

**FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE HOOKUP CULTURE:  
A STUDY OF FEMALE ENGAGEMENT IN NON-RELATIONAL SEX ON A  
UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**

By

Shanlea L. Gordon

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## Abstract

Recent empirical evidence suggests that we have entered a new period of courtship known as *the hookup era*. Contemporary research which explores hooking up has confirmed the prevalence of this dating script, particularly within post-secondary institutions. The relevant literature has focused on a variety of important issues including the conceptual meaning of hooking up, and the identification of potential correlates and consequences of these behaviours. Despite this increase in scholarly interest, several problems remain unaddressed. Principal among these is the way(s) in which young women mediate the self-perceived risks involved in the sexual exchange known as the hookup, so as to facilitate their participation in this culture. The current paper examines the controversy that is female hookup participation by investigating the risks – and subsequent negotiation of these risks – which women face in the hookup culture. Specifically, this paper makes use of detailed qualitative data gathered from a sample of female undergraduate students at a medium-sized Canadian university, in order to uncover the social processes by which female proponents of the hookup culture account for their actions to themselves and to others, in this the seemingly risky courtship script.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“We just suck socially now”, Serena<sup>1</sup> tells me, as she reflects upon contemporary courtship behaviours. Serena is of course referencing the primary mode of heterosexual romantic interaction on university and college campuses, a practice commonly referred to as *hooking up*. Empirical evidence, derived mainly from studies undertaken in the United States, suggest that there have been recent transitions in the culture of courtship which have sparked the emergence of a new courtship period known as *the hookup era* (Bogle 2008a; Epstein et al. 2009; Glenn and Marquardt 2001). These studies confirm the pervasiveness of hooking up on university and college campuses and more importantly, identify hooking up as the primary courtship script to which post-secondary students subscribe (Bogle 2008a; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Paul and Hayes 2002).

Although the term *hooking up* is rather ambiguous, there is a general consensus that a hookup involves some degree of sexual intimacy – whether that be kissing, sexual intercourse, or anything “in-between” – and explicitly lacks any *a priori* agreements or obligations for subsequent relations or relationships (Bogle 2007, 2008a; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Owen et al. 2010). In other words, young men and women are partaking in sexual exchanges with one another with no assurance that any future interactions will result. The hooking up era is seemingly characterized by a reversal in the relationship between emotional investment and sexual intimacy, as the latter generally precedes the former in contemporary relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> All names have been replaced with pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of participants in this study.

Despite the scholarly interest in hooking up behaviours, several significant problems remain unaddressed. Principal among these is the understanding of female participation in the hookup culture. Several researchers and social commentators suggest that non-relational sexual liaisons have several risky elements, especially for females who subscribe to this culture (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Flack et al. 2007; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Owen and Fincham 2011; Paul and Hayes 2002; Regnerus and Uecker 2011; Wade and Heldman 2012). Despite the identification of these risks however, the same studies continuously report high levels of female involvement in hooking up (Bogle 2008a; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Owen et al. 2011; Paul and Hayes 2002). The implication is that female participation in the hookup culture is paradoxical; although hooking up poses several risks for young women, high levels of female participation are consistently reported. Thus it is unclear why female students knowingly participate in a courtship script which many of them recognize as disproportionately disadvantageous.

Noting this, the current study attempts to address the paradox that is female participation in the hookup culture. Specifically, this thesis reports on research which asks female respondents about the ways in which they manage risks associated with hooking up; in other words, how do female participants in the hookup culture negate the associated risks, so as to make sense of their behaviours and facilitate participation in this culture? This study considers the linguistic and discursive approaches employed by young women to construct and reconstruct their hookup behaviours in ways that make them acceptable to themselves and to others. To investigate this paradox, this research



makes use of detailed qualitative data gathered from a sample of female university students at “Eastern”<sup>2</sup> – a medium-sized Canadian university.

This study draws upon the theoretical considerations of sociologists of deviance, some of whom contend that when individuals behave in ways that they themselves believe to be wrong, they employ various linguistic techniques in order to reconstruct their behaviours as non-problematic (Scott and Lyman 1968; Scully and Marolla 1984; Sykes and Matza 1957). Accordingly, the literatures regarding neutralization and accounts are employed to explain how young women in university conceptually rationalize their participation in the hookup culture. To date, there are no known studies that investigate the techniques of neutralization employed by young women to account for their hookup participation, and notably, no known sociological studies which explore the hookup culture in any respect within the Canadian context.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the scholarly literatures which inform this thesis. Specifically, the first section of this chapter traces the historical transitions in the culture of courtship in North American societies. The second section summarizes the predominant hookup literatures and considers the cultural changes thought to have sparked the emergence of the hookup era. Third, Chapter Two will outline the various risks associated with hookup participation, and argue that women are more likely to experience these risks. Finally, Chapter Two will examine the theoretical considerations of sociologists of deviance which will be used to inform the current analysis.

Chapter Three begins with an overview of the methodological choices and strategies employed throughout the research process. This chapter will describe the

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<sup>2</sup> To ensure the confidentiality of all participants, the name of the educational institution from which this sample was collected has been changed to *Eastern University*.

specific qualitative methods used and the corresponding rationale for each of the data collection techniques. Additionally, this chapter will detail some of the ethical dilemmas encountered during the research process.

Chapter Four details the findings of the study. The first section in this chapter explains the varying ways in which respondents conceptualized the term *hooking up*, and reviews the “hookup scene” on Eastern’s campus. The second section considers the risks associated with hookup participation, and specifically, women’s experiences with, and understanding of these risks. Lastly, this chapter describes the most significant findings of the study, by outlining the five primary ways in which respondents neutralize their hookup behaviours in order to reinterpret their hookup participation as non-problematic.

The final chapter discusses the interpretations and implications of the study. After providing a summary of the results, Chapter Five considers some additional findings which are unrelated to the primary aims of this research. This chapter ends with a brief discussion of the limitations of the current study, and suggestions for future research in the area of hooking up.

This short chapter has introduced the paradox that is female participation in the hookup culture, and correspondingly outlined a principal void within the sociological literatures. The current study attempts to address this gap by putting forth a constructionist account of the ways in which female proponents of the hookup culture negotiate the risks associated with these non-relational sexual liaisons. It is hoped that the results from this research will offer a valuable contribution to the sociological literature, and provide insight into the largely undocumented hookup culture in Canada.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review and Theory

This chapter will explicate the sociological literatures as they relate to hooking up. Specifically, this chapter will first examine some of the historical changes made to the courtship scripts in the West. Secondly, this chapter will offer potential determinants for the emergence of the hookup culture and discuss the relevant scholarly hookup literatures. Lastly, this chapter will focus on the central theoretical question discussed in this thesis: how do women make sense of their involvement in the hookup culture? To this end, the general tenets of accounts and neutralization theory will be discussed. Particular emphasis will be placed on the works of Sykes and Matza (1957), Scott and Lyman (1968), and Scully and Marolla (1984), whose theoretical contributions can inform our understanding of hooking up, and women's role within this culture.

#### **The Shifting Culture of Courtship**

Heterosexual courtship practices within North American culture have varied significantly throughout history. Specifically, Bailey (2004) notes that several distinct stages of divergent courtship patterns can be identified as previously dominant scripts (Bailey 2004). In order to explicate the interrelated cultural conditions which stimulated the emergence of the hookup culture, it is necessary to first understand the major historical transitions in the cultural evolution of North American courtship patterns.

#### *Calling*

The first decade of the twentieth century was characterized by the *calling era* (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a). During this time, young heterosexual male suitors interested in a romantic relationship would visit or “call” upon a young woman at her home. Within

middle class courtships a call would often involve the young man and woman sitting in her parlour, while the young lady served refreshments and perhaps played the violin or piano for her caller (Bailey 2004). It would not be uncommon for the young woman's parents to be present for the majority of the call, although the pair might be given privacy "for part of the visit, particularly if the mother knew her daughter really 'liked' the young man" (Bogle 2008a). This period in courtship history was largely controlled by young women and their mothers; "they and only they could invite a young man to come to their home for a visit" (Bogle 2008a), they decided when, and for how long the call would take place, and they chose the activities for the duration of a suitor's visit (Bailey 1988). Due to the stringent level of supervision and parental involvement, along with conservative gendered social ideals<sup>3</sup> of this time, young couples in the calling era tended to abstain from sexual activities until marriage (Bailey 1988).

Although the calling era appeared to be beneficial for all youth – especially young women – "this script did not work for the lower or working class families" (Bogle 2008a:13). Working class families typically lived in crowded homes with one or two rooms in total, and thus the customary act of courting in 'the family's front parlour' was largely unfeasible for these youth (Bailey 1988). Additionally, working class families did not often own a piano or violin, rendering these young women unable to provide the conventional forms of entertainment to a potential male caller (Bailey 1988). Eventually however, lower-class youth began abandoning aspirations to conform to the middle-class system of calling, instead choosing to leave the home and all parental supervision by going on "dates" (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a).

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<sup>3</sup> Most notably, gendered social ideas of the twentieth century were characterized by the notion of the "Christian gentleman" and the "passionless female" (Simmons 2009:8).

