook up partner, saying:

For me like something that really can make someone more attractive or not, is like our conversations like before or after whatever, um, I don't I don't really like it even if it's casual sex I don't really like it if like we just have sex and like never talk or never do anything other than that, so someone who can like who is like intellectual who can hold like a stimulating conversation like not just physically but like um yeah, um, that's actually pretty important to me. [20, Asian American woman]

Both Jasmine and Esther felt that even if they were having strictly casual sex with their hook up partners, with no expectations for that to lead to a more sustained committed relationship, that they simply enjoyed their hook ups more if they had a good vibe or chemistry with their hook up partner.

Finally, women relayed how important it was to their overall sense of pleasure to feel safe and comfortable with their hook up partner. Central to this definition of safety and comfort was the absence of fear of harm or the fear that they might be in an unsafe situation. Mary remarked,

But also like, being excited about the guy or the situation or that means that it was a comfortable situation for me to be in like there was never any like me wanting to get out or like me in a position where I didn't want to be. Um, and so I think that is kind of or that exemplifies like a good hook up [19, White woman].

Another woman, Lana, offered similar sentiments, stating:

Um so I guess that's probably like the only thing. Um I feel like I was a little more comfortable because I met them though friends as well, like I dunno I almost feel like I was a little more, I felt a little like safer with them instead of being like a little more cautious I guess [19, Latina woman]

For Lana, having a hook up that felt safe, where she did not have to worry about being overly “cautious” with her partner contributed to her feelings that the hook up was enjoyable. Overall, women described the pleasure they experienced in recent hook ups to be diverse, encompassing emotional factors such as safety and comfort, as well as more cognitive factors such as chemistry, and a sense of pride or accomplishment for bringing their male partner pleasure.

## **Imagined Future Pleasure: Orgasm & Reciprocity**

While women's actual pleasure in their recent hook ups was described as being diverse, women also imagined the types of pleasure they might like to enjoy in their future hook ups, and for many women, orgasm was central to this definition. While a few women noted having orgasms in their recent hook ups, this was somewhat uncommon, and women strived for orgasms in their future imagined hook ups, endorsing the orgasm imperative, although restructured to meet their own orgasmic potential, a pattern that has been described in recent studies, as well (Bell & McClelland, 2017). Women also longed for their hook up partners to invest more time and attention into meeting their own needs, either through extended foreplay, or oral sex, or just showing more reciprocity in general during the hook up. Cuddling or spending time together just hanging out was also a common type of pleasure that women seemed to find more achievable than orgasm, perhaps more easily met, and that they hoped to experience more of in their future hook ups.

Women reported hoping to experience more orgasms in their future hook ups, and this longing was met with some resignation that it may not ever be achievable. Riley commented, "I mean, I would love to orgasm but I don't really think that's gonna happen." [20, White woman]. Sometimes women's descriptions of longing for orgasm were situated within a hedging comment, using terms such as "I think" or "I guess," for example, Katie comments: "I think I would like to finish, have an orgasm" [20, White woman]. This hesitation at longing for orgasm, but framing that longing within a somewhat unsure statement perhaps speaks to women's uncertainty about whether they really want to strive for something that may be out of reach for them.

Perhaps the largest form of pleasure women wished to achieve in their future hook ups centered on the desire for more reciprocity from their partners. Women desired to have hook up partners who invested as much labor into pleasing them as the women did into pleasing their partners. Esther commented on this desire for more equal distribution of sexual labor within the hook up saying, “Yeah, I’d like to receive yeah. It’s usually like one way” [20, Asian American woman]. Imagining what her ideal hook up might look like Lana painted a picture of an experience that includes a man and another woman, and she also emphasized how central reciprocity would be,

I would just like everything to be very reciprocated I guess, so everyone would like. Okay I know I said I want like the most attention, which is true, but also the ideal hook up would be like if I get head like everyone gets head, and like we all kinda do what the other person wants. [19, Latina woman].

This desire for more reciprocity in future or ideal imagined hook ups speaks to what is lacking in women’s accounts of recent hook ups. Next, I explore how sexual norms influenced women’s freedom to choose to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and the role that reciprocity plays in hook up culture.

### **Feelings of Obligation**

In the second research question, I sought to understand how the unique norms of hook up culture impacted women’s sexual pleasure, or their freedom to pursue pleasure if it was important to them. This analysis was conducted on a more latent level, looking for women’s implicit or implied meanings, in contrast to the manifest level of the first research question. The analysis for this second research question yielded two themes: women describing feelings of obligation to tend to their male partner’s sexual pleasure above their own, and a lack of

reciprocity on men's part to prioritize women's pleasure as important. This second research question is in conversation with the first; the way that women interacted with the norms or rules of hook up culture helps shed light on the types of pleasure that they did and did not experience in their hook ups, findings that were reported in the corresponding themes for the first research question. So while the themes for the two research questions are discussed separately, the themes are in relation to one another and speak to each other.

In this first theme, women reported feelings of obligation to tend to their male hook up partner's pleasure, and these narratives frequently involved women describing, somewhat unenthusiastically, giving their partners oral sex. Other women described focusing on pleasing their male partners more generally, without reference to specific sexual behaviors. Esther, [20, Asian-American woman], stated: "Most of the time guys don't ask for like blow jobs or whatever, but then you kind of feel obligated to." Echoing Esther's sentiments is Lana, who also reported feeling a strong sense of duty to give her male partners oral sex, "No, I usually just like [give them a blow job], not like verbally offer, but like I kind of make sure they're into it, but um yeah I kind of just do it. I feel like it's almost expected" [19, Latina woman]. Both Esther and Lana tapped into the sense of obligation they felt towards their male partner's pleasure, and how this expectation exists as an unspoken rule within hook up culture. Despite being an unspoken rule, these findings suggest that many women are aware of this expectation and invest labor into prioritizing their male partner's pleasure, even if they do not particularly feel like giving oral sex.

The norms of hook up culture dictate what sexual behaviors should take place, in what order, and also create a hierarchy of whose pleasure is most important, and whose pleasure should be tended to first and foremost. Mary made this hierarchy very clear, stating:

I often um, give rather than receive just because I feel not more comfortable with that just like I think like I feel like I'm supposed to do that so that's why I do it. Like giving a blow job instead of me being like instead of like asking for him to give me oral sex or whatever like I would, more of like oh I have to please him versus like worrying about like what I would want. [19, White woman].

Lana explained how this hierarchy comes with a sense of pressure, "again I just feel a lot of pressure to have my partner have a good time at that time" [19, Latina woman]. Together these participant narratives show how men's pleasure is prioritized in the hook up, and this hierarchy comes with a lot of pressure for women to make sure that their male partners have pleasurable hook up experiences, even at the expense of the woman's own pleasure. The fact that men's pleasure is prioritized as most important, means that men are given a privilege to then decide if they wish to reciprocate the labor their partners invest towards pleasing them, and findings suggest that all too often, men opt out of reciprocating.

### **Lack of Reciprocity**

In addition to a sense of obligation to tend to men's sexual pleasure, even at the expense of deprioritizing their own pleasure, women relayed narratives of experiencing a distinct lack of reciprocity from their male partners. The norm of reciprocity (Braun et al., 2003; Frith, 2013) states that there is an unspoken rule that if someone gives you something, in this case, invests labor towards your sexual pleasure, that the other party expects you to reciprocate without having to request it explicitly. The norm of reciprocity exists in many social domains, and operates as an unspoken rule that most people are aware of and abide by. However, in hook ups between men and women, men are violating this norm of reciprocity, and can only do so because their pleasure was prioritized first, and they possess a male privilege to violate norms without

consequences befalling them. Women note worrying over potential consequences for objecting to men's norm violations, and this mental labor reveals that women often do not possess the freedom to pursue their own sexual pleasure in hook ups with men.

Fahs' (2014) model of sexual freedoms posited that in order for an individual to have true sexual freedom they must possess both the "freedom to" engage in or pursue their desires, and the corresponding "freedom from" engaging in sexual behaviors they do not wish to. Referred to as "freedom to" and "freedom from," these two components to sexual freedom are theorized as necessary for an individual to have true sexual freedom, as sexual norms that do not provide for both "freedom to" and "freedom from" run the risk of becoming obligations, as opposed to mere options (Fahs, 2014). The way that women interacted with sexual norms in their hook ups reveal that they do not possess the "freedom to" prioritize or pursue their own sexual pleasure as a result of the restrictive norms of hook up culture. Women reported fearing negative repercussions should they choose to ask for oral sex from their hook up partners.

Bianca touched on this dynamic as she reflected on her hook ups more generally, "I've had hook ups where they want it all but they lack in the area of returning the favor" [19, African American/Black woman]. Similarly, Katie noted that while she consistently experiences a lack of reciprocity, that she doesn't speak up and ask for oral sex for fear of garnering negative repercussions from her hook up partner. Katie reflected on this saying,

It's nothing that I've verbalized in general [asking for oral sex], so maybe, and it might be because like there is that emotional uncertainty there, so you're not really sure, or I'm not really sure, if it's like you know, if I do want this to happen again, is anything I'm going to say gonna change that outcome? [20, White woman]

Katie made it clear that she engages in a mental labor of determining whether pursuing her sexual pleasure in hook ups was worth any potential negative consequences that might stem from speaking up and asking her partner to focus on her. The fact that she had to take time to weigh the costs and benefits of doing so, ultimately deciding against it for fear of consequences, shows that Katie did not possess the freedom to prioritize her own sexual pleasure as important during her hook ups.

While Katie's narrative might have appeared to arise from a fear that she would not be able to develop a relationship with her hook up partner if she spoke up, that is not the case. Most women in this sample when asked directly if they would like a relationship to develop from their hook ups said no, giving various thoughtful reasons for this. Women described wanting to focus on their studies, or knowing that they or a partner might move soon, or just wanting to enjoy having casual sex without the responsibility of a relationship. What many women did describe however, was preferring to have a consistent hook up partner, and they noted that hook ups were more pleasurable with men they were familiar with, and also, having more hook up partners opened women up to more social stigma that could arise from participating in hook up culture. Rachel made this point more clearly: "Maybe it's just like a maturity thing or something about like I just don't wanna keep having one night stands or something like that" [21, Biracial woman].

Both the prioritization of men's sexual pleasure as more important than women's, with women reporting feelings of obligation to tend to their male partner's pleasure, coupled with the lack of reciprocity from men, functioned to undermine women's freedom to pursue or prioritize their own sexual pleasure in their hook ups. This lack of freedom to pursue sexual pleasure is

made clear via the mental labor women engaged in to weight the potential costs and benefits of objecting to the pleasure hierarchy and men's repeated norm violations.

### **Discussion**

In this analysis, I sought to understand if women were experiencing sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and if so, what forms this pleasure took and how women's pleasure is informed by the norms of hook culture. Using a social norms framework (Schultz et al., 2007) and Fahs' (2014) theory of sexual freedoms, I explored how the norms of hook up culture impact women's sexual pleasure, or women's freedom to pursue their own sexual pleasure in their hook ups with male partners. The presence of one-sided scripts within the hook up, and the violation of the norm of reciprocity on men's part both functioned to undermine women's ability to freely pursue sexual pleasure even when they desired to. Women described sexual pleasure they experienced in their recent hook ups as diverse, and yet women also longed to achieve orgasms in their future hook ups, revealing their endorsement of the orgasmic imperative, and the potential for a new "pleasure imperative." Additionally, women described factors that needed to be in place before pleasure was possible for them, and these factors suggest possible recommendations for how to increase women's freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups, if they so choose.

#### **The "Pleasure Imperative"**

Women described experiencing a range of different types of sexual pleasure in their hook ups, and these included things such as having good chemistry or rapport with their partner, feeling safe and comfortable, and also pleasing their male partner. While most women described not experiencing orgasms in their hook ups with men, they described these varied types of sexual pleasure, revealing that women felt compelled to report having pleasurable sexual experiences

even in the absence of orgasm. These different pleasures may function as a stand in until orgasm can be achieved, and they may also reveal the endorsement of a “pleasure imperative.”

The pleasure imperative builds on the orgasm imperative (Potts, 2000), and suggests that women may strive for pleasurable sexual encounters more generally, feeling compelled to reach or ascertain a certain level of fulfillment, which may substitute for that which is otherwise achieved through an orgasm. Given the cultural discourses that prioritize and privilege orgasm as a source of sexual maturation, healthy sexual functioning, and even feminist empowerment (Basson, 2004; Tiefer, 2001, 2002; Koedt, 1973, Lydon, 1970), the absence of orgasm may give women the sense that there is a void that can be filled through the experience of sexual pleasure more generally.

The fact that so many women reported longing to achieve orgasm in their future hook ups adds more evidence to the presence of a pleasure imperative. While women hoped to have orgasms someday, endorsing the orgasm imperative, this longing was met with a sense of resignation that it likely would not happen, as young women remarked somewhat forlornly that they did not expect this desire for orgasm to be fulfilled in their imagined future hook ups. Women also reported hoping or longing for more foreplay or attention from their male partners to be invested towards their own sexual pleasure in their future hook ups, which underscores the distinct lack of reciprocity women were experiencing in their current or recent hook ups.

### **The Norm of Reciprocity**

While hook up culture has unique sexual scripts that proscribe certain social or sexual behaviors (Wade, 2017), other norms are useful for understanding women’s sexual pleasure in hook ups. The norm of reciprocity essentially describes an implicit rule that governs sexual experiences in which it is expected that the effort or labor invested by one person is matched or

reciprocated by the other person(s) involved (Braun et al., 2003; Frith, 2013). For example, the norm of reciprocity has been explored in sexual scenarios in which women and men are expected to exchange orgasms. In their qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with 15 men and 15 women, Braun, and colleagues (2003) described the linear and scripted nature of heterosexual intercourse, and the extent to which reciprocity factors into these accounts. Men and women in this study felt compelled to invest effort to make sure their partners had an orgasm, and sometimes women felt a duty to produce an orgasm in order to meet expectations of reciprocity. It is notable that in their study men felt uncomfortable when they could not reciprocate and give pleasure to their female partners. It is also important to note that the age range for their study was rather large, between 18 and 50, which came with very diverse backgrounds in terms of participants' sexual and romantic histories. Hence, this sample is quite unlike most hook up samples, and was not focused on hook up sex, but sex more generally. It remains unclear if men feel a similar compulsion to reciprocate pleasure within a hook up as these men did, and whether reciprocal oral sex is a common or established part of the hook up script, two factors that have great significance for women's sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men.

The findings from the current study showed that in fact men often do not reciprocate sexual effort in hook ups, and that women reported wishing for their sexual labors to be returned, and hoping for more oral sex from their male partners. Moreover, because men's sexual pleasure was prioritized first and foremost in the sexual interaction, women gave effort by giving their partners oral sex and then their male partners had the ability to choose not to reciprocate, which was a common outcome. Whereas women felt compelled to please their male partners through giving oral sex, men felt free to disregard the norm of reciprocity altogether.

## **Oral Sex**

Recent research on sexual scripts suggest that the sexual scripts for hook ups have evolved over the years, such that oral sex has become quite common, and now mutual oral sex takes place before intercourse in hook ups (England et al., 2011; Heldman & Wade, 2010). My findings suggest that this pattern is partially true; women definitely described giving men oral sex quite commonly in their hook ups to the degree that this is likely part of an established sexual script, but women also noted that men are not reciprocating this effort for them. The sexual scripts in hook ups appear to be very one sided, with women and men both prioritizing the male partner's pleasure as the most important, and this decision grants men the position to choose not to give the same level of attention and effort to their partners. Women also described the initial sexual behaviors leading up to sex as being rather short, and hoped that their future hook ups might involve more build up, or that their future male partners would spend more time tending to their pleasure, or trying to meet their needs and wants.

Given that women reported not receiving oral sex and also reported very low rates of orgasm similar to other research (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010), it makes sense that mutual oral sex is not an established part of the hook up sexual script, at least not yet. Some women reported receiving oral sex, which indicates that the typical sexual script for a hook up involves giving oral sex to the male partner, and sometimes he may reciprocate, but that is not a firm part of the script. It may be the case that sexual scripts are trending towards mutual oral sex being an established part of the script, but as of right now, the script appears to include men almost always receiving and women only incidentally receiving oral sex.

Taken together, the themes from this analysis revealed that women experienced a range of different types of pleasure in their recent hook ups, that they may have endorsed a type of

“pleasure imperative,” and that this imperative may function as a stand in for the orgasms women are longing or hoping to achieve in their future hook ups. Additionally, women’s narratives revealed how the unique norms of hook up culture combined to undermine women’s freedom to pursue their own sexual pleasure in hook ups.

### **Freedom to Pursue Pleasure**

Fahs’ (2014) theory of positive sexual freedoms stated that in order for a person to have true freedom, they must possess both the freedom to choose a course of action or to value something, as well as a corresponding freedom from this action or freedom from valuing something. Referred to as “freedom to” and “freedom from,” Fahs (2014) noted how in the absence of both of these avenues to freedom, a person does not have true freedom, but rather they have something that risks becoming an obligation. The theory of “freedom to” and “freedom from” has been used in prior research that underscores how women use strategies to create “freedom from” the orgasm imperative (Bell & McClelland, 2017). This theoretical paradigm is important for understanding how women navigate hook up culture, and whether women possess the “freedom to” pursue their own pleasure or prioritize their own pleasure in their hook ups with men. Given the restrictive norms associated with hook up culture, and the sexual double standard that can result from hooking up, it is important to consider whether women have the freedom to pursue their own sexual pleasure amidst these constraints.

These results also speak to Fahs’ theory of sexual freedoms (2014). In the current analysis, women’s narratives illustrated how the norms of hook up culture influenced their freedom to pursue sexual pleasure. Women reported feelings of obligation to tend to their male partner’s sexual pleasure and also noted a lack of reciprocity from men to tend to women’s pleasure in return. While women reported giving unreciprocated oral sex and hoping for their

partner to return their sexual labor, women also reported fearing that negative consequences would stem from speaking up and asking their male partners to give them oral sex.

The fear of repercussions was not due to women longing for a committed romantic relationship to develop from their hook ups as some prior research has suggested (England et al., 2011; Kenney et al., 2014; Regan & Dreyer, 1999), but rather, it stemmed from women's hope to have a repeat hook up partner. Having a repeat hook up partner functioned to protect women from encountering more social stigma and the sexual double standard that could arise from participating in hook up culture or having multiple hook up partners (Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). The fact that women engaged in an elaborate mental labor to determine if it was worth the potential consequences of speaking up and asking for reciprocity in oral sex, makes clear that women did not have complete freedom to pursue their sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men. Moreover, women's sense of obligation to tend to their male partner's sexual pleasure, raises questions of whether women had freedom from giving men oral sex, as women explicitly referred to this as an "obligation" or "expectation."

Additionally, it may have been difficult for women to voice their desire to receive more oral sex, or more reciprocity in general from their male partners due to the socialization processes that encourage young girls to perform sexual gatekeeping. Sexual gatekeeping is the idea that young girls and women should be the ones to set the pace for sexual activities, and should theoretically be the ones to stop sexual activities from progressing, and to say "no" to sexual advances from boys and men (Hlavka, 2014). The process of teaching young women to not be desirous, and to stop sex from taking place, begins at a very young age and continues throughout adolescence and into young adulthood for women (Fine & McClelland, 2006). This process undoubtedly leaves women with the mindset that they should not ask for sex or specific

sexual behaviors even once they have reached the culturally approved age or status to have consensual sex. It may be very difficult for women to unlearn that socialization and bring themselves to ask a partner to please give them oral sex, or manual stimulation, to help bring them to orgasm.

### **Intimate Justice & Systems Justification Theory**

Women's narratives also reveal that they struggled internally with the discrepancy between what they did experience in their hook ups and what they desired to experience in their hook ups. Whereas women clearly longed to receive oral sex and have more reciprocity in general, they did not feel empowered to change the way their hook ups functioned. When orgasm was essentially taken out of the equation for women, they emphasized other pleasures as more important, such as pleasing their partner, or having an emotional connection. Finding other pleasures as a substitute for orgasm, while also hoping for orgasms in their future hook ups, perhaps may reveal that women were justifying the systemic inequality associated with hook up culture (Jost et al., 2003; 2004). Through this process of asserting the importance of these other kinds of pleasure, women may have been downplaying the inequality of hooking up, and this may have helped to reduce cognitive dissonance associated with hooking up for them. Finally, in line with the intimate justice theory (McClelland, 2010) it may be the case that women had low expectations of what they might be entitled to in a hook up in terms of pleasure, and that these low expectations facilitated the women's efforts to justify the structural inequality of hook up culture.

While women's narratives revealed the way that their freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups was undermined by the uneven sexual norms within the hook up and men's consistent norm violations via their lack of reciprocity, they also provided clues for how to

increase women's freedom to pursue pleasure if they so desired. Women described certain factors as being conducive to helping them have pleasurable hook ups, and these included things such as choosing a safe location to hook up in, having clear consent and communication about the activities in the hook up and what each partner wanted to come from the hook up. These factors were described as things that needed to be in place in order for women to feel that pleasure was even a possibility for them. Women's narratives revealed how it is possible to increase their freedom to pursue pleasure in their hook ups through the process of increasing awareness of these various factors that facilitate pleasure.

Many universities have some type of safe sex programming that involves giving seminars or workshops to undergraduates about topics such as having consent and having safe sex. Given that such a large proportion of undergraduates hook up, it is possible to increase women's freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups by increasing discussion of these factors that facilitate pleasure. For example, including discussions of choosing safe hook up locations, or how to communicate what each person's expectations are, can greatly increase women's ability to pursue pleasure if that is important to them. If these factors were not in place, women felt that their ability to pursue pleasure was compromised. Additionally, such programming should emphasize the importance of reciprocity, given that this was such a crucial factor in undermining women's ability to pursue sexual pleasure, and one of the key things women reported hoping for more of in their imagined future hook ups.

### **Future Directions & Limitations**

The current study has certain strengths as well as limitations, and also provides thoughtful avenues for further research development. The current sample focused on young college aged women between the ages of 18 and 24, as this is the group of women most likely to

be engaging in hook ups with men. However, the sample demographics also constrain the ability to apply the current findings to a larger group of women who are older or not in college. It is possible that hook ups that take place within the hook up culture on college campuses function or look different than hook ups that take place off campus or for women who are younger than 18 or older than 24. Research suggests that the unique atmosphere of colleges and universities, with the sororities and fraternities and parties that happen frequently, have a distinct ability to shape the contours of the hook up experiences, by proscribing strict rules and norms for hook ups (Wade, 2017). It is possible that hook ups that happen in everyday life within a casual dating environment not associated with a highly regulated sexual culture might look or function differently. For example, it may be the case that mutual oral sex is a part of an established sexual script for hook ups that happen among older individuals or outside the college context.

Additionally, prior research has noted that hook up culture encourages the participation of individuals from certain class and racial or ethnic backgrounds (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017). Students who can afford to live on campus and not work but go to school full time are likely to have more free time to participate in the parties and social events where hook ups originate (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017). This class bias also brings with it a racial component as well, as students of color are more likely to have to work part time to help pay for school, or to live off campus with roommates or relatives and commute to school (Alison & Risman, 2014). Wade (2017) also noted that even when students of color do participate in hook up culture that they may feel left out, or as though there is a hierarchy of desirable partners, with white men and women enjoying the privilege of being at the top of that hierarchy. Participating in a sexual system in which one feels less valuable than others can contribute to individuals feeling less entitled to pursue or prioritize their own sexual pleasure or needs as compared to a

partners' desires (Green, 2008), and it can also discourage participation in the culture over the longer term.

While there were women in my study from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, I did not analyze the intersectional identities of the women in these samples and explore their unique experiences navigating hook up culture as Latina or African American women, for example. There are reasons to believe that women's experiences with hooking up are heavily influenced by their racial identities, based on extant literature pertaining to race and hook up culture (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017), but also certain patterns that were noted in the analysis. For example, in the current Study 2 both of the women who identified as Asian American brought up issues with dominance and reported that they desired their hook up partner to be less rough and to get their permission to dominate them. Asian American women have been portrayed in the media or popular culture as "exotic" and sexually subservient (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Root, 1995). Future research should take a closer examination of women's racial and ethnic identities as it relates to their hook up experiences and how they negotiate their own pleasure.

The current study recruited young women who had reported at least one consensual hook up with a man in the past six months. These criteria allowed women who had experiences with other women to also participate, and so the sample may have been diverse in terms of sexual identity. However, the study explicitly studied women's sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men, as the larger body of literature on the norms and rules of hook up culture is predominately, if not exclusively, geared towards heterosexual norms. Whether young women hook up with other women during college is an area that is unexplored, and what their sexual pleasure looks like in hook ups with other women is also unknown.

In order to understand women's pleasure in hook ups with other women during college, researchers would first need to begin by exploring what the unique norms or scripts germane to queer hook up culture look like, and how they function (Watson et al., 2017). There is reason to assume that women would have more orgasms in their hook ups with other women, as women are more likely to report having orgasms with women than with men (Blair, Cappell, & Pukall, 2017). However, this remains an important and as of yet unexplored domain. It is also an area of research that is important given that women have long faced serious obstacles in their freedom to pursue their sexual and romantic relationships with other women. Therefore, the question of whether women have the freedom to pursue their sexual pleasure in hook ups with other women is a historically and culturally significant query that researchers may seek to answer.

### **Conclusions**

The current study sought to answer the questions of whether women were experiencing sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men, and what that pleasure looked like, as well as how women's freedom to seek pleasure is informed by the unique norms germane to hook up culture. Results from the study revealed that while women reported experiencing some different kinds of pleasure in their recent hook ups with men, that they also reported wishing for more reciprocity from their male partners, and hoped to achieve orgasms in their future hook ups. Women's focus on future orgasms shows that they did endorse the orgasmic imperative, and their emphasis on diverse pleasures in the meantime suggests that they also endorsed a "pleasure imperative" that perhaps stands in for orgasm, until orgasms are more attainable.

Additionally, women's freedom to pursue pleasure in their hook ups was compromised by men's repeated violations of the norm of reciprocity (Braun et al., 2003; Frith, 2013), which left women longing for their sexual efforts to be returned, but fearing that speaking up could

bring negative repercussions, including potentially having to find a new hook up partner, a decision that could leave them open to the sexual double standard and social stigma. Contrary to prior research that suggests mutual oral sex has evolved to become part of the sexual script of hook ups (Heldman & Wade, 2017), the current study reveals that this is not the case for young college men and women. Rather, young women are giving oral sex as part of an established sexual script, and they may or may not receive oral sex from their partners in return. This finding may only apply to this particular age group, as little is known about hook ups among older adults outside of the college context.

Finally, women elaborated on ways their freedom to pursue sexual pleasure in their hook ups could be increased, through a range of different avenues. For example, women suggested that having increased communication with their partners could help establish mutual expectations going forward, and that having clear consent for sexual activities, and having hook ups in safe locations could all function to increase their ability to have pleasurable hook up experiences. Universities and colleges could work to include such topics in existing seminars or workshops that are often given on consent and safe sex. By including information on how to increase communication with a partner, or to emphasize the importance of reciprocity, universities can help support women's freedom to pursue safe and pleasurable hook up experiences.

## **Chapter 5 What Happens in a Typical Hook Up?**

### **Introduction**

Up to three quarters of college students will hook up during their time as undergraduates (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Whereas men are seen to benefit from hooking up in a multitude of ways, including via their frequent orgasms, research has documented at length women's negative emotional reactions (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Kenney et al., 2013; Lovejoy, 2015), physical or emotional risks (Kenney et al., 2013; Napper et al., 2015), and lack of orgasms during hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). But if hooking up is so negative and un-pleasurable for women, why do so many women continue to hook up in such high numbers?

Some research has documented positive emotional outcomes or reactions to hooking up for women (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Lovejoy, 2015; Vrangalova, 2015), although these studies are few and far between. Therefore, this study sought to answer the question of what kinds of pleasure women report they commonly experience in their hook ups, and how these types of pleasure might be influenced by certain behaviors, such as oral sex, that women may experience in their hook ups. Additionally, given the vague meaning behind the term "hook up" the study sought to answer what behaviors are most commonly engaged in during women's hook ups with men, in order to get a sense for what the typical hook up might look like. Given that women's emotional reactions and pleasure both have links to the kinds of behaviors they experience in a hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012; Vrangalova, 2015), it is important to understand what the typical hook up does and does not include behaviorally.

Women's sexuality is often positioned from a risk paradigm, and moreover, women's sexuality is often studied from a protective standpoint in which doctors, scientists and researchers aim to protect women from potential harm, psychologically, physiologically or emotionally, that may stem from exploring their sexuality within a less than equitable sexual landscape (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Garcia & Reiber, 2008). The body of literature on hooking up has coalesced around the perception that women are risking a lot and gaining very little from their hook ups, and yet, there has not been a thorough exploration of women's potential positive emotional reactions or pleasures that may arise from hooking up. Therefore, the current study aimed to examine what kinds of emotions or pleasures women are experiencing in their hook ups, and how common these experiences are, as well as what the typical hook up includes behaviorally, in order to gain a better understanding of why women hook up and what they stand to gain from hooking up, as opposed to positioning women as the perennial losers in a hook up exchange.

### **Literature Review**

Roughly equal numbers of women and men hook up, although the research on hook ups would present two very different pictures of the costs and benefits women and men take on when they decide to hook up (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Kenney et al., 2013; Lovejoy, 2015; Napper et al., 2015). The risky milieu of hook up culture is due in part to the prevalence of the sexual double standard, which grants men status for sexual exploits while women face stigma for their own casual sex experiences (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Lovejoy, 2015; Trinh, 2015). Women experience orgasms very infrequently during their hook ups, but less is known about their pleasure in hook ups outside these rates of orgasm (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Women's sexual pleasure has also been linked to both their emotional reactions

(Armstrong et al., 2012) and the behaviors they experience during hook ups, as well (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015). It is therefore necessary to understand these three domains together: behaviors, emotions, and pleasure, in order to have a more complete understanding of what women's sexual pleasure in hook ups looks like.

### **Sexual Behaviors in Hook Ups**

There is little known about what kinds of sexual behaviors might be most commonly experienced in a hook up. Some research has assessed the types of sexual behaviors that might be included in a hook up (England & Thomas, 2006; Fielder et al. 2013; Lewis et al., 2013) and how this relates to the different definitions of a "hook up." Lewis and colleagues (2013) assessed the definition of hook up and associated behaviors in a survey study with 1,468 undergraduates (56% female). Participants responded to open-ended questions that asked them to define a hook up, and these responses were then content coded and researchers found that there were varying definitions that were used to refer to a hook up (Lewis et al., 2013). Findings in this study revealed that a significant portion of students defined a hook up as including sexual acts such as kissing and making out, whereas other participants defined a hook up as including oral, manual or anal sex (Lewis et al., 2013).

Lewis and colleagues noted that the definitions people use for a hook up stem largely from their own personal experiences with hook ups, i.e. those who mainly kiss or make out during a hook up will define a hook up in that way (Lewis et al., 2013). The term hooking up is so vague that it allows room for these varying definitions to circulate among the population of people who engage in hook ups. While Lewis and colleagues found that a range of sexual activities were included in various definitions of a "hook up," they only assessed this definition along five sexual behaviors: kissing, manual stimulation, oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex

(2013). There are myriad more sexual behaviors that could be included in a hook up that were not included in this study, and the frequency of those behaviors, or women's feelings about their hook ups still remains under explored.

Some research has assessed the likelihood of women and men either giving or receiving certain kinds of behaviors during hook ups such as oral sex (England & Thomas, 2006; Fielder et al., 2013). In Fielder and colleagues' study (2013) 483 men and women reported on their hook up behaviors using a baseline and nine follow up surveys. Similar to England and Thomas' (2006) study, the Fielder and colleagues (2013) study found that women are more likely to give and less likely than men are to receive oral sex during their hook ups, (England & Thomas, 2006; Fielder et al., 2013). Together, these studies provide some idea of what behaviors might or might not occur in a hook up, and who might use certain definitions of the term hook up, but there remains a question about what the typical hook up consists of behaviorally, or if there is even a most common type of hook up. It is important to understand what the common hook up looks like and includes behaviorally, as sexual behaviors are linked to both women's psychological and emotional outcomes (Owen et al., 2010), as well as their sexual pleasure (Armstrong et al., 2012), as they relate to hook ups.

### **Emotional Outcomes of Hooking Up**

There is a substantial body of research that assesses women and men's psychosocial predictors or outcomes of hooking up, and emphasizes the negative emotional or social risks that many women face when they hook up. Thus, the extant literature quietly poses the question, why would women continue to have hook ups given the fact that they seemingly risk so much and gain so little in return? Owen and colleagues (2010) examined demographics of individuals who are likely to hook up, such as ethnicity, sex, and income, as well as attachment style and

psychological well being in a sample of 832 college men and women. Importantly, women were less likely than men to report having positive emotional experiences with hooking up. Findings in this study also revealed that women who had negative reactions to hooking up were also more likely to report lower psychological well-being, emphasizing the somewhat risky nature of hook ups for women (Owen et al., 2010).