## *Dating*

A typical date of the early twentieth century involved a young man and woman leaving the home and entering the public sphere to engage in entertainment activities (Bailey 1988). Young couples on a date would often go dining, dancing, to a movie, or on the ever-popular “Coke dates”, which involved enjoying a conversation over a soft drink (Bailey 1988:3). Regardless of what activities the couple took part in, a date “required that a man and a woman ‘went somewhere’ outside of the home” (Bogle 2008a:13). Men were generally expected to initiate invitations to go out on a date, to plan the activities of the date itself, and to pick the woman up and take her home afterwards (Bogle 2008a). Given that the man was responsible for planning and initiating the date, it was also customary for him to incur any of the financial costs of the dating activities (Bogle 2008a). Although these activities were not deemed to be respectable – as young ladies were not morally permitted to be alone with a man, unescorted in public – for working class couples, these public outings were necessary in order to meaningfully interact (Bailey 1988). The emergence of the dating script ultimately resulted in the distancing of constraints from family control, and provided a young couple with more privacy and intimacy (Bailey 1988).

Dating “did not remain exclusively in the lower class for long” (Bogle 2008a:13), as North America experienced a *trickle up effect*<sup>4</sup> of courtship customs. Soon, privileged youth became envious of the freedom the lower class courtship models provided (Bailey 1988). Prestigious, respectable young women who were entering the public sphere in record numbers for college or job opportunities “began to demand access to the public

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<sup>4</sup> A “trickle up effect” is typically described as the flow of normative values of information upward in the class hierarchy.

world in general” (Bailey 1988:19). With the corresponding diffusion of the automobile, middle and upper class youth also began leaving their homes and entering the public sphere for dates (Bogle 2008a).

The widespread adoption of the dating model in the 1920s began to attract the interest of academics (Bogle 2008a). William Waller (1937) for example, conducted a groundbreaking sociological study at Pennsylvania State University in the 1920s and 1930s which sought to analyze the dating practices of men and women in college. Waller became one of the first scholars to differentiate the conceptualization of dating from that of courtship (Bogle 2008a; Waller 1937). Specifically, he defined the latter as the “set of processes of association among the unmarried which, in time...normally eventuate in marriage” (Waller 1937:727). Dating, however, Waller described as “thrill-seeking, exploitative relationships” (Waller 1937:728), which atypically culminated in long-term relationships.

Waller found that at Pennsylvania State, dating took place under what was referred to as *the rating and dating complex* (Waller 1937). During this time, although more women were entering college and university than ever before, there remained a 6:1 ratio of males to females on campus (Waller 1937:729). Accordingly, “competition for dates was fierce” (Bogle 2008a:15), and the men who were the most desirable – “Class A” men – wanted to ensure they acquired many dates with the most socially desirable women – “Class A” women (Bogle 2008a; Waller 1937). In order for young men to “rate” well:

...they must belong to one of the better fraternities, be prominent in activities, have a copious supply of spending money, be well-dressed, ‘smooth’ in manners and appearance, have a ‘good line,’ dance well, and have access to an automobile...The factors which...[are] important for girls [to rate well] are good

clothes, a smooth line, ability to dance well, and popularity as a date. The most important of these factors is the last, for the girl's prestige depends upon dating more than anything else" (Waller 1937:730).

Dating, Waller (1937) argued, was heavily influenced by peer culture. This was a significant change from the courtship script of the calling era, whereby parents – not peers – were largely involved in the calling process. Due to the distancing of dating activities from one's family, peers were now "heavily involved in monitoring who was dating whom" (Bogle 2008a:15). Notably, some women would refuse to date altogether because their female friends would mock the men that they were able to "get" (Bogle 2008a).

Waller (1937) concluded that the "rating and dating" script on college campuses was largely exploitative. Both men and women participated in the dating culture for the purposes of "thrill-seeking", and to receive something from their partner other than a committed romantic relationship. Women, Waller argued, would usually exploit "for the sake of presents and expensive amusements – the common pattern of 'gold-digging'" (1937:728). Men, on the other hand, were usually after sexual favours (Waller 1937). Both men and women of this particular courtship era were looking to have a good time, and although this courtship script was seemingly manipulative, the exploitation experienced by each gender was typically reciprocated.

World War II sparked a new dating script with new norms and values as millions of men and smaller numbers of women were involved in the war effort overseas. Men "literally became a scarce resource" (Bogle 2008a:16), and dating practices subsequently assumed a more serious tone in the immediate pre and post-war eras (Bailey 1988). Dating was no longer about competition, but about securing a stable and dependable mate

(Bailey 1988). Young men and women who were previously concerned with going on many dates with high rating “Class A” partners, were now predominantly interested in finding a suitable companion to exclusively date, or “go steady” with (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a). Bogle explains:

The end of World War II ushered in a period of economic prosperity in the United States... Employment opportunities and a booming economy gave young men the financial stability to afford to marry sooner than they could in the previous era. It is well documented that in the years after the end of World War II the median age of marriage dropped, the number of children per family grew, and in general, a heightened focus on harmonious domestic life took hold (2008a:17).

Similar to past courtship scripts, the “going steady” era came with its own set of expectations and norms. Young couples who were going steady “rarely expected to marry one another – especially the twelve-year-olds – but, for the duration, they acted as if they *were* married” (Bailey 2004:24). *Steadies* would often exchange some form of token, like a class ring or a sweater, to express to their peers that they were monogamous (Bailey 1988, 2004). Additionally, going steady often entailed greater sexual intimacy; continuous interaction with one partner – rather than many dates with several different partners – allowed for a more serious emotional connection to form. From the 1940s to 1950s, monogamy and sexual exploration became normative practices in dating relationships.

### ***The Hookup Era***

Unsurprisingly, relational scripts changed once again in the post-war period. Empirical evidence has surfaced referencing a new period of courtship known as *the hookup era* (Bogle 2008a; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Owen et al. 2010; Paul and Hayes 2002). Although the exact time when dating began to lose its prominence is unknown, “the evidence points to a new system beginning to emerge in the



1960s and 1970s” (Bogle 2007:778). Research on hooking up has confirmed this newfound courtship script as an integral part of male-female relations; especially on university and college campuses.

Although operational definitions of hooking up differ slightly amongst researchers, there is a general consensus that hooking up is characterized by:

A man and a woman [pairing] off at the end of a party or evening at a bar to engage in a physical/sexual encounter. The hookup can involve anything from kissing to sexual intercourse or anything seen as falling in-between these two ends of the spectrum. Regardless of what happens sexually, a hallmark of hooking up is that there are no obligations or ‘strings attached’ to the encounter... (Bogle 2007:776).

The ambiguous nature of the term *hooking up* provides proponents of the hookup culture with a degree of clandestineness when speaking about their sexual experiences. “To say ‘we hooked up’ could mean a couple kissed, or had sex, or had oral sex, but no one will know for sure” (Glenn and Marquardt 2001:5). Accordingly, one can never be quite certain of what a peer is referring to when he or she reports hooking up, “unless you ask a follow-up question to see how much activity took place” (Bogle 2008a:25).

The hooking up era is characterized by more sexual intimacy and less emotional involvement than any courtship script of the past. Perhaps what is most noteworthy about the hookup script is that there are explicitly no *a priori* agreements or promises of any subsequent relations or relationships following the initial hookup (Garcia and Reiber 2008). Men and women are engaging in sexual activities with one another with no assurance that they will ever meet or interact with each other again, and certainly no assurance that they will begin dating. Although dating is no longer the dominant courtship model, college students still use the term *date*; however, “they are not referring to dating in the traditional sense...they are referring to...a man and a woman who are

*already a couple, going out on a date*” (Bogle 2007:776). In other words, the primary mode by which young men and women get together romantically present-day is hooking up; young people become sexual first, and then decide whether they are interested in future relations (Bogle 2007:777).

Another notable feature of this courtship script is that alcohol is almost always involved (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Bogle 2008a; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Vander Ven 2011). One study goes as far to suggest that “getting drunk and ‘hooking up’ [are] activities that [go] hand in hand” (Vander Ven and Beck 2009:646). Bars and parties – typical hot spots for the initiation of the hookup – are environments where the sale and/or provision of alcohol is evident. Alcohol use allows drinkers to approach prospective hookup partners with more confidence and sociability than they would while sober (Vander Ven 2011). Correspondingly, as hookups are typically spontaneous, alcohol-fueled encounters, they often “unfold without communication about sexual health and consent or protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)” (Holman and Sillars 2012:205).

Hooking up can occur just once or it can occur multiple times with the same person over a period of weeks or months (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). However, multiple hookups with the same partner do not infer monogamy; students report that they can hook up with the same partner several times and still be uncommitted (Bogle 2008a; Glenn and Marquardt 2001). Still, like all courtship scripts of the past, hooking up “is a system for socializing with the opposite sex and finding sexual and romantic partners” (Bogle 2008b:32). Although dating relationships are not the most common product of a hookup encounter, there is potential for a hookup to progress to an exclusive relationship

(Armstrong et al. 2010; Bogle 2008a, 2008b). In order to delineate the status of a relationship, it is expected that women will initiate “the talk” with their hookup partner, whereby they ask the question: “‘Are we committed or not?’ [then] When she asks, he decides” (Glenn and Marquardt 2001:5). Although a typical hookup does not culminate in a relationship, many students consider hooking up to be the only available means to finding a boyfriend or girlfriend in university (Bogle 2008b).

### *Prevalence and Correlates of Hooking Up*

Research has consistently reported that hooking up is the dominant contemporary script for romantic interaction between men and women on college campuses (Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Kalish and Kimmel 2001; Paul et al. 2000; Owen et al. 2011). Students “rarely meet others through traditional dating; now the hookup is at the center of the heterosexual relationship on campus” (Stinson 2010:99). Although the exact frequency at which university and college students are hooking up varies between campuses, approximate estimates for the prevalence rates of all undergraduates in the contemporary North American context can be inferred (Garcia and Reiber 2008). Glenn and Marquardt led one of the first national studies of the hookup script in the United States, and found that 40% of women in college reported experiencing at least one hookup in their lifetime (2001:4). Since this time, scholarly interest in this area has increased, and prevalence data estimating hooking up participation among college students range from a low of 39% (Jackson et al. 2011:632), to a high of 84% (Lewis et al. 2011:9). However, recent data suggests that “somewhere between 60% and 80% of [all] North American college students have had some sort of hookup experience” (Garcia et al. 2012:163).

Scholars contend that “some students are hooking up on a weekly basis” (Paul et al. 2000:84), although on average, students report a total of 10.28 hookups during their entire college career (Paul and Hayes 2002:644). Of these hookup experiences, almost all involve kissing (Fielder and Carey 2010b), approximately 55% include “penetrative” sex (oral sex, vaginal intercourse, or anal sex), and 45% are strictly “non-penetrative” (limited to kissing and/or genital touching) (Owen et al. 2011:338). The majority of findings suggest that approximately 30-40% of hookups involve vaginal sexual intercourse (England 2011; England, Shafer and Fogarty 2007; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Owen et al. 2011).

Although some research has concluded that women are hooking up at higher rates than men (O’Brien et al. 2010), the vast majority of research findings have established that men hook up at higher rates than women (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008; Holman and Sillars 2012; Penhollow et al. 2007). Additionally, correlations between age and number of hookups experienced have been reported; specifically, it has been demonstrated that a positive correlation exists between age and number of hookups experienced. For example, Manning and colleagues’ sample of 1316 seventh, ninth, and eleventh graders found that 61% of sexually active teens reported having had sexual intercourse in the context of a hookup (2006:468). As 61% is at the lower end of college hooking up estimates, it appears as though the amount of hooking up significantly increases as students make the transition from high school to university. Fielder and Carey’s (2010b) research supports this notion, as they found that the rates of hooking up are significantly higher after one semester in college in comparison to the rates of hooking up experienced prior to college. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that rates

of hooking up increase with each year of college experience (Flack et al. 2007). Flack and colleagues found that the lowest percentage of hookups in university were experienced by first-year students (66.2%), and the highest were experienced by college seniors (84.6%) (Flack et al. 2007:144).

With respect to race or ethnicity, many college samples lack the diversity to demonstrate any relation to hookup rates. However, both Fortunato and colleagues (2010) and George and colleagues (2006) collected ethnically diverse samples and found no significant correlations between race/ethnicity and hooking up. Conversely, Owen and colleagues' (2010) findings confirm a relationship between ethnicity and hookup participation. Specifically, they reported that: "as compared to Caucasian students, students from all other ethnicities, except those who identified themselves as multi-ethnic, were significantly less likely to have hooked up" (Owen et al. 2010:658). Likewise, after many qualitative interviews with minority undergraduate students, Bogle noted that:

...minority students are not interested in sexual encounters...with white students (and vice versa). Therefore, on campuses that are overwhelmingly white, minority students often socialize among themselves [and choose to avoid participation in the hookup culture] (2008a:68).

Religion and religiosity also seem to affect the rates at which university and college students hookup. Specifically, studies conducted by Burdette and colleagues (2009) and Penhollow and colleagues (2007) found that students who report higher levels of religiosity also report lower frequencies of hookups. Penhollow and colleagues' (2007) research found that those who attended religious services more often reported a lower incidence rate of sexual intercourse as part of their hooking up experiences. Interestingly, Burdette and colleagues (2009) concluded that although religiosity may decrease one's

likelihood to participate in the hookup culture, religious affiliation may actually *increase* the likelihood of hooking up. Specifically, Burdette and colleagues found that “50% of Catholic women who report infrequent church attendance...have ‘hooked up’ at college compared to 38% of those with no religious affiliation” (2009:545). These findings evidently support the contention that “the odds of ‘hooking up’ are much higher at religious schools than at secular educational institutions” (Burdette et al. 2009:545).

Although approximately 94% of students have heard of the term *hooking up* in reference to sexual activities (Holman and Sillars 2012:209), somewhere between 20%-40% of undergraduates report non-participation in the hookup culture (Garcia et al. 2012:163). Some of the reasons for non-participation include religiosity and minority status – as mentioned – along with failed hookup attempts, and relationship status. Many studies which aim to capture the prevalence rates of students who hookup fail to acknowledge the percentage of students who attempt to hook up, but are unsuccessful in their endeavors. For instance, of 507 male and female undergraduates surveyed, 64% reported actually experiencing a hookup, although 72% of students reported having *attempted* to initiate a hookup at least once (Garcia and Reiber 2008:198). This indicates that a portion of undergraduate students who are not hooking up may actually be unwillingly alienated from the culture, rather than its moral opponents. Similarly, another reason why many students do not hookup is because they are already in exclusive relationships (Bogle 2008a). “Usually, [these] relationship[s] began with a hookup, or [they] had carried over from their high school days” (Bogle 2008a). Students already in romantic relationships thus have no need to engage in hookups, although this does not

infer that these students have never been participants, nor are they are non-proponents of the hookup culture.

### **The Emergence of The Hooking Up Culture**

Despite the extensive amount of research devoted to better understanding hooking up, there remains speculation about the reasons why the hookup culture emerged.

Sociohistorical data suggest that the mid-1960s marks the emergence of hooking up behaviours on college and university campuses, and that by the 1970s “the shift was likely well underway” (Bogle 2008a:23). Accordingly, this time period coincides with a variety of key social and cultural changes which many argue aided in the transition in courtship scripts from dating to hooking up.

#### *The Sexual Revolution*

Glenn and Marquardt point to *the sexual revolution of the 1960s* as an important change “affecting the mating behavior of college women” (2001:10). During this movement women actively fought for their rights to be envisioned as sexual creatures, free to engage in intimate acts while devoid from any moral condemnation (Allyn 2001). As a result, sexual intercourse and oral sex – acts which were previously reserved for married couples – became increasingly common among the unwed (Bogle 2008a). Although premarital sex of course occurred during the dating era and prior to, it was not until the sexual revolution that it became normalized.

Additionally, with the invention in the 1960s of the combined oral contraceptive pill – more commonly known as *the birth control pill* – women began to demand moral and financial accessibility to this form of birth control (Allyn 2001). It was no longer necessary for sex to be inherently tied to reproduction; coitus could now be about

pleasure and intimacy with one's partner (Bogle 2008a). In part as a result of the sexual revolution, disapproval of premarital sexual relations significantly declined; presently, less than 25% of young adults in the Western context believe it is "always wrong" or "almost always wrong" to engage in sex before marriage (Glenn and Marquardt 2001:10). Bogle notes that:

Among the prewar brides only 24% had already lost their virginity (prior to marriage)... For the baby boom era brides this figure increases to 51% and in the post-1965 cases to 72%...while the majority of women in the latest cohort had premarital sexual intercourse before meeting their eventual husband...in all three cohorts the majority of women had premarital sex with their eventual husband only. Only 3% of prewar brides and 17% of baby boom brides had sex with someone other than their eventual husband. This percentage rose to 33% among brides in the most recent (post-1965) generation (2008a:20).

These data suggest that although premarital sexual relations drastically increased around the time of the sexual revolution, sexual intercourse was still "generally restricted to intimate relationships where a likely outcome was marriage" (Bogle 2008a:20). Although the sexual revolution aided in the transformation of the ways in which individuals conceptualize premarital sex, this movement alone did not bring about a transition in courtship scripts (Bogle 2008a; Heldman and Wade 2010).

### *The Women's Movement*

Bogle (2008a) points to the women's movement of the 1960s as a relevant phenomenon that may have aided in the transition to the hookup script. Second wave feminists pushed for the acceptance of casual, non-marital sex for women, however they also sought greater gender equality in other areas, notably, in the workforce (Heldman and Wade 2010). At the beginning of the 1960s women began to take on more meaningful roles in the public sphere (Milkman 1985). This period witnessed a significant increase in the number of females entering the job market, and



correspondingly, an increase in women's earnings (Bailey 1988). As more women entered the job market and became financially independent, dating conventions – which were largely based on the “man-as-breadwinner” model – began to clash with the realities of life (Bailey 1988). Many women could afford their entertainment and no longer required a man to pay for their dating activities in the public realm, and as such, it became increasingly unclear who should pay for a date, or who should extend a dating invitation (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a). Evidently, the transformations of the gendered economic system in the 1960s, as result of the women's movement, influenced the ways in which males and females romantically interact.