Many women who hook up will face social or emotional costs, a point reiterated in the growing body of literature that highlights the risks women face when they decide to hook up. It seems that these risks only accrue with the more hook ups women have, as they continue to face increasing social stigma for having casual sex, a stigma that men simply do not face (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Lovejoy (2015) collected in depth interviews with 30 young college women, and found that young women may feel a sense of loss or embarrassment if they develop feelings for a hook up partner who does not wish to develop a relationship with them. Lovejoy posited that the norms of hook up culture that emphasize emotional detachment are to blame for women's negative emotional outcomes, such as embarrassment and shame at their unrequited affection.

In their longitudinal qualitative study Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) followed 53 college women across their undergraduate careers and focused on their experiences with hooking up and the party atmosphere associated with college. The authors found that young women were often slut shamed by their peers (often within their own sororities) for participating in hook ups, yet another potential social risk that women face for engaging in hook ups (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). The premise remains that not only are hook ups bad for young women who need to be protected from their poor sexual decision making, but also that more hook ups are more risky.

Logically, there must be more to the cost benefit ratio that motivates women to continue to have hook ups at such high rates, despite the well-documented risks of doing so. Some, albeit scant, research suggests there could be positive outcomes associated with hooking up for women. Fielder and Carey (2010) collected surveys from 140 college students (109 women and 31 men) who were all in their first semester of college. The study involved a baseline assessment of psychological predictors of hooking up derived from prior research, and participants then completed a second time point survey in which they reported on their number of oral and vaginal hook ups as well as their levels of distress and self-esteem. Results showed that men who had penetrative hook ups experienced more distress at time 2 than women did (Fielder & Carey, 2010). Interestingly, women who had non-penetrative hook ups (i.e. kissing or making out), reported higher self-esteem than women who engaged in penetrative hook ups over the course of the study (Fielder & Carey, 2010). These results indicate that there is a potential link between the kinds of hook up behaviors women engage in and their emotional or psychological reactions to those hook ups. Thus, it is possible that not only do women experience positive emotions related to hooking up, but that they may be more or less likely to experience certain emotions depending on the types of sexual behaviors women engage in during their hook ups.

Similar results were found in another study; Vrangalova (2015) conducted a larger scale survey with 666 college freshman and juniors (68% white and 63% women) who completed questionnaires at two time points, once at the beginning and end of a semester. Findings from this study revealed that relatively equal numbers of women had increased well being and decreased well being as a result of hooking up. Participants in this study completed the Rosenberg self esteem scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Vrangalova, 2015). The authors found that having hook ups does not lead to lower self-esteem or depression in adults

(Vrangalova, 2015). Interestingly, having oral hook ups was linked to higher life satisfaction for women, but not men (Vrangalova, 2015). Given that a very specific type of hook up behavior was linked to life satisfaction for women, it may be the case that oral sex hook ups are also able to predict overall sexual pleasure in hook ups or even certain types of pleasure, such as orgasm, among women.

Sometimes, the research on hooking up and emotional outcomes offers mixed results. Owen and colleagues (2011) assessed young adults' depressive symptoms and reported loneliness as it related to hook ups in a survey study with 394 men and women who reported their experiences at two time points. The authors found that those who began at time point 1 with lower symptoms of depression or loneliness and who then hooked up reported greater depression and loneliness at time point 2. Alternatively, those who began at time point 1 with higher depressive and loneliness symptoms and who then hooked up, reported lower symptoms at time point 2. The authors suggested that the potential outcomes of hooking up may depend on unique individual psychological profiles that are established before the hook ups take place. For students who are experiencing the most distress and loneliness, hook ups may allow them to feel more connected to others and less lonely overall.

Together these studies offer mixed results in terms of assessing the overall negative or positive psychological outcomes of hooking up for women. Some studies find hook ups pose real risks in terms of increasing negative affect (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Owen et al., 2010; 2011), while others find positive psychological benefits for women who hook up (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015). Additionally, some studies have found direct links between oral or non-penetrative hook ups and positive psychological outcomes for women (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015), suggesting that specific kinds of hook ups may be related to women's

emotional reactions to those hook ups. While these studies offer some insight to women's emotional reactions to hook ups along certain dimensions of psychological well-being, there is still very little known about women's feelings as they directly relate to their hook ups.

Understanding the range of emotions or attitudes women experience, as opposed to measuring depression, self-esteem, or loneliness as distinct outcomes, might better pinpoint women's emotional and psychological relationship to hook ups. Moreover, we know little about women's emotional or psychological affect as it relates to increasing number of hook ups, that is to say, if hook ups are so bad for women, are more hook ups even worse?

### **Pleasure & Hooking Up**

The sexual milieu of hook up culture has been characterized as less than favorable for women, due to the prevalence of the sexual double standard, and high psychological, emotional, or social risks women face coupled with the lack of pleasure women gain from hooking up. However, there is not very much known about women's pleasure in hook ups, aside from a couple of studies that have documented women's lower rates of orgasm compared to men (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Given this, it remains to be asked whether women are experiencing other kinds of pleasure in their hook ups aside from orgasm, and how common those types of pleasure might be for women who hook up. It may be the case that women hook up despite the high risks and lack of orgasm because there are other types of pleasure they are deriving from their hook ups, pleasures that serve to even out the apparent imbalance in costs and benefits. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the relative costs or benefits women face for hooking up, it is necessary to have a better account of the benefits (i.e. pleasures) women stand to gain from hooking up.

Armstrong and colleagues (2012) conducted in depth interviews with 85 women from two different universities, which they coupled with survey data from the Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS), which included survey responses from 6,591 women to better understand women's experiences with orgasm and enjoyment in hook ups. The authors found that women were more likely to experience orgasms within relationships than within hookups, and that both men and women endorsed women's right to pleasure within relationships but both men and women questioned women's entitlement to pleasure within a hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012). Women were only 32% as likely as men to have an orgasm during their first hook up encounter with a specific partner (Armstrong et al., 2012). These rates increased somewhat in future hook ups with the same partner, although they never reached equal rates of orgasm as men (Armstrong et al., 2012). Additionally, findings showed that specific behaviors were more likely to lead to orgasm for women, such as oral sex or manual stimulation, and these were behaviors that were more likely to occur in relationship sex than in a hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Interestingly, this study revealed that certain emotions also predicted orgasms during women's hook ups; women who reported experiencing affection and commitment from their hook up partners were more likely to have orgasms during their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). This finding adds credence to prior literature that found certain behaviors are linked to women's emotions in hook ups (Fielder & Carey, 2010), and also provides evidence that women's feelings about her partner or the hook up itself, are implicated in not only women's psychosocial outcomes, but also their sexual pleasure as well.

These findings also raise new questions, namely the possibility that experiencing positive emotions or a type of connection with one's hook up partner could be a pleasurable outcome for women in and of itself, as opposed to just functioning as a conduit to orgasm. If so, then this

would mean that women stand to gain more potential benefits when they engage in hook ups, and offset some of the risks that have been so well documented and appear to outweigh the benefits for women who hook up. Moreover, orgasm has been critiqued in prior research as a male centered definition of pleasure (Jackson, 1984). Given this, it is problematic to measure women's sexual pleasure during hook ups solely along the dimension of the presence or absence of an orgasm, and it becomes important to document the range of different types of pleasure women may experience in their hook ups, including, but not limited to, orgasm.

Shepardson and colleagues (2016) conducted surveys with 262 women and gathered information on what benefits women felt they gained from hooking up. The most commonly listed benefit was sexual pleasure, reported by 23% of the sample, although sexual pleasure was not further defined. Sexual pleasure could be physical pleasure that does not result in an orgasm, it could mean orgasm, or some other type of pleasure associated with the sexual act of hooking up, such as having chemistry or a connection with one's partner. Together these studies show that orgasm is uncommon for women to experience in their hook ups, and yet, pleasure is the most commonly reported benefit of hooking up for women, two findings that point towards the conclusion that women experience other types of pleasure aside from orgasm in their hook ups.

All together, these studies show that the behaviors, feelings, and pleasures women experience in their hook ups are interrelated, and they also suggest that women may be experiencing more types of pleasure in their hook ups aside from orgasm, given the prevalence of sexual pleasure reported by women as the most common benefit they experience in their hook ups (Shepardson et al., 2016). Additionally, these studies suggest that women's emotional experiences, such as care or affection expressed by a hook up partner, may be pleasurable

outcomes in and of themselves, in addition to providing a conduit to orgasm for some women (Armstrong et al., 2012).

The current study sought to answer the questions of what behaviors, feelings, and types of pleasure are most common for women to experience in their hook ups, and whether certain sexual behaviors such as oral sex can predict women's overall ratings of sexual pleasure, or certain types of pleasure, such as orgasm. Additionally, the current study sought to answer the question of what types of pleasure women commonly report hoping or wishing for in their future hook ups, which may differ from the types of pleasure women report experiencing in the prior hook ups.

### **Race/Ethnicity & Pleasure**

Much of the studies on hook ups have been focused on largely white samples. This focus on white participants may be in part due to the fact that hook up culture is overwhelmingly comprised of college students, and college samples are usually excessively white. However, race and ethnicity may be important for understanding women's experiences with sexual pleasure during hook ups. Wade (2017) has shown in her study with 101 college students that women of color often felt left out of hook up culture, or as though they were less desirable partners who did not have as much choice when navigating the hook up scene as compared to their white counterparts (Wade, 2017). If women of color feel less empowered to choose desirable partners, they may not have hook ups that are as pleasurable as white women, who have more choice when it comes to the erotic marketplace. Given this, the current study asked if there were differences in overall pleasure with regards to the race/ethnicity of the participants.

## **Method**

The current study used online surveys with young college women to gather data on what types of sexual behaviors and feelings they commonly experienced in their hook ups with men. Additionally, the surveys aimed to gather information on women's reported overall pleasure or enjoyment in their hook ups with men, as well as the frequency of a range of different types of pleasure women reported experiencing in their hook ups with men.

### **Sample**

Hook up culture is largely centered on college campuses, and young individuals comprise the majority of hook up culture, therefore, this sample was collected with these characteristics in mind. Women who were in college (any year), between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, and who reported experiencing at least one consensual hook up with a male partner in the last six months were eligible to participate in the study.

### **Recruitment**

Women were recruited using flyers that advertised a study on hook ups that was comprised of a short (approximately 15 minute) online survey, and compensation was provided with a \$5 Amazon gift card. These flyers were posted on a large Midwestern University campus, as well as smaller college campuses in surrounding nearby cities. Recruitment was intentionally undertaken in various locations and college campuses in order to try to increase the diversity of the sample in terms of race and ethnicity. Participants were instructed on the flyer to email the study team for more information.

### **Procedure**

Once a potential participant contacted me via email, she was emailed a link to a short screening survey that inquired about her age, year in college, race or ethnicity, whether she had

at least one consensual hook up with a man in the past six months, and the types of sexual behaviors she had engaged in during her previous hook up(s). Women who were between the ages of 18 and 24, any year in college or university, and who reported at least one consensual hook up with a man in the previous six months were sent an email with a link to the online survey through Qualtrics. Once women completed the online survey they were sent their \$5 Amazon gift card via email.

Women followed the link to the online Qualtrics survey, which presented them with an electronic version of the consent form. Participants read the consent form online and then either clicked “yes, I consent,” or “no, I do not consent.” All participants confirmed their consent to participate, and then reported their unique participant ID that I sent them via email. This unique participant ID allowed for confirmation that the data were accurate and entered by only the invited participants, and also allowed me to confirm the participant’s reported demographic information between the screening survey and Qualtrics study survey.

The hook up survey asked participants to begin by reporting their estimated total number of hook ups within the past six months, and then by reporting on the kinds of behaviors they have engaged in during their hook ups within the past 6 months. Participants reflected on a list of 47 behaviors, and indicated either yes or no for each behavior. These were the same sexual behaviors that participants in the first interview study reflected on during their card sort activities (see Chapter 3). Following this, participants indicated whether any of these behaviors were more common for them to engage in during their hook ups than others, and if they responded in the affirmative, they then reported which behaviors were the most common for them to experience in their hook ups.

Next participants perused a list of 73 feelings or attitudes they may have felt in their hook ups, and also selected those they have experienced in their prior hook ups. These were also the same feelings or attitudes that women reflect on during their card sorts in the interview study (see Appendix A for a complete list of behaviors and feelings). Similar to the behaviors, women indicated yes or no for each feeling, and then were asked if any of these were more common for them to experience, and if so, they selected the feelings they experienced most commonly. Behaviors and feelings were divided up into sets of ten items on each page, and participants were instructed to select those they engaged in, and participants were also given options to select “none of the above” or “something not listed” on each page.

Following the behaviors and feelings, women reported on their overall pleasure or enjoyment they experienced in their hook ups, as well as what types of pleasure they had experienced in their previous hook ups. Women were also asked if they experienced any of these types of enjoyment more commonly than others, and if they indicated yes, they were asked to select which ones they experienced most commonly. Finally, women reported on the types of pleasure they hoped to experience in their future hook ups, which was the same list of pleasures. Similarly to the behaviors and feelings, women were given the option of selecting “none of the above” or “something not listed here” for all sections on the pleasure items.

### **Measures**

*Screening Survey.* Hook ups were defined on the screening survey as any sexual behavior ranging from kissing to intercourse that was engaged in without the intention or expectation of continuing a committed, romantic relationship with that person.

*Behaviors & Feelings.* Participants indicated what behaviors and feelings they experienced in their prior hook ups that had taken place within the past six months. The

behaviors and feelings were derived from consultation with a group of diverse undergraduate research assistants, who brainstormed the different kinds of behaviors and feelings they thought women experienced during hook ups. These may have come from either their own experiences or those of friends or family who had discussed their hook ups with the research assistants.

Following the generation of the lists of behaviors and feelings, I reviewed them to make sure that most feelings had a corresponding opposite (i.e. pride and shame, happy and sad, etc.). I also removed some behaviors that were related to hook ups but not central to the sexual act of hooking up such as deciding whether to take a cab home or ask for a ride from a partner. In all there were 47 behaviors and 73 feelings that women reviewed and indicated whether they had experienced them in their prior hook ups.

*Pleasure Questions.* Women reflected on their hook ups that they had within the past six months and were asked to estimate their overall enjoyment or pleasure. Overall enjoyment was rated on a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing “not enjoyable at all,” 2 represented “okay, could be better,” 3 was “good, fairly decent,” 4 meant “very enjoyable,” and 5 was “extremely enjoyable.” Following this, participants reflected on a list of different types of pleasure that were derived from the interview study (see chapter 4) wherein women reported on the types of pleasure they experienced in their hook ups with men. There were 12 types of pleasure or “enjoyment” that women in the current study reflected on and indicated if they had experienced them in their prior hook ups that had taken place within the past six months. Women in the survey study reported if they had experienced any of these types of pleasure in their hook ups, and then indicated if any of these types of pleasure were more common to experience than others. If women answered in the affirmative, they then selected the most common pleasures they felt.

Finally, participants indicated any types of pleasure that they hoped to experience in their imagined future hook ups, which contained the same list of 12 pleasures. All questions pertaining to pleasure were phrased in terms of potential “enjoyment” in order to avoid potential response bias, and participants inflating or exaggerating responses in order to indicate that they had more pleasurable experiences with hook ups than perhaps they actually did. (For a complete list of survey questions including behaviors, emotions, and pleasures, see Appendix C).

The types of pleasure women reported on were derived from in-depth interviews with a sample of 23 young women that was representative of the U.S. population in terms of race and ethnicity (see chapter 4). In the interview study, 23 young women who were representative of the U.S. population in terms of race/ethnicity participated in a one-hour in person interview about their hook up experiences. The interview guide questions were created in such a way that they addressed participants’ “enjoyment” in hook ups, and did not use words that might be leading or encourage participants in an artificial way. For example, the questions never used the words pleasure or orgasm, but asked about what participants liked or enjoyed about their hook ups, or what they might like to experience in their ideal or imagined future hook ups.

Examples of questions that participants were asked in relation to their hook ups included items such as: “is there anything you would like more of when it comes to your hook ups? Do any of your past hook ups stand out to you as ones you’ve liked more than others? If so, can you say a bit about what made that one(s) better for you?” The questions were also created in such a way that participants did not feel compelled to answer in the affirmative to any particular question, i.e., it was not assumed that all women experienced pleasurable hook ups. This phrasing allowed participants who may not have had very positive or pleasurable hook ups to

reflect on their experiences as well as those participants who did have positive or pleasurable hook ups.