#### *Changing Gender Ratios in University*

As the women's movement fought for economic equality in the labour market, they also “opened the doors of higher education for women at the same time that newly dominant modes of masculinity started devaluing education as a feminized pursuit” (Heldman and Wade 2010:328). Correspondingly, women began enrolling in post-secondary educational institutions in record numbers, and since the 1970s female students have progressively outnumbered males in college enrollment (Heldman and Wade 2010). As of 1972 “three times as many women were attending college than there had been just twelve years earlier in 1960” (Bogle 2008a:23), and presently, there are approximately 80 men for every 100 women enrolled in university or college (Bogle 2008a:23). This new gender imbalance on campus resulted in a power shift in the courtship script as there “seems to be power in *lack of numbers*” (Bogle 2008a:23). Although women used to control the access to dating and sex when they were outnumbered in university settings,

“men have become a more ‘scarce resource’ on campus with greater power to determine sexual norms and scripts” (Heldman and Wade 2010:328).

Whitmire (2008) notes that although women may be dominating university classrooms academically, they have become increasingly competitive in seeking out male companions and are often quick to lower their dating standards. In order to form romantic connections, it is argued that college women have become more sexually permissive to cater to the desires of men (Bogle 2008a; Heldman and Wade 2010; Whitmire 2008). Since the onset of the gender imbalance on university and college campuses, women began engaging in casual sex to attract men because “if they do not, someone else will” (Heldman and Wade 2010:328). Whitmire notes that the emergence of hookup culture should come as no surprise to biologists and social scientists; “in the animal kingdom, it is well known that whichever sex is in short supply has the upper hand” (2008:A23).

### *In Loco Parentis*

Bogle (2008a) cites that changes to university and college policies may have also facilitated the emergence of the hookup era. Formerly, post-secondary institutions were governed by an *in loco parentis*; a policy whereby universities and colleges assumed responsibility for students who no longer lived with their parents (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). Universities heavily monitored their students’ activities outside of the classroom, as they sought to control and limit their sexual behaviours. Under the doctrine of *in loco parentis* students were required to live either on campus, or in off-campus housing approved by their educational institution (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). On campus housing held separate dorms for men and women which were “sometimes on opposite sides of campus” (Glenn and Marquardt 2001:11), and male/female overnight stays were

strictly forbidden (Bogle 2008a). Additionally, curfews were assigned to university and college students, and the curfews for women were noticeably more stringent than for men (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). However, by the mid-1960s – influenced by the sexual revolution occurring around them – college students began rebelling against the *in loco parentis* system as they increasingly sought individualism and freedom of personal choice (Bogle 2008a). As more women enrolled in post-secondary education and as more single-sex institutions became coeducational, the *in loco parentis* system became increasingly more difficult for educational institutions to maintain (Bogle 2008a). Bogle notes that:

Ultimately, students prevailed in the battle with administrators over privacy and sexual freedom. Student-conduct policies [such as those aforementioned]... declined ... in the 1960s and 1970s... Furthermore, the idea that the university administration is responsible for their students' sexual behavior has changed (2008a:22).

In the contemporary North American context, most college administrators facilitate the conditions necessary for hooking up as now they allow “virtually unrestricted access” (Bogle 2008a:22) to members of the opposite sex on campus.

### *Biopsychosocial Approach*

Other scholars propose what Garcia and Reiber (2008) have called a *biopsychosocial* approach to understanding the emergence of the hookup culture. According to evolutionary theory, men should favour the hookup era more than any other courtship script of the past. Specifically, males are expected to prefer short-term sexual encounters with multiple women for the purposes of transferring their genes, while concurrently making little investment (Garcia and Reiber 2008; Townsend 1995; Trivers 1972). Women, on the other hand, would be expected to prefer long-term monogamous

relationships to casual sexual encounters. If women engage in sexual intercourse they risk pregnancy and thus a costly investment of time and resources. In evolutionary terms, women would therefore benefit from a monogamous life partner with whom to mutually acquire resources, and from whom protection for themselves and their offspring may be expected (Garcia and Reiber 2008; Trivers 1972). Given this argument, it becomes increasingly troubling for biologists and social scientists to account for women's participation in the hookup culture.

In order to mediate the reason for women's participation, Garcia and Reiber (2008) propose that the hookup era may be a result of two transitioning female life trends. Specifically, various data report that the age of menarche, which signals the beginning of a young woman's ability to reproduce, is on the decline (Demerath et al. 2004; Garcia and Reiber 2008; McDowell et al. 2007).

Estimates from the early to mid-1800's suggest that average age of menarche was roughly between 15 and 17 years... Estimates from the late 1800's in the United States indicate that the age of menarche was approximately 14.75 years; while current estimates in western industrialized nations are nearly 12 years of age (Garcia and Reiber 2008:201-202).

In spite of this new trend, women living in Western industrialized nations present-day atypically reproduce at the age of 12. Rather, available data indicate that women's age at first reproduction has steadily risen since the 1970s (Botting and Dunnell 2000; Garcia and Reiber 2008). Between 1970 and 2005, it is estimated that the average age of first reproduction rose from approximately 21.4 years to 25.2 years (Garcia and Reiber 2008:202). Thus, following menarche the average woman in the contemporary Western context waits approximately thirteen years before having her first child (Garcia and Reiber 2008).

Garcia and Reiber (2008) contend that this thirteen-year time span is especially significant when compared to the shorter time period of three years that separated menarche and first reproduction in ancestral and preindustrial times. This gap between menarche and first reproduction present-day thus “provides a window for sexual opportunity and exploration not previously available” (Garcia and Reiber 2008:203). Settling down into a lifelong monogamous relationship and having children now occurs much later in life than ever before, however the human body has been “primitively programmed to...have sex” (Garcia and Reiber 2008:203). Rather than remaining celibate for approximately thirteen years, young women now experience a significant period in which they are able to experiment with sexual activities with non-relational partners prior to marriage and children (Garcia and Reiber 2008; Heldman and Wade 2010). These shifts in the life trends of females allow for a better understanding of the onset of the hooking up era, where “both men *and* women are having sex just to have sex” (Garcia and Reiber 2008:203).

*“The Pornification” of the Mass Media*

Garcia and Reiber’s (2008) biopsychosocial perspective on the emergence of the hookup era offers a noteworthy explanation for female proponents of non-relational sex, however it alone cannot account for the over-sexualized, yet seemingly lackadaisical nature of the present courtship script. Garcia and Reiber suggest that their biopsychosocial approach, “coupled with the high sexual content of the mainstream media” (2008:203) has allowed for the ideal social conditions necessary for the hookup culture. Heldman and Wade (2010) refer to this hypersexualization of mass media as “the pornification” of the mass mediated world.

Television, music, magazines, and advertisements all contain overtly sexualized content that arguably reinforces non-relational sexual activities (Heldman and Wade 2010). In a content analysis of television shows starring 12-22 year olds, Aubrey found that 90.5% of episodes contained sexual references, with an average of 7.9 sexual references per hour (2004:509). Accordingly, some scholars and social commentators contend that these images affect the sexual behaviour of their young viewers (Brown et al. 2006). One study initially surveyed children at the ages of 12-14 years, and once more two years later at the ages of 14-16, about the content of their “sexual media diet” (Brown et al. 2006). Findings demonstrated that Caucasian adolescents were 2.2 times more likely to have had sexual intercourse by ages 14-16 if they were in the “top quintile of sexual media diet[s]” (Brown et al. 2006:1018). In other words, adolescents who were more frequently exposed to media with high degrees of sexual content were more likely to engage in sexual activities in comparison to those with less exposure (Brown et al. 2006). Correspondingly, it seems plausible that “the pornification of mass media may correlate with participation and endorsement of [the] hook-up culture” (Heldman and Wade 2010:329).

### *Women’s Self-Objectification*

Heldman and Wade (2010) also point to the consistent acceleration of women’s levels of self-objectification as a potential correlate for the onset of the hooking up era. Self-objectification is a process whereby women are socially conditioned to “expect that they will be judged and represented by their appearance” (Fischer et al. 2011:128). Sadly, many contemporary women learn to treat their bodies as objects which exist for the pleasure of others (Szymanski and Henning 2007), and may adapt by constantly self-

surveilling their appearance and developing “an observer’s perspective on [their] own [bodies]” (Fischer et al. 2011:128). Upon a review of the relevant self-objectification literatures, Heldman and Wade (2010) contend that levels of self-objectification amongst women have been consistently increasing over the past three decades. Correspondingly, Martino and colleagues note that self-objectification may “[promote] early sexual activity” (2006:432), whilst Heldman and Wade (2010) report that self-objectification can lead to less sexual agency for young women. As the hookup culture seemingly promotes the use of women’s bodies as objects that exist for the use and pleasure of others, heightened levels of self-objectification may have been a necessary occurrence for the emergence of this courtship script.

#### *Rise in Narcissism*

A recent significant increase in narcissistic personality traits is thought to have influenced the emergence of the hookup culture (Heldman and Wade 2010; Twenge et al. 2008). Twenge and colleagues (2008) undertook a meta-analysis of 85 samples of college students in the United States, and found a consistent significant increase in scores on the Narcissism Personality Inventory. Specifically, students who scored above the mean on the Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI) – and are thusly deemed narcissistic – increased 30% between 1979 and 2006 (Twenge et al. 2008:875). These results indicate that systematic generational changes in narcissism have been occurring since the 1980s resulting in historically high rates of narcissistic youth (Twenge et al. 2008).

Twenge and colleagues note that the hookup era “is consistent with a rise in narcissism” (2008:891). Narcissists are typically self-centered egocentric individuals, and their “externally validated ‘egos’ may lead them to create a social environment to stroke

their own ego” (Jonason et al. 2012:182) Accordingly, narcissists are more likely to experience and desire short-term casual sexual liaisons, which require little-to-no partner investment, and may result in the type of sociosexual validation which narcissists crave (Jonason et al. 2012; Twenge 2007). The work of Jonason, Luevano and Adams (2012) confirm these findings in their study of *The Dark Triad* traits. The authors found that narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism are all positively correlated with preferences for short-term sexual relationships, and are negatively correlated with preferences for long-term romantic relationships (Jonason et al. 2012). Notably, narcissism in particular was “uniquely correlated with preferences for one-night stands and friends-with benefits... and negatively correlated with preferences for serious romantic relationships” (Jonason et al. 2012:180). The increase in narcissism amongst contemporary youth, and the corresponding preference for narcissists to hook up rather than form meaningful relationships, may have contributed to the facilitation of the hookup era. Heldman and Wade (2010) note that while cause and effect is not entirely clear, the evident relationship between the “new narcissism” and the hookup culture requires further exploration.

#### *Alcohol Use in University*

The culture of hooking up may have been facilitated by changes in the nature of alcohol use (Heldman and Wade 2010; Vander Ven 2011). Specifically, studies have shown that binge drinking has been consistently increasing in popularity among college students (Heldman and Wade 2010; Mitka 2009; Vander Ven 2011). *Binge drinking* can be defined as when men consume five or more alcoholic beverages in a row, and when women consume four or more drinks in a row (Vander Ven 2011). University and college



students now participate in a phenomenon known as “pre-drinking” or “pre-gaming” (Brandon 2010; Vander Ven 2011), in which men and women will binge drink to intoxication prior to arriving at a bar, at least in part to avoid the steep cost of drinks (Brandon 2010; Vander Ven 2011). According to nation-wide surveys conducted in the United States, 44% of college students are classified as binge drinkers, and one-fifth of these students report frequent binge drinking activity (Vander Ven 2011:14).

Evidently college students are consuming more alcohol on a more frequent basis than at any time in recent history (Brandon 2010; Mitka 2009; Vander Ven 2011). Correspondingly, “alcohol is regarded by some as the key that opens the door to the ‘hookup’” (Vander Ven 2011:63). A strong correlation between alcohol and hooking up has been confirmed, as alcohol seemingly provides many college students with the social dexterity they need in order to initiate a hookup (Bogle 2008a; Fielder and Carey 2010a, 2010b; Fischer et al. 2012; Grello et al. 2006; Lambert et al. 2003). One study found that 93% of men and 81% of women have reported being under the influence of alcohol during at least one non-relational sexual encounter (Fischer et al. 2012:52), and another reports that 65% of university undergraduates admit to using alcohol and/or drugs prior to their most recent hookup (Grello et al. 2006:259). Hooking up and alcohol are seemingly inherently intertwined, as Bogle contends that “students who choose to forgo the party and bar scene are also excluding themselves from the hookup scene” (2008a:167). Ultimately, the significant increase of alcohol use (or misuse) on campus may have contributed to the facilitation of the hookup era.

### *Perception of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)*

Lastly, Heldman and Wade (2010) argue that transitions to college students' perceptions of sexually transmitted infections may have assisted in fostering the necessary social conditions for the emergence of the hooking up era. Specifically, Heldman and Wade (2010) contend that hooking up would have been more widespread amongst college and university students in the 1960s, if it were not for the coinciding HIV/AIDS epidemic. During the 1960s, men and women had:

...an acute understanding that sexual choices were life and death ones. Since then, successful safer sex campaigns have normalized condom use for intercourse...rates of HIV transmission have dropped in the USA... and advances in treatments for HIV make it less of an acute threat that it [once] was... (Heldman and Wade 2010:329).

This suggests that university and college students no longer fear that sexual intercourse may kill them. Regnerus and Uecker (2011) report that present-day, discussion of HIV/AIDS amongst heterosexual young adults is extremely uncommon. In fact, the only subpopulation that tends to discuss the risk of HIV/AIDS is the African American population, those of whom are at the highest risk of infection (Regnerus and Uecker 2011), and also underrepresented in college and university populations (Snyder and Dillow 2012).

In addition to the declining fear of HIV/AIDS, it appears as though the majority of college and university students are misinformed regarding the potential risk of STI transmission, especially with reference to oral sex. In part due to the ineffective sex education regarding condom use, young men and women believe that condoms can easily mediate any potential risks of sexual intercourse (Heldman and Wade 2010). Although proper use of condoms can significantly reduce the risk of contracting an STI, it cannot

eliminate the risk altogether (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). For instance, Mann and colleagues' findings demonstrate that:

For infections spread by skin-to-skin contact, such as chancroid, syphilis, genital herpes, and infection due to human papillomavirus, infection that occurs outside the area covered by an intact condom can be transmitted even if a condom is used and does not break or slip" (2002:347).

However, most men and women fail to properly use condoms – especially when giving or receiving oral sex – thus further increasing their risk of STI transmission (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009) found that although almost 50% of their participants reported engaging in oral sex during their most recent hookup, many were unaware as to how to protect themselves against oral STIs, and some were altogether oblivious to the fact that STIs can be transmitted through oral sex. Regnerus and Uecker note that: “although the empirical association between oral sex and STIs is obvious, the cognitive association is simply not yet strong enough to merit ...risk-reductive approaches” (2011:43). In other words, oral sex is prevalent amongst university and college students, however the use of protection during these acts is uncommon. Evidently, college and university students present-day are less fearful of STIs and HIV/AIDS transmission than in the past, and Heldman and Wade (2010) argue that this mitigating factor may have aided in the emergence of the hooking up era.

### *Summary*

In sum, there are a variety of social and cultural changes that have taken place over the past few decades that have arguably influenced the courtship scripts in such a way to trigger the emergence of the hooking up era. However, given what we know about the biology, psychology, and sociology of sex and gender, it would seem reasonable to presume that the hookup culture tends to reflect male sexual interests more than female

interests. Specifically, in comparison to courtship scripts of the past such as calling or dating, hooking up arguably poses more emotional, sexual, physical and psychological risks for women than for men.

### **Women, Risk, and the Hooking Up Culture**

Non-relational sexual liaisons have been deemed risky (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Flack et al. 2007; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Owen and Fincham 2011; Paul and Hayes 2002; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Both men and women share some of these risks, however, it can be argued that hooking up behaviours pose more risk to females than to males. Specifically, the literature suggests that females are at a heightened risk of experiencing sexual dissatisfaction, a devalued reputation, failed relationship expectations, emotional and mental health issues, the transmission of STIs, pregnancy or pregnancy scares, and sexual assault, in comparison to their male hookup partners.

#### *Sexual Dissatisfaction*

Some feminist scholars contend that hooking up can be a particularly empowering experience for young women (Armstrong et al. 2010; Weaver and Herold 2000). Specifically, these academics posit that engaging in a passionate, sexually satisfying act with a non-relational partner can be both liberating and exhilarating for female participants desiring to enhance their sex lives and sexuality more generally. However, empirical research suggests that it can often be difficult for women to be sexually satisfied in a hookup (Armstrong et al. 2012; Backstrom et al. 2012; England 2011). There is seemingly a *literal* “sexual double standard” with regards to the sexual practices taking place in the context of a hookup. Specifically, Armstrong, England and Fogarty’s

(2012) qualitative research findings suggest that men report a general disregard for their hookup partners' sexual pleasure. While in a relationship, a number of male respondents expressed "feeling 'responsible' for his girlfriend's orgasm" (Armstrong et al. 2012:456), the majority of men are seemingly apathetic when it comes to the orgasm of their hookup partners. One male respondent in Armstrong and colleagues' study claimed that:

'I'm all about making her orgasm,' but when asked if he meant 'the general her or like the specific her?' he replied, 'Girlfriend her. In a hookup...I don't give a shit.' (2012:456).

With reference to the sexual pleasure of a hookup partner, this 'I don't give a shit' sentiment was found to be the general consensus among college men (Armstrong et al. 2012).

In a heterosexual hookup, it is presumed that neither the man nor the woman is romantically or emotionally involved. Correspondingly, perhaps this absence of affection is what accounts for the lack of investment in a hookup partner's sexual pleasure (Armstrong et al. 2012). If this were the case, female respondents should also report a comparable level of disregard for their hookup partners' sexual satisfaction. However, Armstrong and colleagues found that women are oftentimes concerned about their hookup partners' pleasure, and with only a few exceptions, "women did not seem to view boyfriends and hookup partners as owed categorically different levels of [sexual] consideration" (2012:456). These findings are supported by the research of Backstrom and colleagues (2012), which found that although the act of fellatio is a common sexual act in the context of a hookup, cunnilingus can only be expected in a relationship; women who desire cunnilingus from a hookup partner have to specifically negotiate for the reciprocity of oral sex.