### **Analysis**

The survey data were downloaded from Qualtrics software as an Excel spreadsheet that contained participant responses regarding behaviors, emotions, and pleasures they experienced, and these data were then transformed into binary variables (yes and no) for each item. This Excel data was transferred to SPSS version 24.0 where statistics were run to assess correlations between the types of behaviors and feelings women reported experiencing, what the most frequently experienced behaviors, feelings, and pleasures were, and regression analyses were also run in order to test whether women receiving oral sex during their hook ups could predict either women's overall pleasure ratings or whether they reported experiencing orgasms during their hook ups.

There were four types of analyses run on these data and they corresponded to different research questions. The first analysis pertained to some sample descriptives in order to characterize the sample (e.g., mean age, average number of hook ups). Next, frequency statistics were run on the behavior and feelings data in order to assess what the most common or "typical" hook up behaviors and feelings are for women. These data give percentages for each of the 43 different sexual behaviors and 73 different feelings women reported on. Frequencies were also run using a list of 12 pleasures derived from the interview study (see Chapter 4), and the kinds of pleasures they imagined or hoped to experience in their future hook ups, in order to get a sense for what the most common types of pleasure women experience in their hook ups are.

Following this, correlations were run between feelings and behaviors to see if there were any links between the types of behaviors women engaged in and their emotions as they related to

their hook ups. Prior research has shown links between specific kinds of behaviors, such as oral sex, and specific feelings, such as life satisfaction. Therefore, all behaviors and feelings were entered in order to see if there were any significant relationships between the two.

Finally, regression analyses were run in order to answer the research question of whether certain behaviors, such as oral sex can predict 1) women's ratings of overall pleasure on the scale of 1-5, and 2) whether women listed orgasm as a type of pleasure they have experienced in their prior hook ups. Given that oral sex has been found to predict women's orgasms in other research, and that oral sex was reported by women in study 2 (see Chapter 4) as something they longed to receive but often did not, it was hypothesized that women who did receive oral sex would both score higher on ratings of overall pleasure and enjoyment, as well as be more likely to report experiencing orgasms in their prior hook ups. Hypotheses for the regressions included:

H1) That women who received oral sex would be more likely to report higher levels of overall pleasure derived from their hook ups based on the 1-5 pleasure scale developed for this study.

H2) That women who received oral sex would be more likely to list orgasm as one of the types of pleasure they had experienced in their prior hook ups within the past six months.

H3) That white women would report higher levels of overall pleasure according to the 1-5 pleasure scale developed for this study.

## **Results**

### **Sample Characteristics**

The sample consisted of (N = 102) women, who were all in college or university, and ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old (M = 19.33). Women also reported on the total number of hook ups they had in the past six months, which could include repeat hook ups with the same

person, and the average number of hook ups women reported experiencing in the previous six months was ( $M = 5.47$ ) hook ups. The range was 1- 40 hook ups; the median and mode was 3 hook ups. The racial composition of the sample consisted of: white 59% ( $n = 60$ ), Asian American 20% ( $n = 20$ ), Black/African American 7% ( $n = 7$ ), Biracial 10% ( $n = 10$ ), Latina 3% ( $n = 3$ ), South Asian 1% ( $n = 1$ ), and South Indian 1% ( $n = 1$ ). Women indicated whether they had been hooking up with men or women, or people of other gender identities. Ninety-three percent of women indicated hooking up exclusively with men ( $n = 95$ ), while 7% of women indicated hooking up with men and women ( $n = 7$ ). There were not enough participants who hooked up with both women and men to do any group analyses between the two, and these participants were included in all analyses.

Women reported a range of different types of hook up behaviors on the screening survey; some women reported having hook ups that involved relatively minimal sexual contact such as kissing or making out, and some women reported a wide range of sexual behaviors including oral, manual and penetrative vaginal sex. Therefore, the sample was also diverse in terms of the types of hook up experiences the women had engaged in prior to participating in the study, and women reflected upon and drew from these experiences in their responses to the survey questions, including the types of pleasure they experienced.

### **Frequencies: Common Behaviors, Feelings/Attitudes, & Pleasures**

In order to assess the most frequent behaviors and feelings that women experienced in relation to their hook ups, frequencies were run on both dimensions. While some studies on hook ups discuss certain types of sexual behaviors and how they relate to pleasure, for example, the presence or absence of oral sex, or manual stimulation, very little is known about what types of behaviors or feelings are most common for a hook up. This has been complicated in part by the

fluidity in the term “hook up” and the various definitions that circulate. Findings from the current study revealed that there are certain sexual behaviors that were very commonly engaged in during a hook up (i.e. more than 50% or 75% of the sample reported experiencing them), indicating perhaps that these behaviors in particular comprise a “typical” hook up as they are the most commonly engaged in. Table 13 [Typical Hook Up Behaviors] on page 175 includes some of these behaviors, as well as others that were not commonly engaged in [for a complete table of results including rates for all 43 behaviors see Table 21 on page 209 in Appendix D].

Also notable from the frequencies of behaviors is the fact that women reported fewer orgasms across the different types of sexual stimulation than their male partners, including manual, oral, and penile vaginal sex ( $n = 75$ ), whereas they reported their male partners having orgasms over twice as often ( $n = 151$ ). This too, suggests that the male orgasm is a central and common figure in the typical hook up, whereas a woman’s orgasm is not a common occurrence in the typical hook up, a finding that aligns with prior literature, as well (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Frequencies were also run with regard to the feelings or attitudes women reported feeling about their hook ups that had taken place within the prior six months. A table containing frequencies of the feelings is on page 177 [Table 14: Typical Hook Up Feelings & Attitudes] including some of the feelings that were most commonly endorsed and some that were not [for a complete table of results including rates for all 73 feelings see Table 22 on page 212 in Appendix E].

Some of the most highly endorsed emotions were feeling turned on (85%) feeling greater excitement (83%), feeling desirable (75%), increased self-confidence (67%), and feeling sexually skilled (68%). Together, these feelings reveal some of the positive aspects of women’s hook ups, and give a glimpse into why women would continue to have hook ups if orgasms are

not present. Women experienced a range of positive emotions related to their own self-confidence and sexual skill. While women reported some negative feelings or attitudes, all of the most highly reported feelings were positive dimensions to women's hook ups, indicating that by and large women's hook ups are positive self-enhancing experiences that support their sense of self-worth and value.

Certainly, these results provide some of the answer for why women continue to hook up and balance out the proverbial scale by which women are presumed to be the loser in the hook up exchange. Even though women are not having orgasms frequently, their overall hook up experiences are characterized by positive feelings and attitudes. Next, I examine women's experiences with sexual pleasure in their hook ups. First, I explore women's overall ratings of pleasure, and their reported pleasure in past hook ups (prior six months), as well as the types of pleasure they hope to experience in their future hook ups. These lists of pleasure were derived from the interviews with women in study 2 (see chapter 4).

There were 12 types of pleasure that were derived from the interview study that were incorporated into the survey: 1) hook up partner tends to the woman's needs, 2) orgasm, 3) emotional connection with hook up partner, 4) positive emotions in general, 5) cuddling, 6) pleasing one's partner/feeling accomplished, 6) Feeling safe, 7) feeling respected, 8) feeling comfortable, 9) partner compliments her or says something nice 10) hanging out/spending time together, 11) having good chemistry or rapport, 12) reciprocity/ each person's needs are met. A table is included on page 179 [Table 15: Past Pleasure], containing women's reported pleasure in their prior hook ups.

There were several types of pleasure that most women reported experiencing in their prior hook ups that took place within the past 6 months. In fact, the only types of pleasure that

were not experienced by most women were orgasm, having an emotional connection with her partner, and feeling respected. Interestingly, 68% of women reported feeling that their prior hook up partners had tended to their needs within the hook up. Given that most of them were not having orgasms, this implies that women's other needs, perhaps emotional or psychological needs or even physical needs that did not include orgasm, were being met by the hook up partner. Similar to the behaviors, these findings reveal some of the why behind women's motivations to continue hooking up despite the uneven or unfair sexual terrain in which they encounter the sexual double standard, potential social stigma, and lack of orgasms.

Despite the fact that prior research has applied a male model of sexual pleasure that privileges orgasm as the primary, if not only, barometer of sexual pleasure to women's hook ups and found them falling short of this, women are clearly having other types of pleasures and positive feelings in their hook ups. Prior research has found women's pleasure to be diverse and to include physical, cognitive, and emotional elements, and the current findings build on this model and shows that women's pleasure is diverse in casual sex encounters as well.

Additionally, while some research has looked at women's positive emotions such as feeling care and affection from a hook up partner as being a conduit to orgasm (Armstrong et al., 2012), the current study found that positive feelings and connection with a partner are also a pleasure outcome in and of themselves. This has important implications for research on hook ups, and how we approach or calculate women's costs and benefits as it relates to hook ups or casual sex.

Women also reported on the types of pleasure they hoped to achieve in their future imagined hook ups. Frequencies for these pleasures are included in table 16 on page 180 [Table 16: Future Pleasure]. Women highly endorsed each type of pleasure as ones they would like to experience in future hook ups. This pattern indicates that the kinds of pleasure derived from the

interviews were those that women identify with and would like to experience in their hook ups. While women did report experiencing many kinds of pleasure in their prior hook ups, they reported hoping for even more types of pleasure in their future hook ups. Notably, orgasm was a big type of pleasure that, while not previously experienced by most women, was reported by nearly all of the women ( $N = 90$ ) as something they'd like to have in their future hook ups. In fact, this was the most highly rated type of pleasure women longed for in their future hook ups.

This focus on orgasm in future hook ups may be attributed to the fact that women were not commonly having orgasms in their past hook ups, and so orgasm may have been seen as something that could round out their pleasures, since women were already experiencing other kinds of pleasure. It is also important to note that other types of pleasure were rated almost as high as orgasm, with "positive emotions in general" being the second highest rated at ( $N = 87$ ). Therefore, while women's experiences with pleasure challenge the orgasmic imperative, and reveal myriad kinds of pleasures that women find important and valuable, women also long for orgasms and endorse the orgasmic imperative (Potts, 2000) in their imagined future sexual experiences.

Additionally, findings here corroborate findings from the interview study (see Chapter 4), in regards to the importance of reciprocity. Women rated reciprocity as the third highest type of pleasure that they longed to experience in their future hook ups, with ( $n = 86$ ) women indicating this was something they desired. Only ( $n = 53$ ) women, a very slim majority, reported experiencing reciprocity in their prior hook ups, meaning that many more women hoped to experience reciprocity in future hook ups than actually did experience in their past hook ups. Given that so many women reported that their hook up partner tended to their needs in past hook ups ( $n = 69$ ), it seems reciprocity may have been interpreted in regards to sexual behaviors such

as oral sex specifically, give the gap in rates of oral sex between men and women. Women in study 2 (see chapter 4) also brought up reciprocity in relation to oral sex specifically, and so it seems that may be a common interpretation in the current findings, as well.

### **Correlation Analyses**

While prior research on hook ups has assessed some of the behaviors that may be happening in hook ups, there has been less attention paid to women's feelings as they relate directly to their hook up experiences. Moreover, there is a dearth of information on the relationship between the sexual behaviors that take place in the hook up and women's feelings regarding the hook ups they have. Given that feelings have been shown to be a pleasure outcome and not just a conduit to orgasm in this study, knowing how different sexual behaviors can affect women's feelings or attitudes pertaining to the hook up is paramount.

Correlation analyses were descriptive and preceded the regression analysis; behaviors and feelings were entered into a bivariate correlation, and significant results are reported here. Women reported their total number of hook ups that they had within the past 6 months, and this number could include repeat hook ups with the same person. This measure was significantly linked to several different feelings and behaviors. Women's greater number of reported hook ups was related to feeling tense,  $r = .216, p < .05$ , and greater the number of hook was also correlated with women's reports of feeling satisfied,  $r = .213, p < .05$ ; greater number of hook ups was also linked to feelings of accomplishment, with  $r = .228, p < .05$ . Number of hook ups was also negatively linked to making out,  $r = -.366, p < .05$ , meaning that the more often a woman hooked up the less likely she was to engage in making out with her partner. Increased number of hook ups was also linked to a woman receiving oral sex,  $r = .263, p < .05$ . Prior research has found that women are more likely to receive oral in relationships than in hook ups, but also that women are

more likely to have orgasms with hook up partners with whom they have had repeat hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). Please see table 17 on page 181 for correlation matrix [Table 17: Correlations for Number of Hook Ups].

Therefore, these findings may speak to prior literature, as more hook ups were linked to greater likelihood of women receiving oral sex. While we can not be sure that increased hook ups were with repeat partners, as they may in fact be unique partners, some women did comment that they had repeat partners in the survey. Alternatively, if a woman has many new hook up partners, she may become more empowered or adept at negotiating her own pleasure within the hook up, which is an alternative interpretation of this relationship between greater number of hook ups and likelihood of receiving oral sex. See Table 18 on page 182 for the correlation matrix pertaining to these results [Table 18: Correlations for receiving oral sex and satisfaction].

There was a significant relationship between women receiving oral sex from their hook up partner and their reported satisfaction  $r = .329, p < .05$ , and physical satisfaction  $r = .314, p < .05$ . This means that women who received oral sex were more likely to also report that overall their hook ups were more satisfying and even more specifically, were more likely to find them to be physically satisfying. Given that women are more likely to receive oral sex with the greater number of hook ups they have, this means that their satisfaction and physical satisfaction likely also increase with the number of hook ups they have.

There was also a relationship between women's reported satisfaction and their sense of greater trust with their hook up partner,  $r = -.361, p < .05$ , which aligns with the findings on the pleasure items. Women tend to find emotional connection with their partner to be a form of satisfaction in and of itself, despite the prevalence of the orgasmic imperative (Potts, 2000). Together, the findings from the correlations reveal that women are more likely to experience

positive affect the more number of hook ups they have, a finding that certainly contradicts the overwhelming sentiment in the extant literature that paints hook ups as risky with little potential benefit for women, either psychologically, physiologically, or socially. See Table 19 on page 183 for a correlation matrix [Table 19: Women's orgasms and emotions].

Finally, certain correlations between women's types of orgasms and their emotions showed some interesting patterns. Notably, women's orgasms from both manual stimulation and PVI were associated with certain negative emotions, however, orgasms from oral sex were not. Women's orgasm from manual sex were correlated with lower self-confidence  $r = .253, p < .05$ , and feeling worthless,  $r = .300, p < .01$ . Women's orgasms from PVI were correlated with feeling worthless,  $r = .237, p < .05$ . However, women's orgasms from oral sex were linked to feelings of satisfaction,  $r = .282, p < .01$ .

In contrast to the negative emotions that were associated with women's orgasms from manual sex and PVI, there were correlations between women's positive emotions and their reports of male partner's orgasms. Men's orgasms from manual sex were correlated with women feeling satisfied,  $r = .198, p < .05$ , and men's orgasms from oral sex were correlated with women's feeling worthy,  $r = .198, p < .05$ , satisfied,  $r = .267, p < .01$ , and accomplished,  $r = .353, p < .01$ . Likewise, men's orgasm from PVI were correlated with women's feelings of satisfaction,  $r = .246, p < .05$ , and accomplishment,  $r = .241, p < .05$ . See Figure Table 20 on page 184 for correlations [Table 20: Men's orgasms and women's emotions].

This pattern of results in which women's negative emotions are correlated with certain kinds of orgasms, notably manual and PVI but not from oral sex, may potentially indicate that women are more concerned with their male partner's orgasms than their own during their hook ups. It may be the case that the presence of an orgasm may cause women to worry about whether

their male partner's needs have been satisfied, and may make them concerned about sexual stigma associated with experiencing pleasure in casual sex. On the other hand, having an orgasm from oral sex might indicate that there is more of an emotional connection between the two parties involved in the hook up, as men tend not to give oral sex as much in casual sex as they do in committed relationships (Armstrong et al., 2012). It is possible that women who have orgasms from oral sex during hook ups are experiencing more positive connections with their partner overall, which could explain the link to satisfaction.

The correlations between women's positive emotions such as a sense of accomplishment, feeling worthy, and feeling satisfied and men's orgasms from PVI, oral, and manual types of sex makes sense when compared with the types of pleasure women report experiencing. Pleasing their male partner is the most common type of pleasure women reported in their past hook ups, and so it makes sense that men's concrete evidence of pleasure in the form of an orgasm is correlated with women's positive emotions.

Next, regression analyses were used to determine if the presence of certain behaviors, namely whether women received oral sex from their partner, could predict their overall pleasure rating on a scale of 1 to 5, and whether oral sex also predicted whether women reported orgasms as a type of pleasure they received in their prior hook ups.

### **Regression Analyses**

It is known that certain sexual behaviors which provide direct clitoral stimulation such as manual or oral sex are more likely to lead to an orgasm for women, and this has also been found in at least one prior study on hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012). Therefore, the current study sought to establish whether oral sex predicted whether women reported orgasm as a type of pleasure they had experienced in their prior hook ups with men within the past six months.