Perhaps in part as a result of this literal sexual double standard, women consistently report that sex in the context of a relationship is far better than sex in the context of a hookup (Armstrong et al. 2012; Backstrom et al. 2012; England 2011). One research study found that “if you take all hookups irrespective of what they did [sexually], 44% of men and [only] 19% of women had an orgasm” (England 2011:4). Armstrong and colleagues found similar rates of female orgasm in the context of a hookup:

...women had orgasms more in repeat hookups compared to hookups with a new partner, and relationship sex led to orgasm most often. Women reported orgasms in 11% of first hookups, 16% of second or third hookups...and 67% of relationship sexual events (2012:442).

There appears to be a significant disparity between the quality of sex which men are experiencing in hookups and the quality of sex which women are experiencing. Women are considerably more invested in the sexual pleasure of their hookup partners, and men are considerably more likely to orgasm during a hookup than their female partners.

Although lack of orgasm does not always indicate a lack of sexual satisfaction, Armstrong and colleagues note that respondents who did climax were significantly more likely to say that they “enjoyed the activity very much” (2012:442), as opposed to those respondents who did not orgasm.

The literatures regarding sexual satisfaction within the context of a hookup leads to the conclusion that men are generally sexually benefitting from a hookup, and women are disproportionately left unsatisfied. Although many women do report enjoying the sexual activities involved in their hookups (Armstrong et al. 2012), the data on hooking up suggests that it is atypical for females to report sexual pleasure from a hookup partner. Correspondingly, it is reasonable to presume that the majority of female proponents of

the hookup culture disproportionately risk personal sexual dissatisfaction during a hookup.

### *Devalued Reputation*

Since the sexual revolution and the women's movement of the 1960s, premarital sex and sexual behaviours have become increasingly more socially acceptable (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008a; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Some scholars go as far to suggest that the sexual double standard has disappeared altogether within contemporary North American society (DeLamater and MacCorquodale 1979). However, most empirical findings suggest that this standard remains a prevalent aspect of our culture, and is reinforced by the modern-day courtship script (Kreager and Staff 2009; Regnerus and Uecker 2011; Reid et al. 2011).

*The sexual double standard* is a term used to describe situations in which “an active, desiring sexuality is positively regarded in men, but denigrated and regulated by negative labeling in women” (Jackson and Cram 2003:113). In other words, when males and females engage in similar sexual actions or behaviours that infer that they possess a healthy sexual appetite, men and women are treated differently; specifically, men are praised for their sexuality, and women are chastised. The prevalence of the sexual double standard becomes apparent in a survey administered by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Kreager and Staff 2009). In this study, 90,118 boys and girls in grades seven to twelve were asked about some basic demographic and behavioural characteristics, and were also asked to nominate their five best male and female friends from school (Kreager and Staff 2009). Upon analyzing these data, Kreager and Staff (2009) found that sexually permissive girls – i.e. girls with more than eight lifetime

sexual partners – had significantly fewer friendship nominations in comparison to girls who reported no sexual partners. Additionally, sexually inexperienced boys had significantly fewer friendship nominations when compared to boys with one or more sexual partners (Kreager and Staff 2009). Kreager and Staff (2009) concluded their research by indicating that a sexual double standard is seemingly prevalent amongst teenagers and adolescents, as permissive girls are socially marginalized, while permissive boys are socially celebrated. These findings are further supported by the work of Milhausen and Herold, who found that 79% of men and 89% of women agree that women who have many sexual partners are judged more harshly than men who have many sexual partners (2001:73).

The sexual double standard is “regulated through the tool of sexual reputation” (Jackson and Cram 2003:114), whereby being a sexually experienced male is a positive reputational characteristic while a woman with similar sexual experiences is ascribed a negative reputational status. For men, “there are very few restrictions on sexual behaviour” (Bogle 2008a) in the hookup culture on college and university campuses. Stigmatization “only occurs for men who cannot ‘get any’ (i.e., they are virgins or have difficulty getting women to hook up with them)” (Bogle 2008a:104). However, according to Bogle (2008a), there are thought to be few men in university settings with a negative reputation due to these struggles.

Although the hookup culture implies that participation in sexual activities with a multitude of sexual partners is widely accepted on campus, women in particular must be wary that some behaviours can result in the diminishment of social reputations (Bogle 2008a; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Plante 2006). In Bogle’s study of hooking up among



college students, one particular rule emerged consistently within her interviews: women cannot hookup “too often” or with “too many partners” without risking the ascription of a negative sexual reputation (2008a:105). One female university student in Bogle’s study explains that:

...there’s a girl named ‘Blow Job Jen’ and supposedly she gives a lot of blow jobs...when I see her I think about that so I guess there are (people with bad reputations) (2008a:112).

Clearly “Blow Job Jen” was giving “too much” oral sex to “too many” men, and thus a negative reputation ensued.

Glenn and Marquardt note that women who hook up “too much” or are perceived to be overly sexual in the hookup culture were most often known as “sluts”, but also “whores,” “couch,” “trash,” “tricks,” “teases,” “hos,” “skanky,” “easy,” and “hoochies” (2001:22). However, Bogle (2008a) found that many of her participants were unable to identify what “too many”, “a lot of guys”, or “too often” really meant. Regnerus and Uecker point out that:

A humorous street definition of promiscuity (derived from an Alfred Kinsey quote...) is ‘more partners than you’ve had,’ meaning both that any count is relative and that it’s always *other people* that are promiscuous. There is certainly something to this idea, since very few Americans identify themselves as promiscuous (2011:28).

In other words, “too many” or “too often” are relative terms which men and women struggle to quantify, and oftentimes these terms vary with the personal sexual behaviours of its user.

Sometimes sexual labeling or a poor reputation has little to no correlation with actual sexual behaviour (Armstrong et al. 2010). For example, one woman in Armstrong and colleagues’ (2010) study complained that she was a virgin the first time she was

called a “slut”. Additionally, university students have identified behaviours unrelated to hooking up “too much” or “too often” which are also worthy of negative sexual labeling. Female participants in the hookup culture can be deemed “slutty” if they: hook up “like men” (Bogle 2008a:103), hook up with two men who know each other well, hook up with two or more men within the same fraternity, hang around a particular fraternity often, drink a lot of alcohol, behave “wildly” at parties/bar, or dress “provocatively” at parties/bars (Bogle 2008a).

Evidently, the lack of a clear definition as to what constitutes promiscuous behaviour essentially allows for any female participant in the hookup culture to be sexually stigmatized. Hooking up too much, too often, socializing too much at a fraternity, or dressing too provocatively are all highly subjective quantifications of hookup behaviour, which makes avoiding these condemnable acts in the hookup culture difficult, if not impossible. Correspondingly, women who participate in the hookup culture risk the acquirement of a “bad” reputation or negative sexual labeling.

#### *Failed Relationship Expectations*

Prior research concerned with courtship scripts and romantic behaviours has consistently demonstrated that men are more comfortable engaging in uncommitted sexual activities than women (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Fielder and Carey 2010a; Fisher et al. 2012:53; Gute and Eshbaugh 2008; Lambert et al. 2003; Townsend 1995). Specifically, men are more likely than woman to desire and engage in casual sexual relations with a variety of sexual partners (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Kinsey et al. 1948; Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Townsend 1998). Additionally, men are “more willing to

engage in sexual relations in the absence of emotional involvement or marital potential... [they seek] a variety of partners for the sake of variety” (Townsend 1995:174).

While men are seemingly able to sever the link between sex and emotions, many women who engage in a sexual liaison with no relational commitment are hoping that their hookup partners will eventually become monogamous romantic partners (Glenn and Marquardt; Bogle 2008a; Plante 2006; Kalish and Kimmel 2011). Glenn and Marquardt’s findings conclude that women in university “typically do not yearn for a series of [hookups], but instead the majority seek long-term commitment” (2001:7). However, as hooking up is the dominant contemporary courtship script on campus, many college-aged women feel that hooking up is the only way to acquire a serious romantic relationship (Bogle 2008a; Gilmartin 2006; Kalish and Kimmel 2011). Kalish and Kimmel note that “hooking up is all there is; relationships begin and end with sex” (2011:146), and as a result, many women are hooking up with the hopes of garnering a committed relationship.

Although hookups are non-committal by definition, Grello and colleagues found that 18% of women – as opposed to merely 3% of men – believed that their most recent hookup was the “beginning of a romance” (2006:260). Garcia and Reiber (2008) found similar rates upon asking female participants about their relationship expectations with a hookup partner. Notably, 42.93% of women in their study reported that the *ideal* outcome of a hookup would be the formation of a romantic relationship (Garcia and Reiber 2008:200). Owen and Fincham’s findings – that 64.9% of women surveyed hoped that their hooking up encounter would become a committed relationship – also support the

theory that female participants in the hookup culture desire a committed relationship over casual sex (2011:325).

When asked how satisfied she thought women were with the hookup culture, one woman in Glenn and Marquardt's study answered:

Not very, because [women] want a stable relationship and they haven't been able to find that and sometimes they get hurt by guys. Sometimes, like a guy will call back (for another hookup) and you think that is serious and it's not (2001:16).

Glenn and Marquardt found that many of the women in their study experienced the "desire for something more to happen" (2011:18) post-hookup. Bogle (2008a) found a similar sentiment within her own research. One female student exclaimed that:

...girls are very predictable...if they're hooking up with someone for a while, they're going to want a relationship. They're going to want like some type of like title, not title, but like...commitment. And usually guys don't want it (Bogle 2008a:101).