Additionally, regression analyses were run to determine if oral sex could predict women's ratings of overall pleasure, which were reported on a scale of 1-5, with one meaning "not enjoyable at all" and five meaning "extremely enjoyable." Results are discussed for each of the three regression hypotheses below.

H1) Women who received oral sex would be more likely to report higher levels of overall pleasure derived from their hook ups based on the 1-5 pleasure scale developed for this study.

In order to test whether receiving oral sex from a hook up partner could predict women's overall ratings of pleasure (H1), a simple linear regression was carried out with oral sex entered as the predictor variable and overall pleasure ratings entered as the dependent variable. Results confirmed the hypothesis that receiving oral sex does significantly predict women's reports of overall pleasure ratings:  $F(1,100) = 7.922, p < .006$ , with an  $R^2$  of .271. This means that women who received oral sex from their partners were significantly more likely to also report higher ratings on their overall pleasure. This is the first real glimpse at whether oral sex can predict women's overall sense of the quality of her hook ups, as prior research has mostly focused on orgasm or other psychological outcomes and has not taken a direct assessment of women's overall sense of pleasure derived from their hook ups.

H2) Women who received oral sex would be more likely to list orgasm as one of the types of pleasure they had experienced in their prior hook ups within the past six months.

Regression tests were also run to see if women who received oral sex were significantly more likely to report experiencing orgasm as a type of pleasure in their prior hook ups (H2). Results confirmed the hypothesis that women who received oral sex from their hook up partners were significantly more likely to also report orgasm as a type of pleasure they have experienced in their hook ups within the past six months:  $F(1,100) = 8.126, p < .005$ , with an  $R^2$  of .075. This

finding confirms other findings in previous research which has found that direct clitoral stimulation either through oral or manual sex can increase women's likelihood of having an orgasm during a hook up (Armstrong et al., 2012).

H3) White women would report higher levels of overall pleasure according to the 1-5 pleasure scale developed for this study.

Finally, regression analyses were run to see if race and ethnicity predicted overall pleasure ratings (H3), given prior studies which had noted racial differences in the composition of hook up culture (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017). Research has found that women of color participate less in hook up culture and also reported feeling less desirable within hook up culture (Wade, 2017). Findings did not support this hypothesis, and revealed that there was not a statistically significant relationship between race and overall pleasure ratings:  $F(7,94) = .625, p > .05$ , with an  $R^2$  of .044. This does not mean there is no relationship whatsoever between race or ethnicity and sexual pleasure within hook ups, but there was not a relationship found using this sample and this pleasure scale. While the sample was diverse, and notably had a larger percentage of Asian American women and a lower percentage of white women as compared to the U.S. population, it had a relatively small percentage of Latina and African-American or Black women. A more representative sample or a different pleasure scale might find differences between women of different racial or ethnic backgrounds and their levels of pleasure.

### **Discussion**

The current study had several aims: first, was to assess whether women experienced pleasure in their prior hook ups, if so what that pleasure consisted of, as well as to get an estimate of women's overall pleasure from their prior hook ups, and what kinds of pleasures they imagined or hoped for in their future hook ups. Second, the study sought to understand what the

common behaviors and feelings are that women experience in direction relation to their hook ups, and whether certain behaviors, such as receiving oral sex, could predict women's overall pleasure or orgasm. Several significant relationships were found, and reveal that not only were women having pleasurable hook ups, but that women experienced more positive than negative emotions in relation to their hook ups, and that certain positive emotions served as types of pleasure in and of themselves, and did not merely make orgasm more likely, as has been found in prior studies (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Despite the tone in extant literature which positions young women as participating in a risky sexual culture that offers them little in the way of benefits or pleasure (Kenney et al., 2013), the current findings show that not only did women have pleasure in their hook ups that goes beyond orgasm, but they experienced more positive than negative emotional reactions to their hook ups. Moreover, an increasing number of hook ups was associated with several positive outcomes as well, undermining the assumption that hook ups are bad, and more hook ups are more risky for women.

### **Sexual Pleasure in Hook Ups**

Women's pleasure in their hook ups goes beyond just orgasm, and the current findings expand our understanding of what pleasure looks like for women who have hook ups, and also provide an answer as to why women would continue to have hook ups despite the apparent risks they face for doing so. In contrast to prior research, hook ups appear to offer myriad benefits and pleasures to women. Women in the current study indicated that certain emotional states, such as having a connection with their partner, having chemistry, or feeling safe, are all types of pleasure they commonly experienced in their hook ups. Moreover, women reported hoping for more types of emotional pleasure in their future hook ups such as experiencing a connection with their

partner, or feeling respected. Prior literature has positioned women as the perennial loser in the hook up exchange, giving a lot and receiving little benefit in return (Kenney et al., 2013).

However, if this were the case then it would not explain the rather large proportion of women who hook up and continue to hookup throughout their college careers (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009).

Emotional affect has only been considered in relation to sexual pleasure within a hook up in one study that found women were more likely to orgasm if they felt a connection to their hook up partner (Armstrong et al., 2012). The current study shows how positive affect is considered by many women to be a common type of pleasure in and of itself, even when orgasm is not experienced. Therefore, positive emotions during a hook up are not simply a conduit to orgasm, but pleasurable in their own right. Positioning positive emotional states as merely supporting orgasm reifies the orgasmic imperative (Potts, 2000), and relegates diverse types of pleasure to a supporting role, only important in so far as they can increase the potential for an orgasm.

Pleasure has historically been characterized by the presence of an orgasm in much of scientific literature on sexuality, and this is no different for the literature on hooking up (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Orgasm has been critiqued as a male model of sexual pleasure (Jackson, 1984), in part because many women do not experience orgasms during sex with men (Bell & McClelland, 2017). Additionally, it is known that women's sexual pleasure, either via masturbation or with a partner, is diverse and includes cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects (Goldey et al., 2016). Thus, it is not only problematic to define pleasure in terms of orgasm for social and political reasons, but scientifically speaking it is an incomplete definition; it simply overlooks the diverse nature of pleasure, and narrows it down to one limited dimension.

When this narrow definition of pleasure is then used to inform cost and benefit ratios as they apply to women's hook ups, women are ultimately positioned as risking a lot to gain very little (Kenney et al., 2013). This inaccurate conclusion continues to fuel scientific and cultural discourses that describe sex as inherently risky for women, and seek to protect women from their own poor sexual decision-making (Fine & McClelland, 2006). Widening the definition of pleasure to include these varied forms that women experience in their hook ups allows scientists to gather more complete and accurate assessments of women's pleasure, and the relative benefits associated with hooking up.

While women's pleasure in hook ups includes a range of different emotional, cognitive, and physical forms of pleasure, these pleasures are also constituted by the norms, or norm violations, associated with hook up culture. As Study 2 (Chapter 4) noted, men often violate the norm of reciprocity (Braun et al., 2003; Frith, 2013). These norm violations undermined women's ability to experience reciprocal oral sex and made orgasm less likely for them. It is possible that because orgasm has been taken off the table for women that these other kinds of pleasure are so common for women to experience.

In support of this hypothesis, while women in the current study listed their most common type of past pleasures as "pleasing their male partner/feeling accomplished" with 78% of the sample reporting this, when women reflected on their future pleasures this list rearranged significantly. Women still reported wanting to pleasure their male partner in future hook ups, and in fact this stayed at 78%, however, 88% of women in this study reported hoping for an orgasm in their future hook ups, making it the most common kind of pleasure women wished for in their future hook ups. Therefore, while it is important to understand the range of pleasures women experience, as they still factor into the costs and benefits women encounter for hooking up, it is

equally important to understand how these pleasures are made possible or more salient by the sexual inequality of hook up culture that undermines women's ability to prioritize certain kinds of pleasures such as orgasm.

When orgasm is not possible as was the case for most of the women in this study, the most frequently reported type of pleasure they experienced in prior hook ups was pleasing their male partner. This pattern of findings suggests that while women's definition and experience of sexual pleasure in hook ups is multifaceted, it is shaped by the inequality of hook up culture, and in the absence of the ability to experience their own orgasms, women often find pleasure in helping their male partners have orgasms instead.

Women rated their overall pleasure on a scale of 1-5 and the average for the sample was a 3 (mean = 3). Given that women were not experiencing the orgasms they reported wishing to have in their future hook ups, a pattern might be expected in which women reported lower average pleasure ratings and fewer positive or more negative emotions than they actually did report. This slightly surprising set of results may make sense when interpreted through the intimate justice paradigm (McClelland, 2010), which posits that women's sexual expectations may be informed by their levels of satisfaction with their sexual experiences. If women have relatively low expectations for pleasure or emotional outcomes associated with their hook ups, then they may feel sated with a modicum amount of pleasure or even with a sexual experience that was not overtly negative. It was clear that in Study 2 (Chapter 4) women desired to have orgasms but did not expect them, as women commonly mentioned wishing or hoping for orgasms but then adding "it's not going to happen." If women expected their pleasure to consist of pleasing their male partner, and they experienced exactly that, they may have felt quite satisfied and happy with that sexual encounter.

Women's relatively high rates of sexual pleasure may also be evidence of systems justification (Jost, 2003; 2004) as well. It may be that by focusing their drive towards pleasure on these other kinds of pleasure that are more easily attainable, such as pleasing their male partners, that they are able to justify the obvious inequality inherent to hooking up, and reduce cognitive dissonance associated with longing for orgasms that they readily admit are unlikely to happen. However, all pleasure is culturally constructed, and it is important to understand these various kinds of pleasure women experience, as they are still pleasurable regardless of how they are shaped or made more likely by the given cultural context.

### **The “Typical” Hook Up**

While some prior research has assessed what kinds of behaviors might be included in a hook up, these have generally had limited findings, and have explored the definition of hook up based on participants' own prior experiences (Lewis et al., 2013). There are multiple definitions of a hook up that circulate in the community and in the literature, which has made it a challenge to describe what might be included in an average hook up experience (Lewis et al., 2013). However, it has been shown that sexual behaviors or certain kinds of hookups may be linked to more positive outcomes (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Vrangalova, 2015), meaning that it is important to understand what the average or typical hook up looks like in terms of behaviors because it has implications for understanding a wide variety of psychosocial predictors or outcomes for men and women who hook up.

The current study included a wide range of sexual behaviors that participants indicated they had engaged in during their hook ups, but a pattern did emerge; a typical hook up includes making out and kissing without tongue, touching or rubbing each other's bodies, taking one's own and each other's clothes off, giving each other oral sex, cuddling, and the male partner

experiencing orgasm from oral and penile vaginal sex. Women did not experience orgasm in the typical hook up, whether that was from manual, oral, or penetrative sex.

While some past literature has suggested that mutual oral sex now is part of the hook up script (Wade & Heldman, 2010), findings from Study 2 (see Chapter 4: Interviews), indicated that many women did not receive oral sex from their partners in their previous hook ups. Findings from this survey indicate that about two thirds of women received oral sex in their prior hook ups (within the past six months), and about one third of women did not. This is certainly high enough to suggest that receiving oral sex is fairly common part of the typical hook up script, despite the contradicting findings between the current study and study 2 (see chapter 4).

However, when compared to the rates of oral sex that women gave men, it is clear that women gave oral sex more often than they received it, in line with prior findings (England & Thomas, 2006; Fielder et al., 2013). Women reported giving men oral sex with and without condoms a total of 81 times. These statistics help put into context some of the contrasting prior findings on oral sex and hook ups: it is both true that mutual oral sex happens frequently in a hook up, and it is also true that many, but not most, young women who hook up with men, up to one third of them, do not receive oral sex from their male partners, despite the fact that most of those young women are giving oral sex.

### **Relationship Between Behaviors & Pleasure**

It is known that women who receive oral or manual sex in their hook ups are more likely to experience an orgasm, which is just one type of pleasure (Armstrong et al., 2012). However, the current study sought to understand if oral sex could predict overall pleasure as well, given that sexual pleasure is diverse. Findings showed that women who reported receiving oral sex were more likely to also give higher ratings of overall pleasure, and were also more likely to

report experiencing an orgasm, as well. This finding speaks to other findings in Study 2 (Chapter 4), wherein lack of reciprocity during oral sex was a big factor in women's overall sense of enjoyment to their hook ups. Women who received oral sex were also more likely to report feeling both satisfied, and physically satisfied, indicating how central oral sex is to women's overall enjoyment in their hook ups. This also aligns with prior literature, which found that oral hook ups are linked to greater life satisfaction (Vrangalova, 2015).

Women who had a greater number of hook ups were more likely to receive oral sex, indicating that women may have been having repeat hook ups with one partner which led to greater reciprocity, an interpretation that would align with prior findings that showed women were more likely to have orgasms in repeat hook ups with the same person (Armstrong et al., 2012). However, only a couple of women explicitly wrote notes that they were having repeat hook ups, leading to an alternative interpretation that many of these were unique hook ups, and potentially, that women were having more oral sex in their later hook ups because women were perhaps becoming more adept at negotiating their own pleasure and reciprocity with more sexual experiences.

Such an interpretation would actually make sense from a sexual subjectivity standpoint, in which women with more sexual experience have greater levels of subjectivity, or an ability to define their own wants and desires and feel efficacious in achieving them (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). This would be another finding that would challenge the presumption in current literature that hook ups are bad for women and the underlying premise that more hook ups are even more risky. More hook ups are associated with a variety of positive outcomes for women, including feeling satisfied and accomplished. This finding provides more answer to the question, why would women hook up if they stand to gain so little? The women in this study gave a

resounding answer: hook ups are pleasurable for women in a variety of physical and emotional ways, and a greater number of hook ups is linked to positive outcomes, as well.

### **Limitations & Future Directions**

The current study answered questions pertaining to what women's sexual pleasure in hook ups includes, and what kinds of positive or negative emotions women experience in relation to their hook ups. While these findings go a long way towards gaining a more complete understanding of women's benefits as it pertains to hook ups, there are certain limitations that apply to the generalizability of the current findings. First, while the sample was diverse, which provides some measure of relevance to the larger population of college women, it had a smaller proportion of white women and larger proportion of Asian American women as compared to the U.S. population, meaning that the sample was not perfectly representative. A more representative sample could provide more ability to generalize or characterize college women's experiences with hook ups.

A second limitation involves the lack of information gathered from participants in regards to their sexual orientation or identity. It was not deemed relevant to the current study to know the sexual identity of women who participated, any woman who was of the right age and in college and who reported at least on consensual hook up with a man in the prior six months was eligible. Therefore it is possible that some of the sample was describing experiences they had with both women and men, and certainly some women did indicate they hooked up with women and men. It was therefore not possible to do group analyses and see if there were any pleasure differences between heterosexual or bisexual women for example, and there were not enough women who indicated hook ups with both men and women to do a group analysis between them and women who only hooked up with men. It was also not possible to compare women's hook ups with men

or women as we did not ask them to explicitly answer the questions with only reference to male partners, but to think back to their hook ups over the prior six months.

Future research might seek to correct these limitations and to compare women's sexual pleasure in hook ups with men and women, or to do group comparisons between women with differing sexual identities along a range of emotions and behaviors as they relate to hook ups. It is very likely that women who have casual sex primarily with other women experience very different kinds of sexual behaviors and feelings than women who hook up with men, given that behaviors and feelings have been shown to be related within a hook up (Vrangalova, 2015). Knowing this, the psychosocial outcomes would likely look very different for women who hook up with women as compared to women who hook up with men. It is important to have diverse and inclusive studies that expand our knowledge of women's sexual pleasure within hook ups, as much of the extant literature pertains only to heterosexual samples (Watson et al., 2017). While queer and heterosexual women have similarities in their pleasure, they also diverge in terms of their sense of entitlement to orgasm (Goldey et al., 2016), and scientific models of sexual pleasure should likewise be inclusive of a range of different experiences and identities.

Similarly, few questions were asked about the women's sexual partners beyond whether they identified as male. It is not known if women's partners identified as heterosexual for example, or bisexual, etc. Given the importance of gender roles for navigating hook up culture and the norms of hooking up, having a better understanding of both partners (or more than 2 partners, as the case may be) within the hook up experience could be important for future researchers to examine. It is also not known how the women's partners identified in terms of race/ethnicity. Given that hook up culture is overwhelmingly white, it is likely that their partners were often white men. However, knowing how their partners identify may help shed light on the

women's experiences with pursuing their own pleasure. For example, do white men prioritize their own pleasure even more than men of color might? Do white men invest more effort into pleasing partners who are white, or do women of color fear confirming negative racial stereotypes with white male hook up partners? These are all important intersectional questions that future research could examine with more clarity.

There are certain aspects and limitations across the three studies that help contextualize the findings for the current study. The three studies utilized different time frames for each of the women's hook up encounters, and so a neat comparison across studies in terms of similarities is bound by these time frames. Study 1 asked women to complete the card sorts while thinking back to only their most recent hook up encounter. Study 2 asked women to answer the interview questions while reflecting on any of their prior hook ups that they could recall, so there was no distinct time limit on those experiences women discussed. Study 3 asked women to fill out the survey while reflecting on their hook ups they had within the past six months.

While women in the current study reported receiving oral sex more often than women described in the interviews in Study 2 (Chapter 4), the rates of receiving oral sex in the current study (68%) only mean that women received oral sex at some point within their hook ups in the past six months. Additionally, I did not ask women how long they gave or received oral sex for. Results from this study showed that when women gave oral sex it resulted in an orgasm more than twice as often as when they received oral sex (54% vs. 25%). This pattern of results leads to the conclusion that women may not have received oral sex that lasted as long as when they gave oral sex, or the rates of orgasm might have been closer together. Future studies might want to consider using more consistent time frames across multiple studies, or, in the case of using different time frames, may want to ask women to estimate how many times they received oral

sex for example. It may be the case that women in Study 3 gave oral sex at ten times the rate they received, but that nuance was not captured in these studies.

### **Conclusions**

While it is true that hook ups are not all positive experiences, and certainly some women experience negative hook ups, or experience negative outcomes associated with hooking up such as unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections or lack of pleasure (Fielder et al., 2014; Kenney et al., 2013; Napper et al., 2015; Lovejoy, 2015), it appears that the risks associated with hooking up have been overstated somewhat in extant literature. Emphasizing the potential risks women face from sexual exploration, particularly in casual sex, is nothing new; women are often positioned as sexually naïve, and needing protection, either from the State, or from familial units, or even institutional actors, such as universities (Fine & McClelland, 2006). Committed sex has also been historically privileged as safer for women, as it provides a respite from risk associated with greater number of sexual partners, and importantly, safety from emotional risk (Armstrong et al., 2012; Napper et al., 2015).

What is clear from the current study, is that not only are women having pleasurable, positive hook ups, but that greater hook ups are associated with a variety of positive emotions as well. Moreover, positive emotions do not serve as merely a conduit to orgasm (Armstrong et al., 2012), but are pleasurable in their own right, a finding that expands our definition of sexual pleasure to include factors beyond just orgasm, as well as our understanding of what benefits women stand to gain from hooking up. It is important to document the orgasm gap in all its formations and manifestations, and certainly there is an orgasm gap in hook ups between men and women (Armstrong et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). However, it is equally important to document how women are experiencing diverse forms of pleasure, and the positive emotional

outcomes associated with their casual sexual experiences. Without this piece of the puzzle, women get cast as perpetual losers in the erotic marketplace, who are in need of intervention and rescue, a trope that relies on gender inequality and serves to perpetuate sexual stereotypes that undermine women's sexual agency and choice.

## Tables

Table 13

### Typical Hook Up Behaviors

	Yes
<b>Making out</b>	99%
<b>Kissing no tongue</b>	92%
<b>Feel breasts over clothes</b>	92%
<b>They kiss her body</b>	88%
<b>Hook up lasted as long as she'd like</b>	82%
<b>They take her clothes off</b>	82%
<b>Partner rubs her vulva</b>	82%
<b>She rubs them under clothes</b>	81%
<b>Fingering</b>	81%
<b>They rub her under clothes</b>	81%
<b>Kiss breasts</b>	80%
<b>Cuddling</b>	79%
<b>Blow job without condom</b>	75%
<b>Dry humping</b>	73%
<b>She takes their clothes off</b>	69%
<b>Receive oral from partner</b>	68%
<b>Partner orgasms from PVI</b>	66%
<b>Partner gives hickeys to her</b>	63%

<b>He orgasms from oral</b>	54%
<b>He orgasms hand</b>	28%
<b>She orgasms PVI</b>	26%
<b>She orgasms oral</b>	25%
<b>She orgasms fingering</b>	22%

*Note.*  $n = 102$ .

Table 14

Typical Hook Up Emotions

	Yes
<b>Turned on</b>	85%
<b>Greater excitement</b>	83%
<b>Desirable</b>	75%
<b>Physically closer</b>	74%
<b>Wonder if they want to see you again</b>	71%
<b>Sexually skilled</b>	68%
<b>Increased self confidence</b>	67%
<b>Happy</b>	66%
<b>Excited to hook up w/same person</b>	64%
<b>Satisfied</b>	57%
<b>Greater trust</b>	57%
<b>Comfortable in body</b>	55%
<b>Submissive</b>	55%
<b>Excited to hook up w/someone</b>	53%
<b>Accomplished</b>	51%
<b>Physically satisfied</b>	59%
<b>Empowered</b>	47%

<b>Confused</b>	39%
<b>Valued</b>	39%
<b>Safe</b>	30%
<b>Regret</b>	22%
<b>Undesirable</b>	8%

Table 15

Past Pleasure

	Yes
<b>Pleasing</b>	78%
<b>partner/accomplished</b>	
<b>Partner compliments you</b>	78%
<b>Cuddling</b>	75%
<b>Partner tends to your needs</b>	68%
<b>Positive emotions in general</b>	67%
<b>Good chemistry/rapport</b>	65%
<b>Hanging out</b>	62%
<b>Feeling safe</b>	54%
<b>Reciprocity/both partner's needs met</b>	52%
<b>Orgasm</b>	47%
<b>Feeling respected</b>	46%
<b>Emotional connection w/partner</b>	45%

*Note.*  $n = 102$ .

Table 16

Future Pleasure

	Yes
<b>Orgasm</b>	88%
<b>Positive emotions in general</b>	85%
<b>Reciprocity/both partner's needs met</b>	84%
<b>Good chemistry/rapport</b>	83%
<b>Feeling respected</b>	82%
<b>They tend to your needs</b>	82%
<b>Feeling safe</b>	80%
<b>Pleasing partner/accomplished</b>	78%
<b>Partner compliments you</b>	75%
<b>Cuddling</b>	72%
<b>Emotional connection w/partner</b>	71%
<b>Hanging out together</b>	67%

*Note.*  $n = 102$ .

Table 17

Correlations for Number of Hook Ups

	# Hook ups	Tense	Satisfied	Accomplished	Make out	He gives oral sex
# Hook ups	1.0	-.246*	.213*	.228*	-.366**	.263**
Tense		1.0	-.286**	-.171	.057	-.337**
Satisfied			1.0	.215*	-.087	.329**
Accomplished				1.0	-.098	.370**
Make out					1.0	-.069
He gives oral sex						1.0

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 18

Correlations for Receiving Oral Sex and Satisfaction

	Satisfaction	He gives oral sex	Physical satisfaction	Trust
Satisfaction	1.0	.329**	.475**	.361**
He gives oral sex		1.0	.314**	.032
Physical satisfaction			1.0	.277**
Trust				1.0

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 19

## Correlations Between Women's Orgasms and Emotions

	She orgasms fingering	She orgasms PVI	She orgasms oral	Low self- confidence	Satisfied	worthless
She orgasms fingering	1.0	.334**	.240*	.253*	.120	.300**
She orgasms PVI		1.0	.210*	.002	.119	.237*
She orgasms oral			1.0	-.116	.282**	-.021
Low self- confidence				1.0	.141	.422**
Satisfied					1.0	-.142
Worthless						1.0

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 20

## Correlations Men's Orgasms and Women's Emotions

	He orgasms hand	He orgasms oral	He orgasms PVI	Worthy	Satisfied	Accomplished
He orgasms hand	1.0	.234*	.044	.016	.198*	.009
He orgasms oral		1.0	.202*	.198*	.267**	.353**
He orgasms PVI			1.0	-.034	.246*	.241*
Worthy				1.0	.253*	.099
Satisfied					1.0	.030
Accomplished						1.0

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## **Chapter 6 Women's Complex Negotiation of Sexual and Gender Norms**

These three studies addressed certain aspects of women's hook ups with men, and asked questions that highlighted women's pleasure, behaviors, and emotions addressed how the unique sexual milieu of hook up culture affects women's ability to pursue or prioritize their own pleasure. Whereas prior research has often emphasized the negative aspects to hooking up for women, even suggesting that women are in need of some type of intervention to save them for these negative outcomes (Kenney et al., 2013), women relayed narratives of highly positive hook up encounters, and described a range of pleasures they experience from their hook ups that had not previously been explored. Women's narratives also revealed how hook up culture shapes the way women defined and experienced sexual pleasure in their hook ups with men.

The first study used card sorts to ask how women's actual hook up behaviors and emotions differed from their desired hook up behaviors and emotions. While women's actual hook up experiences often aligned quite well with their desired experiences, there were some areas of discrepancy, and these areas speak to issues related to women's empowerment and ability to prioritize their own pleasure in the hook up. The second study used in depth in person interviews to ask about the kinds of pleasure women experienced in their hook ups with men. Women described a range of emotional, cognitive and physical pleasures, such as cuddling, or feeling connected to their partner. Finally, Study 3 asked what the typical hook up consisted of behaviorally, emotionally, and in terms of pleasures women experienced. The typical hook up consists of behaviors that emphasize men's pleasure more than women's, and the typical hook up

includes men's orgasms and not women's. Women commonly experience emotional pleasures, but long for orgasm in their future hook ups, endorsing the orgasmic imperative (Potts, 2000).

### **Sexual & Gender Norms**

Women negotiated a complex set of sexual and gender norms within their hook up experiences, and these norms are made salient when examining women's ability to pursue their own pleasure. Some of these norms pertain to a hierarchy of pleasure, and to unwritten assumptions about whose pleasure takes precedence. It appears that many women are operating under the assumption that men's pleasure is regarded as most important, and the sexual behaviors that are most typically engaged in during hook ups as per findings from Study 3, are the behaviors that make men's orgasm more likely, such as giving oral sex and having penile vaginal intercourse. Conveniently, while women are aware of the norm of reciprocity (Braun et al., 2003), which states that when you give effort or labor towards someone's pleasure that this should be reciprocated, men often violated this norm, and many women gave oral sex but did not receive it in return.

Women also contended with norms of the sexual double standard, which asserts that while men gain status from sex and hooking up, women lose status. Women in Study 2 described feeling as though they should not have many hook up partners, for fear of being seen as "slutty." If she has a hook up partner who is not meeting her needs, replacing him with a new hook up partner could potentially bring more stigma upon her, and this too, is a norm women negotiated in their hook ups when they considered the pursuit of their own sexual pleasure. Even asking for a partner to give oral sex is fraught with this fear of potentially insulting a partner's sexual skill and his negative reaction to this this request, as was made salient by participants in Study 2.

Additionally, women negotiated gender norms within their hook up experiences with men. Norms of femininity state that women might enact their femininity by putting labor into their physical appearance, and women sometimes internalize men's objectification and find validation through the process of being desired (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women in Study 2 (Chapter 4) described one type of pleasure for them as receiving a compliment from their hook up partner, usually something along the lines of him telling her that she looks beautiful, and how this made her feel positively about herself. This experience was described often enough that it was listed as one of the 12 pleasures in the survey that was conducted in Study 3 (Chapter 5). Women in Study 3 highly endorsed this type of pleasure; in fact, 78% of women reported experiencing this in their past hook ups. Feeling desirable has been found in other studies as a common emotion women experience in their hook ups (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001), and 75% of women in Study 3 (Chapter 5) reported feeling desirable in their prior hook ups, as well.

Only 47% of women reported orgasm as a type of pleasure they had experienced in their hook ups within the past 6 months. It may be the case that when orgasm is taken off the table for so many women who hook up, that other kinds of pleasure become more important. This is not to suggest that orgasm is the most important measure of pleasure, but rather, that it has become so prioritized in our cultural and scientific imaginations as the sole barometer of pleasure, that its absence is concerning for many women, a finding researchers have addressed (Bell & McClelland, 2017). In fact, 88% of women who reported on their future imagined pleasure endorsed desiring orgasm, which placed it above receiving compliments from a partner, which 75% of women reported desiring in future hook ups.

Femininity norms do more than just emphasize physical appearance however; these norms also suggest that women are less sexual than men, and that desire is the territory of men,

that orgasms are not to be discussed as arising from within women, but rather, as gifts given from men to women (Fahs, 2011). Femininity is constructed as sexually passive, not assertive, and not overtly concerned with one's own pleasure, but rather, is concerned with pleasing the partner (Sanchez, Crocker, & Boike, 2005). Researchers have found that adhering to gender norms negatively affects sexual satisfaction and pleasure for women (Sanchez et al., 2005). Femininity norms emphasize a sense of self-worth that is based on others', mainly men's, approval. Wanting to be complimented and feeling desirable in hook ups are not inherently negative aspects to hooking up, but rather, may be evidence of larger structural patterns that characterize hook up culture and the roles that women must navigate within that culture. These roles can be restrictive and not conducive to women's sexual pleasure, or ability to prioritize their own sexual needs within a hook up.

Additionally, prior research has found that women viewed sexually agentic men and women as being selfish, and women perceived selfish sexual partners much more negatively than men did (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015). Therefore, women may have feared that being sexually agentic within a hook up could make them appear selfish to their hook up partner, and women may have been trying to avoid this by not pursuing their own pleasure. Women's apprehension about appearing sexually selfish also plays into femininity norms that encourage sexual submissiveness, and hence, the gendered norms of hook up culture are inhibitory towards women's sexual pleasure in a multiplicity of ways.

### **Femininity & Race**

Traditional femininity is also constructed, historically speaking, in relation to whiteness (Black & Sharma, 2001). Researchers who study hook ups have noted the overwhelmingly white composition of their samples (Allison & Risman, 2014; Wade, 2017) and some have even

ventured theories as to why hook up culture is predominantly white (Allison & Risman, 2014), noting the socioeconomic factors related to hooking up, such that college students who have more financial resources tend to have more time for hooking up. What has not been put forward yet is the potential theory that hook up culture is largely white because it relies on adherence to gendered norms of masculinity and femininity and women of color have largely been excluded from the construction of traditional femininity. Thus, women (and men) of color may be perceived as not adhering to the gender norms that structure hook up culture, and this perception may fuel their exclusion from it. Moreover, given these gendered norms and how they are constructed in relation to race, men and women of color may feel unease participating in a sexual system that relies heavily on such norms, and thus may actively choose to avoid hook up culture.

Moreover, women of color who do hook up may encounter exponentially more obstacles to the pursuit of their own sexual pleasure, as they not only deal with these same norms but also racial stereotypes that have positioned certain groups, such as African American women and men, as hypersexual (Ferber, 2007; West, 1995). Combining these racial stereotypes with the sexual double standard that many women encounter for having hook ups may only amplify the potential negative consequences that women of color might face for having hook ups. Women of color may fear confirming such stereotypes, and that could be one reason they do not engage in casual sex such as hook ups at the same rates as white women. When they do engage in hook ups, women of color may be fearful of confirming these racial stereotypes by pursuing their own pleasure as well, and this fear could potentially pose yet another obstacle to their sexual pleasure. These are just some of the potential explanations for the racial/ethnic disparities that have been noted within hook up culture.

Women then must negotiate all of these complex norms when they hook up: norms pertaining to whose pleasure is most important, norms pertaining to the sexual double standard, and norms pertaining to traditional femininity, and these norms land unevenly upon women from different racial backgrounds. Taken together, it is not hard to see why women might not feel they have the agency to negotiate their own pleasure by asking for things such as receiving oral sex, or to strive for their own orgasm during hook ups with men.

### **Conclusions**

Contrary to popular sentiment in extant literature that hook ups are mostly negative for young women, who face a host of psychological, emotional, and social costs for hooking up, women relay narratives of very positive hook up experiences. Women reported positive emotions far more than negative emotions, and experienced negative emotions such as regret or sadness sparingly. Similarly, while it is known that women do not often have orgasms during their hook ups, and this absence has been taken to mean women often lack pleasure in their hook ups (Armstrong et al., 2012), women described having a range of cognitive, emotional, and physical pleasures during their hook ups that did not center around orgasm. Women often experienced pleasures such as cuddling, hanging out, having chemistry with their partner, or having an emotional connection with their partner, all valid types of pleasure that women experienced regardless of whether they also have orgasms or not.

Taken together, the results from these three studies reveal a different narrative pertaining to women's hook ups: women have positive emotional and physical experiences in their hook ups, and this finding explains why so many women continue to hook up despite the extant literature that documents some of the costs of doing so. By exploring the costs that women face for hooking up and not documenting the benefits, the literature presents a biased take on

women's hook ups that reaches a faulty conclusion that the costs posed to women outweigh the potential benefits. It is clear that there are many positive outcomes that women experience from their hook ups and these appear to be much more common than the costs associated with hooking up.