Evidently, the literatures suggest that many women who participate in the hookup culture are participating with the hope that their hookup will result in some form of commitment.

The notion that women typically desire monogamous romantic relationships, while men's relationship goals are more sexual in nature, is argued by some scholars to have its origins in evolutionary processes. Proponents of parental-investment theory posit that these gender differences can be attributed to the levels of potential parental investment associated with pregnancy (Bjorklund and Kipp 1996; Townsend 1995, 1998; Trivers 1972). A man who has sexual intercourse with a woman and subsequently impregnates her can theoretically remove himself from the lives of the mother and child, thus avoiding any future investment in the pregnancy or the child's life (Trivers 1972). He is then available to seek out other potential sexual partners and impregnate them as well. However, a woman who has sexual intercourse has a substantially larger potential

investment with each act of copulation (Bjorklund and Kipp 1996; Trivers 1972). For females, gravidity involves a nine-month gestation period, potential health and medical risks, followed by several years of child rearing and the provision of nourishment and resources for said child (Townsend 1995; Trivers 1972). Due to the high investment and long-term future commitment a woman faces when pregnant, women:

...can best serve their reproductive interests by mating with a man who not only will provide her good genes for her offspring but also will provide resources for herself when she is pregnant and for her children during their extended childhood (Bjorklund and Kipp 1996:165).

Accordingly, women are expected by evolutionary theorists to be much more cautious about their choice in sexual partners, as they seek long-term relationships in order to lessen the burden, and share the responsibilities of potential pregnancies.

Proponents of social control theory are also able to illuminate the gender-related differences experienced in the hookup culture. When people believe that social norms have been broken, they often mobilize various forms of social control in order to demonstrate that these actions or behaviours are socially unacceptable (Janowitz 1975). It has been demonstrated that casual sex with multiple partners is a behaviour that is deemed “unbecoming” for women. As mentioned, a sexual double standard exists which rewards men for having a variety of sexual partners, and simultaneously condemns women for engaging in these behaviours. Accordingly, women in university – like most others in contemporary Western society – have been exposed to cultural influences which encourage the acceptance of the sexual double standard. The sexual double standard and corresponding gendered norms in contemporary Western society “may cause some women to feel more negatively about casual sex” (Fisher et al. 2012:53), and in turn,

prefer a committed romantic relationship in order to avoid a negative sexual reputation, or similar forms of social control.

Whether the reasons for these gender differences are neurologically ingrained or a product of social learning, it is evident that the majority of women who participate in the hookup culture are not seeking a one-time sexual encounter; rather, they are hoping for further commitment. When given the option between a traditional dating relationship and a hookup, 95.33% of women in Bradshaw and colleagues' study reported at least some preference for the more traditional relationship (2010:665). Although many female students realize that they will probably not marry their university boyfriends, the overwhelming majority of women do not want sex to be devoid of investment or commitment (Townsend 1995). When females partake in the hookup culture they disproportionately risk failed relationship expectations, and ultimately disappointment with regards to love and romance in comparison to their male hookup partners.

#### *Emotional and Mental Health Complications*

The potential risk of unmet relationship expectations can be compounded by various mental and emotional consequences. For example, the ambiguous status of one's relationship following a hookup can leave some women in a state of emotional vulnerability (Townsend 1995). From Townsend's sample of 298 female college students, 73% agreed that sexual relations made them feel emotionally vulnerable, even when they did not want to get emotionally involved with their sexual partner (Townsend 1995:180). Townsend explains:

[After sex] thoughts crossed their minds like 'Does he care about me, is sex all he was after, will he [ditch] me in the morning?' These [worrisome] thoughts were difficult to suppress (1995:193).

Eshbaugh and Gute's study of university hookups found that the majority of women surveyed (74%) reported at least some sexual regrets post-hookup (2008:81). Two sexual behaviours in particular were found to be strongly predictive of a participant's regret: engaging in sexual intercourse with someone once and only once, and engaging in intercourse with someone they had known for less than 24 hours (Eshbaugh and Gute 2008). An earlier study by Paul and Hayes (2002) supports these findings, as their analysis revealed that females often experience shame, self-blame, and regret for engaging in a hookup, especially if they did not know their partner or failed to have any further meaningful contact with their partner. It appears as though women are more prone to experiencing troubling feelings following a hookup, and more likely to regret their hooking up experience if a romantic relationship does not form as a result.

It is important to note that most women do not experience the aforementioned negative emotions or mental anguish *immediately after* a hookup has occurred. When asked how they felt "a day or so" after a hookup, Owen and Fincham (2011) found that both men and women generally reported positive reactions. These findings seem to contradict the overwhelming majority of studies that indicate that women experience negative emotions as a result of their participation in the hookup culture. However, the researchers note that:

Given that women were more likely to hope for their hooking up encounter to lead to a committed relationship, there may be other [negative] emotional reactions that transpire after this initial reaction (Owen and Fincham 2011:327).

In other words, it takes some time following a hookup for women to demarcate the status of their sexual relationship with their partner, and correspondingly, for potential negative emotions to arise.

Contemporary literatures addressing hooking up demonstrate that some women can experience damaging emotional and mental complications as a result of their hooking up behaviours, irrespective of whether or not they are looking for romantic relations. In one of the first research studies to explore hooking up in the United States, Glenn and Marquardt reported that following a hook up, women often feel awkward and “hurt” (2001:16). Similarly, Fielder and Carey (2010a) found that female students who were “experienced” in the hookup culture (i.e. had two or more hookups within a given semester) reported higher levels of distress than women who were “inexperienced” (had never hooked up). The levels of mental distress experienced by these women were further exacerbated if their hookups included sexual intercourse (Fielder and Carey 2010a). Fielder and Carey’s (2010a) findings suggest that hookups – especially those involving coitus – may be linked to an increase in mental health problems for young women.

Herold and Mewhinney’s 2003 study on casual sexual encounters noted that several of their female participants – but none of their male participants – expressed that engaging in non-committal sexual relations negatively affected their levels of self-esteem. Paul and colleagues (2000) also found a correlation between poor levels of self-esteem and participation in the hookup culture. Specifically, all participants who had engaged in at least one hookup reported lower levels of self-esteem, while those who had never hooked up before were found to have significantly higher levels of self-esteem (Paul et al. 2000).

Hooking up is also associated with symptoms of depression in females (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Grello et al. 2006; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). In Grello and colleagues’ (2006) study, females who reported the most symptoms associated with depression were



also most likely to report engagement in hooking up. Additionally, the researchers found that as a woman's number of sexual partners increases, symptoms of depression also typically increase (Grello et al. 2006:261). Upon examining

...simple connections between recent and lifetime sexual partnering, frequency of sex, and a variety of emotional-health indicators...it quickly becomes apparent that having more numerous sexual partners is associated with poorer emotional states in women, but not men...women who report the greatest number of partners display the clearest symptoms of depression (Regnerus and Uecker 2011:139).

Thus the more often females hook up, and the more partners they hook up with, the more likely they are to be diagnosed with depression or experience depression-like symptoms.

Evidently for women, hooking up with a non-committed sexual partner is largely associated with negative mental and emotional complications. Specifically, feelings of regret, distress, awkwardness, lowered self-esteem and heightened levels of depression are positively correlated with female participation in the hookup culture. Perhaps "depressed females may be seeking external validation from sex" (Grello et al. 2006:265), but what is more likely is that hooking up creates barriers to the healthy emotional and mental development of female university students (Kooyman et al. 2011). When participating in the hookup culture, female students ultimately risk harm to their emotional and mental states, and are more likely to experience this risk than male students.

#### *Unwanted Pregnancies and Pregnancy Scares*

Research has consistently shown that alcohol use has a strong positive correlation with hooking up (Bogle 2008a; Fielder and Carey 2010a; Grello et al. 2006; Lambert et al. 2003; Lewis et al. 2011). For example, the vast majority (60.9%) of students in Lewis and colleagues' study reported drinking alcohol during their most recent hookup, and of

those who reported alcohol use, 65.4% engaged in “heavy episodic drinking” (5 drinks for men, or 4 drinks for women) (2011:5). Similarly, Fischer and colleagues’ study of uncommitted sexual encounters found that 93% of men and 81% of women reported being under the influence of alcohol during at least one of their hookup experiences (2012:52). Evidently, the majority of hookups in college and university involve the use of alcohol.

Alcohol use is also associated with a failure to use condoms during heterosexual sexual interactions (Certain et al. 2009; Ingersoll et al. 2005; Hittner and Kennington 2008). Hittner and Kennington (2008) found that both male and female college students were more likely to engage in unprotected intercourse when under the influence of alcohol. Certain and colleagues (2009) had similar findings, as their research established that heavy drinking among college students decreases the likelihood of consistent condom use during sexual intercourse. The link between hooking up and alcohol use indicates that students are less likely to use condoms during their hookup experiences. Correspondingly, hookups that involve coitus and fail to properly use condoms can ultimately lead to unwanted pregnancies.