However, hook ups come with complicated gender and sexual norms that women must navigate. These norms can inhibit specific kinds of pleasure, such as orgasm, and create worry for women about the sexual double standard. Moreover, these norms perhaps fuel the racial disparity within hook up culture. Hook up norms facilitate a hierarchy of pleasure in which men's pleasure is taken to be more important, and is often given first, and men then have the privilege of choosing to simply not reciprocate the same labor or effort that their partners invested towards pleasing them. All too often this is the case in hook ups, and women lamented the lack of reciprocity particularly with regard to oral sex. Despite the norm of reciprocity in which it is expected that if someone gives you something you then reciprocate this effort, men have the unique privilege to violate this norm and not suffer any obvious consequences for it. Women described not asking for reciprocity, citing their fear of how their male partner would react to their request.

It may be that women placed more importance on other kinds of pleasure in the absence of orgasm, which so many women reported longing for in their future hook ups. In this longing, women endorsed the orgasmic imperative (Potts, 2000) and hoped to achieve orgasms eventually, despite their resignation at the improbability of doing so. Even without the desired orgasms, women clearly described positive hook up experiences that they felt satisfied with and that brought them pleasure and enjoyment in a variety of ways. Moreover, an increasing number of hook ups was linked to positive emotions and greater likelihood of receiving oral sex,

contradicting the narrative that not only are hook ups negative for women, but that more hook ups are worse, and that women are in need of intervention.

While an intervention in young women's hook ups is probably unnecessary, what is needed is an intervention in the norms that shape and structure hook up culture, and that prioritize men's pleasure above women's. It is not the casual sexual behavior that poses the most harm to women and impedes her pleasure, but rather the implicit rules that suggest her pleasure is not as important in the first place. Intervening in women's hook ups to try and curtail the practice only supports the dangerous assumption that women's sexuality is out of control and that the most "healthy" and pleasurable sex for women can be found within the bounds of committed monogamous relationships. When in reality, it is the structural inequality inherent in hook up culture that presents obstacles to women's pleasure or their ability to freely pursue and prioritize their own pleasure during hook ups with men.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Complete List of Behaviors and Emotions [Chapter 3 and Chapter 5]

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#### Behaviors:

- Making out: heavy kissing with open mouths and tongue contact
- Kissing without tongue: open or closed mouth kissing that does not involve tongue contact
- Rimming give: You lick their anal rim
- Rimming receive: They lick your own anal rim
- Fingering: They use their fingers to stimulate the inside of your vagina
- They rub your vulva: They rub the outside of your vulva (lips area)
- Blow job with condom: You suck or lick their penis while they are wearing a condom
- Blow job without condom: You suck or lick their penis without a condom on it
- Receive anal sex with condom: They use fingers, sex toys, or their penis to penetrate your anus (with a condom)
- Receive anal sex without condom: They use either fingers, sex toys, or their penis to penetrate your anus (without a condom)
- Give anal sex with condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate their anus (with a condom).
- Give anal sex without condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate their anus (without a condom).
- They gave me oral sex: They used their mouth and/or tongue to stimulate your vulva/vagina
- Dry humping: You and the other person rub your genital areas against each other while wearing clothes
- Feeling up breasts over clothes: They used their hands to rub or stroke your breasts over your clothes
- Feeling up breasts under clothes: They used their hands to rub or stroke your breasts under your clothes
- Kissing breasts: They kissed or sucked on your breasts without clothes on
- You had an orgasm from vaginal intercourse: You had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
- You had an orgasm from fingering: You had an orgasm from them using fingers or hands to stimulate your vulva/vagina
- You had orgasm from oral: You had an orgasm from them using their mouth or tongue to stimulate your vulva/vagina

- They had orgasm from hand stimulation: They had an orgasm from you stroking their penis with your hand
- They had orgasm from blow job: They had an orgasm from you using your mouth to suck on their penis
- They had an orgasm from intercourse: They had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
- Cuddling: We held each other close before or after the hook up
- Hickeys give to them: You sucked on their neck or other body parts which left a slight bruise
- Hickeys receive from them: They sucked on my neck or other body part which left a slight bruise.
- Kissed his body: You kissed their body in some place
- They kissed my body: They kissed your body in some place
- Rubbed their body over clothes: You rubbed their body with his clothes on
- Rubbed my partner's body under clothes: You rubbed their body with their clothes off
- They rubbed my body over clothes: They rubbed your body with your clothes on
- They rubbed my body under clothes: They rubbed your body with your clothes off
- You took their clothes off: You take their clothes off
- They took my clothes off: They took your clothes off
- They take their own clothes off: They undressed, took their own clothes off
- You take your clothes off: You undressed, took your own clothes off
- Hook Up lasted as long as you'd like it to (whatever this means to you): Did the hook up last a length of time that felt good to you
- Hook Up didn't last as long as you'd like (whatever this means to you): Did you wish the hook up lasted longer than it did
- You touched yourself: You touched or rubbed your own vulva/vagina
- They touched themselves: Other person touched or rubbed their own penis
- We watched porn together: We watched videos of other people having sex together
- They used a sex toy on me: They used a sex toy, like a vibrator or dildo, on me
- You used a sex toy on them: you used a vibrator or dildo on them
- They came inside me with condom: They ejaculated inside me while wearing a condom
- They came inside me without condom: They ejaculated inside me without wearing a condom
- They came on my body somewhere: They ejaculated on my body somewhere
- They came in my mouth: They ejaculated inside my mouth

### **Emotions:**

- Greater trust with other person: increasing feelings that they are reliable, honest, or good
- Lower trust with other person: decreasing feelings that they are reliable, honest, or good
- Increased self-confidence: increased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Lower self-confidence: decreased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Feeling sexually skilled: Feeling as though you have sexual knowledge or abilities
- Feeling sexually unskilled: Feeling as though you do not have sexual knowledge or abilities
- Relaxed: A sense of calmness, lack of worry

- Tense: A feeling of being worried or anxious
- Satisfied: To feel happy or fulfilled
- Not satisfied: To feel unfulfilled or unhappy
- Greater excitement: Increased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Lower excitement: Decreased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Regret: Wishing that you had not had the hook up
- Accomplished/accomplishment: Feeling that you did a good job, happy about the hook up
- Disrespected: Feeling as though they showed contempt or disregard for you
- Respected: Feeling as though they value you, treat you with high regard
- Dominant: Feeling powerful, in control
- Submissive: Feeling or wanting to obey someone, let them be in control
- Superior: Feeling better than someone or others
- Inferior: Feeling not as good as others, lower than them
- Pride: Feeling important, successful, as though you are respected by others
- Ashamed: Feeling guilty or unworthy
- Dirty: Feeling not clean, or indecent
- Feel emotionally closer to other person: Feeling of greater connection or intimacy with them
- Feel emotionally less close to other person: Feeling less connection or intimacy with them
- Feel physically closer to other person: Feeling closer to the other person's body or private space
- Feel less physically close to other person: Feeling less close to the other person's body or private space
- Turned on: excited, aroused
- Turned Off: Not interested, not excited or aroused
- Clean: Feeling free of dirt or negative things
- Sad: feeling unhappy, lacking enthusiasm
- Happy: Feeling positive, excited, enjoyment
- Disappointed: Feeling let down, didn't meet expectations
- Fulfilled: Feeling your expectations were met
- Confused: feeling mentally disorganized, unsure, not clear
- Not confused: Feeling mentally clear, organized
- More attracted to them: Greater feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- Less attracted to them: Lesser feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- More interested in seeing them again: Wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Less interested in seeing them again: Not wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Slutty: Feeling promiscuous, or sexually open/adventurous
- Curious: A desire to know more about someone or something
- Nervous about bumping into them (If they are someone within your social circle): Anxious about seeing them in a social way (at school for example)
- Sick: Feeling unwell, lacking in health
- Healthy: Feeling strong, vibrant, well
- In physical discomfort: feeling physical pain or soreness in your body

- Feeling physically good in general: Feeling good, strong in your body
- Empowered: Feeling strong, powerful
- Disempowered: Feeling lack of strength or power
- Comfortable with my body: Feeling at ease with your body
- Uncomfortable with my body: Feeling not at ease with your body
- Physically satisfied: Feeling as though you are happy or fulfilled physically
- Physically unsatisfied: Feeling unhappy or unfulfilled physically
- Emotional Discomfort: Feeling emotionally unwell, not happy
- Emotional Comfort: Feeling emotionally safe, secure, happy
- Loved: Feeling as though they care deeply for you
- Unloved: Feeling as though they do not care deeply for you
- Safe: Feeling secure, at ease
- Unsafe: Feeling not secure or not at ease
- Valued: feeling as though they care and see you as worthy
- Used: Feeling as though they took advantage of you to get what they want
- Anticipation of seeing them again: Excited or looking forward to seeing them again
- Wondering if they want to see you again: Wondering if they would like to see you again
- Excitement to hook up with someone: Looking forward to having a hook up with someone in the future, not necessarily the same person
- Excitement to hook up with same person again: Looking forward to hooking up with this same person again
- Tired: Lacking energy or enthusiasm
- Energized: Feeling full of excitement, happy
- Popular: Feeling well liked by others
- Unpopular: Feeling disliked by others
- Worthless: Feeling not valued
- Worthy: Feeling valued
- Undesirable: Feeling not wanted
- Desirable: feeling wanted

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol [Chapter 4]

Interview questions:

- How did the sorts go for you?
- When you were sorting the cards, were you thinking about a recent hook up in which:
- It was someone that you've had more than one hook up with?
- Is this someone you wanted to hook up with more than once?
- Is this someone you wanted to have a relationship with?
- Do you plan on hooking up with them again?
- When doing your sorts, were there any behaviors that you may have engaged in with a partner that were not actually here in these cards? If so, what might those be?
- The sort asked you to group the cards according to what behaviors you engaged in during your most recent hook up. If you have had more than one hook up, do you feel that the sorts represented a “typical” hook up for you?
  - [If no] What might a typical hook up look like for you then?
- If you have had more than one hook up, are there behaviors you might engage in more than others, and if so which ones do you do more often?

- If you've had more than one hook up, do you tend to have them with the same partner or different partners?
  - [Either yes or no]: Does your familiarity with your hook up partner impact what types of behaviors you do?
- We've talked a bit about what your "typical" hook ups are like. What would an "ideal" or "best imaginable" hook up be like for you?
- Do any of your past hook ups stand out to you as ones you liked more than others? If you've only had one hook up, can you say a little bit about how much you liked or disliked that experience generally speaking?
- [If there is one or two that stand out to them, ask them]: what qualities did this particular experience have that made it stand out for you as one of the better ones? For example, are there certain behaviors or feelings that make it particularly good for you?
- If they say they have all been non-enjoyable, ask them]: What was it about these experiences that could have been better for you or would have made it more enjoyable for you?
- Is there anything that you would like more of when it comes to hook ups, such as you'd like to have more of X or Y? This could be in relation to sexual behaviors you do with a partner or it could even be feelings or emotions you have leading up to, during, or after the experience.
- How do you think you would know when you've had a really good hook up experience?
- Are there any other aspects to your hook up experiences that impact how much you like or dislike them that we have not yet talked about?
- Do you have any questions about the study that I can answer for you today?

## Appendix C: Survey Questions [Chapter 5]

- 1) What is your participant ID that the study team emailed to you? [Text box entry]
- 2) Please indicate the MONTH and YEAR of your birth (for example, October, 1979): [Text box entry]
- 3) What is your current zip code? [Text box entry]
- 4) Consent Form Embedded, Do you consent to participate in this survey? [Yes or no check box].
- 5) A hook up is defined as: “A hook up is a sexual encounter that occurs between non-dating friends or acquaintances, often at parties or social events, with no obligation to have future romantic commitment or see each other again, even though a relationship might develop from a hook up. A hook up may include a range of sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to intercourse.” Given this definition, have you ever engaged in a hook up? [Yes or No Check Box]
- 6) If yes, how many consensual hook ups do you estimate you have engaged in? [Text Entry]
- 7) Are these hook ups with men, women, trans identified people, or people who have another gender identity not listed here? Please check all that apply: [Check All That Apply]
- 8) What behaviors have you engaged in during your hook ups? Please check all that apply: [Check All That Apply]
  - Making out: heavy kissing with open mouths and tongue contact
  - Kissing without tongue: open or closed mouth kissing that does not involve tongue contact
  - Rimming give: You lick his anal rim
  - Rimming receive: He licks your own anal rim
  - Fingering: He uses his fingers to stimulate the inside of your vagina
  - He rubs your vulva: He rubs the outside of your vulva (lips area)
  - Blow job with condom: You suck or lick his penis while he has a condom on it
  - Blow job without condom: You suck or lick his penis without a condom on it
  - Receive anal sex with condom: he uses fingers, sex toys, or his penis to penetrate your anus (with a condom)
  - Receive anal sex without condom: He uses either fingers, sex toys, or his penis to penetrate your anus (without a condom)
  - Give anal sex with condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate his anus (with a condom).
  - Give anal sex without condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate his anus (without a condom).
  - He gave me oral sex: He used his mouth and/or tongue to stimulate your vulva/vagina

- Dry humping: You and the other person rub your genital areas against each other while wearing clothes
- Feeling up breasts over clothes: He used his hands to rub or stroke your breasts over your clothes
- Feeling up breasts under clothes: He used his hands to rub or stroke your breasts under your clothes
- Kissing breasts: He kissed or sucked on your breasts without clothes on
- I had an orgasm from vaginal intercourse: You had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
- I had an orgasm from fingering: You had an orgasm from him using his fingers or hands to stimulate your vulva/vagina
- I had orgasm from oral: I had an orgasm from him using his mouth or tongue to stimulate my vulva/vagina
- He had orgasm from hand stimulation: He had an orgasm from you stroking his penis with your hand
- He had orgasm from blow job: He had an orgasm from you using your mouth to suck on his penis
- He had an orgasm from intercourse: He had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
- Cuddling: We held each other close before or after the hook up
- Hickeys give to him: You sucked on his neck or other body parts which left a slight bruise
- Hickeys receive from him: He sucked on my neck or other body part which left a slight bruise.
- Kissed his body: You kissed his body in some place
- He kissed my body: He kissed your body in some place
- Rubbed his body over clothes: You rubbed his body with his clothes on
- Rubbed my partner's body under clothes: You rubbed his body with their clothes off
- He rubbed my body over clothes: He rubbed your body with your clothes on
- He rubbed my body under clothes: He rubbed your body with your clothes off
- I took his clothes off: You take the his clothes off
- He took my clothes off: He took your clothes off
- He takes his clothes off: He took his own clothes off
- I take my clothes off: You take your own clothes off
- Hook Up lasted as long as you'd like it to (whatever this means to you): Did the hook up last a length of time that felt good to you
- Hook Up didn't last as long as you'd like (whatever this means to you): Did you wish the hook up lasted longer than it did
- I touched myself: You touched or rubbed your own vulva/vagina
- He touched himself: Other person touched or rubbed his own penis
- We watched porn together: We watched videos of other people having sex together
- He used a sex toy on me: He used a sex toy, like a vibrator or dildo, on me
- I used a sex toy on him: I used a vibrator or dildo on him
- He came inside me with condom: He ejaculated inside me while wearing a condom
- He came inside me without condom: He ejaculated inside me without wearing a condom
- He came on my body somewhere: He ejaculated on my body somewhere

- He came in my mouth: He ejaculated inside my mouth
  - None of the above
  - Something Else Not Listed
- 9) Do you engage in some of these behaviors more than others during your hook ups? [Yes or No Check Box]
- 10) If yes, which behaviors are the MOST common for you to engage in during hook ups? Please check all that apply: [repeat list of behaviors, check all that apply]
- Making out: heavy kissing with open mouths and tongue contact
  - Kissing without tongue: open or closed mouth kissing that does not involve tongue contact
  - Rimming give: You lick his anal rim
  - Rimming receive: He licks your own anal rim
  - Fingering: He uses his fingers to stimulate the inside of your vagina
  - He rubs your vulva: He rubs the outside of your vulva (lips area)
  - Blow job with condom: You suck or lick his penis while he has a condom on it
  - Blow job without condom: You suck or lick his penis without a condom on it
  - Receive anal sex with condom: he uses fingers, sex toys, or his penis to penetrate your anus (with a condom)
  - Receive anal sex without condom: He uses either fingers, sex toys, or his penis to penetrate your anus (without a condom)
  - Give anal sex with condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate his anus (with a condom).
  - Give anal sex without condom: You use either fingers or sex toys to penetrate his anus (without a condom).
  - He gave me oral sex: He used his mouth and/or tongue to stimulate your vulva/vagina
  - Dry humping: You and the other person rub your genital areas against each other while wearing clothes
  - Feeling up breasts over clothes: He used his hands to rub or stroke your breasts over your clothes
  - Feeling up breasts under clothes: He used his hands to rub or stroke your breasts under your clothes
  - Kissing breasts: He kissed or sucked on your breasts without clothes on
  - I had an orgasm from vaginal intercourse: You had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
  - I had an orgasm from fingering: You had an orgasm from him using his fingers or hands to stimulate your vulva/vagina
  - I had orgasm from oral: I had an orgasm from him using his mouth or tongue to stimulate my vulva/vagina
  - He had orgasm from hand stimulation: He had an orgasm from you stroking his penis with your hand
  - He had orgasm from blow job: He had an orgasm from you using your mouth to suck on his penis
  - He had an orgasm from intercourse: He had an orgasm from penis in vagina sex
  - Cuddling: We held each other close before or after the hook up
  - Hickey give to him: You sucked on his neck or other body parts which left a slight bruise

- Hickeys receive from him: He sucked on my neck or other body part which left a slight bruise.
- Kissed his body: You kissed his body in some place
- He kissed my body: He kissed your body in some place
- Rubbed his body over clothes: You rubbed his body with his clothes on
- Rubbed my partner's body under clothes: You rubbed his body with their clothes off
- He rubbed my body over clothes: He rubbed your body with your clothes on
- He rubbed my body under clothes: He rubbed your body with your clothes off
- I took his clothes off: You take the his clothes off
- He took my clothes off: He took your clothes off
- He takes his clothes off: He took his own clothes off
- I take my clothes off: You take your own clothes off
- Hook Up lasted as long as you'd like it to (whatever this means to you): Did the hook up last a length of time that felt good to you
- Hook Up didn't last as long as you'd like (whatever this means to you): Did you wish the hook up lasted longer than it did
- I touched myself: You touched or rubbed your own vulva/vagina
- He touched himself: Other person touched or rubbed his own penis
- We watched porn together: We watched videos of other people having sex together
- He used a sex toy on me: He used a sex toy, like a vibrator or dildo, on me
- I used a sex toy on him: I used a vibrator or dildo on him
- He came inside me with condom: He ejaculated inside me while wearing a condom
- He came inside me without condom: He ejaculated inside me without wearing a condom
- He came on my body somewhere: He ejaculated on my body somewhere
- He came in my mouth: He ejaculated inside my mouth

11) Are there other behaviors you engage in during your hook ups that are not listed here?  
[Yes or No Check Box]

12) If yes, what might these behaviors be? [Text Entry]

13) Paying careful attention during surveys is important. If you are paying attention and reading the instructions, please select the color purple from the items below. [Check box options]

14) What feelings or attitudes do you commonly feel during your hook ups? Please check all that apply [Check all that apply]

- Greater trust with other person: increasing feelings that he is reliable, honest, or good
- Lower trust with other person: decreasing feelings that he is reliable, honest, or good
- Increased self-confidence: increased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Lower self-confidence: decreased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Feeling sexually skilled: Feeling as though you have sexual knowledge or abilities
- Feeling sexually unskilled: Feeling as though you do not have sexual knowledge or abilities
- Relaxed: A sense of calmness, lack of worry

- Tense: A feeling of being worried or anxious
- Satisfied: To feel happy or fulfilled
- Not satisfied: To feel unfulfilled or unhappy
- Greater excitement: Increased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Lower excitement: Decreased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Regret: Wishing that you had not had the hook up
- Accomplished/accomplishment: Feeling that you did a good job, happy about the hook up
- Disrespected: Feeling as though they showed contempt or disregard for you
- Respected: Feeling as though they value you, treat you with high regard
- Dominant: Feeling powerful, in control
- Submissive: Feeling or wanting to obey someone, let them be in control
- Superior: Feeling better than someone or others
- Inferior: Feeling not as good as others, lower than them
- Pride: Feeling important, successful, as though you are respected by others
- Ashamed: Feeling guilty or unworthy
- Dirty: Feeling not clean, or indecent
- Feel emotionally closer to other person: Feeling of greater connection or intimacy with them
- Feel emotionally less close to other person: Feeling less connection or intimacy with them
- Feel physically closer to other person: Feeling closer to the other person's body or private space
- Feel less physically close to other person: Feeling less close to the other person's body or private space
- Turned on: excited, aroused
- Turned Off: Not interested, not excited or aroused
- Clean: Feeling free of dirt or negative things
- Sad: feeling unhappy, lacking enthusiasm
- Happy: Feeling positive, excited, enjoyment
- Disappointed: Feeling let down, didn't meet expectations
- Fulfilled: Feeling your expectations were met
- Confused: feeling mentally disorganized, unsure, not clear
- Not confused: Feeling mentally clear, organized
- More attracted to them: Greater feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- Less attracted to them: Lesser feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- More interested in seeing them again: Wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Less interested in seeing them again: Not wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Slutty: Feeling promiscuous, or sexually open/adventurous
- Curious: A desire to know more about someone or something
- Nervous about bumping into them (If they are someone within your social circle): Anxious about seeing them in a social way (at school for example)
- Sick: Feeling unwell, lacking in health
- Healthy: Feeling strong, vibrant, well
- In physical discomfort: feeling physical pain or soreness in your body

- Feeling physically good in general: Feeling good, strong in your body
- Empowered: Feeling strong, powerful
- Disempowered: Feeling lack of strength or power
- Comfortable with my body: Feeling at ease with your body
- Uncomfortable with my body: Feeling not at ease with your body
- Physically satisfied: Feeling as though you are happy or fulfilled physically
- Physically unsatisfied: Feeling unhappy or unfulfilled physically
- Emotional Discomfort: Feeling emotionally unwell, not happy
- Emotional Comfort: Feeling emotionally safe, secure, happy
- Loved: Feeling as though they care deeply for you
- Unloved: Feeling as though they do not care deeply for you
- Safe: Feeling secure, at ease
- Unsafe: Feeling not secure or not at ease
- Valued: feeling as though they care and see you as worthy
- Used: Feeling as though they took advantage of you to get what they want
- Anticipation of seeing them again: Excited or looking forward to seeing them again
- Wondering if they want to see you again: Wondering if they would like to see you again
- Excitement to hook up with someone: Looking forward to having a hook up with someone in the future, not necessarily the same person
- Excitement to hook up with same person again: Looking forward to hooking up with this same person again
- Tired: Lacking energy or enthusiasm
- Energized: Feeling full of excitement, happy
- Popular: Feeling well liked by others
- Unpopular: Feeling disliked by others
- Worthless: Feeling not valued
- Worthy: Feeling valued
- Undesirable: Feeling not wanted
- Desirable: feeling wanted

15) Are any of these feelings or attitudes more common for you to feel than others in regards to your hook ups? [Yes or No Check Box]

16) If yes, which feelings or attitudes are MOST common for you to experience in relation to your hook ups? [repeat list of feelings and attitudes, check all that apply]

- Greater trust with other person: increasing feelings that he is reliable, honest, or good
- Lower trust with other person: decreasing feelings that he is reliable, honest, or good
- Increased self-confidence: increased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Lower self-confidence: decreased feeling of being sure of one's abilities
- Feeling sexually skilled: Feeling as though you have sexual knowledge or abilities

- Feeling sexually unskilled: Feeling as though you do not have sexual knowledge or abilities
- Relaxed: A sense of calmness, lack of worry
- Tense: A feeling of being worried or anxious
- Satisfied: To feel happy or fulfilled
- Not satisfied: To feel unfulfilled or unhappy
- Greater excitement: Increased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Lower excitement: Decreased feelings of enthusiasm or anticipation
- Regret: Wishing that you had not had the hook up
- Accomplished/accomplishment: Feeling that you did a good job, happy about the hook up
- Disrespected: Feeling as though they showed contempt or disregard for you
- Respected: Feeling as though they value you, treat you with high regard
- Dominant: Feeling powerful, in control
- Submissive: Feeling or wanting to obey someone, let them be in control
- Superior: Feeling better than someone or others
- Inferior: Feeling not as good as others, lower than them
- Pride: Feeling important, successful, as though you are respected by others
- Ashamed: Feeling guilty or unworthy
- Dirty: Feeling not clean, or indecent
- Feel emotionally closer to other person: Feeling of greater connection or intimacy with them
- Feel emotionally less close to other person: Feeling less connection or intimacy with them
- Feel physically closer to other person: Feeling closer to the other person's body or private space
- Feel less physically close to other person: Feeling less close to the other person's body or private space
- Turned on: excited, aroused
- Turned Off: Not interested, not excited or aroused
- Clean: Feeling free of dirt or negative things
- Sad: feeling unhappy, lacking enthusiasm
- Happy: Feeling positive, excited, enjoyment
- Disappointed: Feeling let down, didn't meet expectations
- Fulfilled: Feeling your expectations were met
- Confused: feeling mentally disorganized, unsure, not clear
- Not confused: Feeling mentally clear, organized
- More attracted to them: Greater feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- Less attracted to them: Lesser feelings of being drawn to or wanting them
- More interested in seeing them again: Wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Less interested in seeing them again: Not wanting or wishing to see them again in the future
- Slutty: Feeling promiscuous, or sexually open/adventurous
- Curious: A desire to know more about someone or something
- Nervous about bumping into them (If they are someone within your social circle): Anxious about seeing them in a social way (at school for example)

- Sick: Feeling unwell, lacking in health
- Healthy: Feeling strong, vibrant, well
- In physical discomfort: feeling physical pain or soreness in your body
- Feeling physically good in general: Feeling good, strong in your body
- Empowered: Feeling strong, powerful
- Disempowered: Feeling lack of strength or power
- Comfortable with my body: Feeling at ease with your body
- Uncomfortable with my body: Feeling not at ease with your body
- Physically satisfied: Feeling as though you are happy or fulfilled physically
- Physically unsatisfied: Feeling unhappy or unfulfilled physically
- Emotional Discomfort: Feeling emotionally unwell, not happy
- Emotional Comfort: Feeling emotionally safe, secure, happy
- Loved: Feeling as though they care deeply for you
- Unloved: Feeling as though they do not care deeply for you
- Safe: Feeling secure, at ease
- Unsafe: Feeling not secure or not at ease
- Valued: feeling as though they care and see you as worthy
- Used: Feeling as though they took advantage of you to get what they want
- Anticipation of seeing them again: Excited or looking forward to seeing them again
- Wondering if they want to see you again: Wondering if they would like to see you again
- Excitement to hook up with someone: Looking forward to having a hook up with someone in the future, not necessarily the same person
- Excitement to hook up with same person again: Looking forward to hooking up with this same person again
- Tired: Lacking energy or enthusiasm
- Energized: Feeling full of excitement, happy
- Popular: Feeling well liked by others
- Unpopular: Feeling disliked by others
- Worthless: Feeling not valued
- Worthy: Feeling valued
- Undesirable: Feeling not wanted
- Desirable: feeling wanted
- None of the Above
- Something Not Listed

17) Are there any other feelings or attitudes you have about your hook ups that are not listed here? [Yes or No Check Box]

18) If yes, what might these feelings or attitudes be? [Text Entry]

19) Paying careful attention during surveys is important. If you are paying attention and reading the instructions, please select the color green from the items below. [Check box options]

- 20) Overall, how enjoyable do you find your hook up experiences to be? [likert type scale, 1-5, 1 = not very enjoyable ranging to 5 = extremely enjoyable]
- 21) The following are a list of different types of enjoyment you may have experienced in prior hook ups. Please check all that you have experienced during your own hook ups: [Check Box all that apply]
- Pleasing him feeling accomplished
  - He compliments you or says something nice
  - They tend to your needs
  - Cuddling
  - Positive emotions in general
  - Emotional connection with hook up partner
  - Orgasm
  - Hanging Out
  - Chemistry/Connection with partner
  - Reciprocity, feeling like each other's needs are met
  - Feeling safe
  - Feeling respected
- 22) Are any of these types of enjoyment more common for you to experience than others? [Yes or No check Box]
- 23) If yes, which types of enjoyment are MOST common for you to experience during your hook ups? Please check all that apply: [Repeat list of enjoyment types, Check Box all that apply]
- Pleasing him feeling accomplished
  - He compliments you or says something nice
  - They tend to your needs
  - Cuddling
  - Positive emotions in general
  - Emotional connection with hook up partner
  - Orgasm
  - Hanging Out
  - Chemistry/Connection with partner
  - Reciprocity, feeling like each other's needs are met
  - Feeling safe
  - Feeling respected
- 24) Paying careful attention during surveys is important. If you are paying attention and reading the instructions, please select the color pink from the items below. [Check box options]
- 25) What types of enjoyment would you desire to experience in your future hook ups? Please check all that apply: [Check All That Apply]
- Pleasing him feeling accomplished
  - He compliments you or says something nice
  - They tend to your needs
  - Cuddling
  - Positive emotions in general
  - Emotional connection with hook up partner
  - Orgasm

- Hanging Out
  - Chemistry/Connection with partner
  - Reciprocity, feeling like each other's needs are met
  - Feeling safe
  - Feeling respected
- 26) Are there any types of enjoyment you have during hook ups that are not listed here? [Yes or No Check Box]
- 27) If yes, what might these types of enjoyment be? [Text Entry]
- 28) Do you have any thoughts or comments related to this survey or your experiences that we have not asked or you would like to share with us? [Yes or No Check Box]
- 29) Please feel free to share these comments with the study team [Text Entry]

## Appendix D: Rates For All Hook Up Behaviors [Chapter 5]

Table 21

### Complete List of Hook Up Behaviors

	<b>Yes</b>
Making Out	99%
Feel breasts over clothes	92%
Kissing no tongue	92%
They kiss her body	88%
Feel breasts under clothes	87%
They rub her over clothes	84%
They take her clothes off	82%
Partner rubs her vulva	82%
Hook up lasted as long as like	82%
Fingering	81%
They rub her under clothes	81%
She rubs them under clothes	81%
They kiss her breasts	80%
She rubs them over clothes	79%
Cuddling	79%

She kisses their body	78%
They take their own clothes off	78%
Blow job without condom	75%
Dry humping	73%
She takes her clothes off	73%
She takes their clothes off	69%
She receives oral from partner	68%
They orgasm PVI	66%
They give hickeys to her	63%
They orgasm oral sex	54%
They came on her body	49%
They came in her mouth	47%
They came inside her w/ condom	43%
They touch themselves	43%
She gives hickeys	40%
Hook up didn't last as long as like	38%
He orgasms hand job	28%
She touches herself	28%
She orgasms PVI	26%

She orgasms oral	25%
They came inside her no condom	22%
She orgasms fingering	22%
Receive anal sex no condom	7%
Watch porn together	6%
Give blow job condom	5%
They use toy on her	5%
Receive anal sex condom	3%
Rimming receive	3%
She used toy on them	1%
Give anal condom	1%
Rimming give	1%
Give anal no condom	0%

*Note.*  $n = 102$ .

## Appendix E: Rates For All Hook Up Emotions [Chapter 5]

Table 22

### Complete List of Hook Up Emotions

	<b>Yes</b>
Turned on	85%
Greater excitement	83%
Desirable	75%
Physically closer	74%
Wonder if they want to see you again	71%
Sexually skilled	68%
Increased self confidence	67%
Happy	66%
More interested in them	65%
More attracted to them	64%
Excited to hook up w/same person again	64%
Greater trust	57%
Satisfied	57%

Submissive	55%
Comfortable in body	55%
Excited to hook up w/someone	53%
Curious	52%
Accomplished	51%
Physically satisfied	50%
Empowered	47%
Anticipation	46%
Relaxed	45%
Slutty	44%
Emotionally closer	42%
Physically well	41%
Valued	39%
Confused	39%
Nervous to see them again	38%
Pride	35%
Respected	33%
Energized	32%
Emotional comfort	31%
Dominant	31%
Safe	30%
Used	28%

Worthy	27%
Dirty	27%
Popular	26%
Tense	25%
Fulfilled	23%
Regret	22%
Healthy	22%
Disappointed	18%
Unloved	18%
Physically unsatisfied	17%
Disrespected	16%
Emotional discomfort	16%
Ashamed	16%
Uncomfortable in body	16%
Sexually unskilled	15%
Lower self confidence	15%
Not satisfied	15%
Physical discomfort	15%
Less interested in them	14%
Worthless	13%
Lower trust	12%
Loved	11%

Less attracted to them	10%
Tired	9%
Sad	9%
Emotionally less close	9%
Superior	9%
Inferior	9%
Undesirable	8%
Not confused	8%
Disempowered	8%
Sick	7%
Unsafe	5%
Lower excitement	3%
Clean	3%
Turned off	3%
Unpopular	2%
Physically less close	1%

*Note.* ( $n = 102$ ).

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