Research indicates that unintended pregnancies are rare on university and college campuses (Scholly et al. 2005), perhaps due to the widespread availability of hormonal contraceptives (Feilder and Carey 2010a). Only .2% of Lewis and colleagues’ sample of college undergraduates reported that their most recent hookup resulted in an unwanted pregnancy (2011:10). Additionally, Scholly and colleagues surveyed four separate college campuses regarding their sexual health behaviours, and 3% of their total participants reported an unintended pregnancy (2005:161).

Although the aforementioned studies by Lewis and colleagues (2011) and Scholly and colleagues (2005) indicate that there are seemingly low rates of unintended pregnancies in university and college, both of these studies have failed to sufficiently capture the population of female students who felt the effects of an unwanted pregnancy and left their post-secondary institutions as a result. Many research studies interested in analyzing unintended pregnancies among college or university students tend to gather their samples from *currently* enrolled students. However, women who unexpectedly find themselves pregnant while attending school may be forced to drop out as a result, leaving these women unaccounted for in the majority of research samples. To illustrate, of unmarried women in the United States in their twenties who experienced an unwanted pregnancy, 40% attended at least some college (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy 2009:1); this statistic may indicate that many women who unexpectedly find themselves pregnant ultimately withdraw from their post-secondary educational institutions, thus removing themselves from any future research studies which sample universities or college campuses. The implication is that some women who become unintentionally pregnant may be excluded by popular sampling techniques.

Studies that analyze the prevalence of unintentional pregnancies among university and college students tend to leave out the prevalence rate of, and potential harm inflicted by what is known as a *pregnancy scare*. A pregnancy scare occurs when a woman who is not trying to conceive has reason to believe she may be pregnant, and later finds out that she is not. A pregnancy scare can occur for multiple reasons, such as: the delayed onset of her menstrual cycle, failing to use birth control during sexual intercourse, failing to properly use hormonal contraceptives, strange eating habits, weight gain, and a variety of

other both rational and irrational behaviours and biological responses (Regnerus and Uecker 2011).

Pregnancy scares are extremely common among young adults (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). However, to my knowledge there are no nationally representative datasets that have asked a direct question regarding the frequency of pregnancy scares (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). A woman's emotional response to a pregnancy scare can be unpredictable, and include reactions "ranging from panicky to nervous to upset to nothing at all" (Regnerus and Uecker 2011:45). A pregnancy scare can cause women to experience negative emotional reactions and mental anguish – especially when a pregnancy scare is experienced outside of the context of a committed romantic relationship. Holly, a 19 year old female participant in Regnerus and Uecker's study explains that:

I've had two (pregnancy scares) in my life, and it was horrible. The time that it was with [my boyfriend] Josh, it wasn't that bad, just because I knew he was there for me. He was gonna be there no matter what happened, no matter what I decided. So I mean, I was horrified, but it was okay 'cause I had a support system. And the next time it was with Trevor...we were still kind of hooking up, just 'cause we were idiots. And I don't know, I was almost two weeks late and I was completely and totally having a meltdown, because he wasn't somebody that I could go to, and I knew that (2011:45).

For Holly, and many other young women, experiencing a pregnancy scare in the context of a hookup further exacerbated her negative emotional reactions, as she realized her relationship with her hookup partner lacked the commitment and emotional support necessary if she was indeed pregnant.

Young women who participate in the hookup culture risk unintentionally getting pregnant. As females "still experience the most direct consequences of...pregnancy including primary child care responsibilities and lower educational attainment" (Manning

et al. 2006:463), the risks of becoming pregnant for women are arguably greater than the risks of their male hookup partners. Although unintended pregnancies are not particularly common in university settings, pregnancy scares are seemingly quite common (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Young heterosexual women who hook up place themselves at risk for unwanted pregnancies and pregnancy scares, and thus the corresponding mental anguish and negative emotional reactions.

### *Sexually Transmitted Infections*

The heightened risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Canada and the United States is a growing concern, especially for young adults (Fang et al. 2010; Kropp et al. 2007; Regnerus and Uecker 2011; Rimsza 2005). Between 1997 and 2007 in Canada, rates of chlamydia increased by 86.8%, rates of gonorrhea increased by 133.3%, and rates of infectious syphilis “increased nearly 8-fold” (Fang et al. 2010:19). Similarly in the United States:

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention... in March 2008... announced that one in every four teen girls in the United States – over three million – have at least one sexually transmitted infection (STI)...overall, 13 percent of young women and 4 percent of men report that they’d learned of an [STI] in the past calendar year (Regnerus and Uecker 2011:40).

In part due to an increase in the pursuit of individual screening, and in part due to a more general increase of infections, rates of reported STIs in the contemporary North American context are on the rise (Fang et al. 2010; Jayaraman et al. 2008; Kropp et al. 2007; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). In Canada, “the majority of reported STI cases occur among individuals under 25 years of age” (Fang et al. 2009:18), making the risk of susceptibility particularly concerning for university and college students.

Men and women who are currently enrolled in post-secondary school or who have already completed undergraduate degrees have been found to use contraceptives more consistently when compared to individuals who do not pursue a higher education (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Although university and college students are more likely to use contraceptives, their overall reported use of condoms in the context of a hookup is quite low. Hooking up “often occurs in situations in which prophylactics against sexually transmitted infections... are not available or in which students’ judgment is impaired [by alcohol]” (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009:1196), thereby causing the likelihood of condom use in the context of a hookup to be diminished. Of Fielder and Carey’s sample of 118 female undergraduates, condom use was reported for only 69% of hookups which included sexual intercourse (2010b:351). Armstrong and colleagues’ study comprising over 13 000 undergraduate females found that merely 67% of women reported using a condom during their most recent hookup involving coitus (2012:446). Additionally, less than half (46.6%) of Lewis and colleagues’ sample reported the use of condoms during their latest hookup encounter (2011:5). As a result of the seemingly inadequate rates of reported condom use during coitus hookups, male and female students put themselves at an increased risk of experiencing an STI.

Fielder and Carey surveyed 140 college students, and after their first semester of college, 33% reported engaging in at least one oral sex hookup (2010a:1112). Downing-Matibag and Geisinger’s sample of 71 college students found that “almost half of the students reported engaging in oral sex during their last hookup” (2009:1200). Although many research studies, such as those conducted by Fielder and Carey (2010a) and Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009), indicate that hookups involving oral sex are

quite common on campus, these studies also reveal that the vast majority of undergraduate students fail to sufficiently protect themselves against oral STIs.

Dental dams can mitigate the contraction of an oral STI during cunnilingus, and similarly, the use of condoms can mitigate the contraction of an oral STI during fellatio (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). However, barrier contraceptive use during oral sex is extremely atypical amongst young adults:

People may carry a condom with them, but seldom a dental dam...the association of oral sex and STIs simply hasn't sunk in yet (Regnerus and Uecker 2011:43).

Of the sample collected by Fielder and Carey, 0% of their respondents reported using protection during oral sex (2010b:351). In Downing-Matibag and Geisinger's study, "not one [student] reported that they had ever used or would consider using protective barriers against STIs when giving or receiving oral intercourse" (2009:1200). Many students surveyed were "appalled at the idea of using protection with oral sex" (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009:1200), and were largely unaware that STIs could be spread orally.

This seemingly widespread lack of knowledge regarding the risk of oral STIs is illuminated in a discussion between an interviewer and an undergraduate research participant in Downing-Matibag and Geisinger's (2009:1200) study:

Interviewer (I): Did you use protection?

Jackie (J): No, 'cuz we didn't have sex.

I: So, even with oral sex, you didn't use protection?

J: Right

Downing-Matibag and Geisinger found that only 50% of their sample was concerned about contracting an STI during a hookup that involved sexual intercourse, and that virtually none of her respondents were concerned about contracting an oral STI (2009:1199). The researchers found that many students were unconcerned about STI

contraction because “they placed too much trust in their partners...they placed too much trust in their community” (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009:1200). As undergraduate students typically share common social networks, they have a tendency to unconditionally trust that their fellow student peers are STI-free. When asked whether or not his hookup partners could have an STI, one respondent replied:

No, because most of the time (that I hooked up), it’s been like a friend of a friend, so you hope they’re clean (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009:1200).

The high prevalence rates of hooking up, coupled with the low prevalence rates of condom use and the glaring lack of knowledge and concern over STI contraction, indicate that hooking up ultimately poses severe risks to the sexual health of university and college students.

Health care professionals are largely unfamiliar with the practices of the hookup culture (George et al. 2006). Although 92.7% of young adults have heard the term *hooking up* used with reference to sexual activities, only 52% of health care professionals surveyed by George and colleagues knew what it meant to “hook up” (2006:2S).

Pharyngeal and cervical cultures were taken from three diverse populations of young adults who admittedly hooked up, and of those participants, 5.3% tested positive for both pharyngeal chlamydia and endocervical chlamydia (George et al. 2006:2S), indicating that rates of STIs in the hookup culture are rather high. However, of the health care professionals surveyed in this same study, “only 5% were aware of the proper media to screen for sexually transmitted diseases of the throat” (George et al. 2006:2S). Health care professionals’ general lack of knowledge of the sexual behaviours of undergraduate students, and their unfamiliarity with how to properly screen for oral STIs, further exacerbates the sexual health complications which participants in the hookup culture risk.



The above description of the risk of STI contraction for participants in the hookup culture applies both to men and women. However, young women disproportionately experience more STI contractions than men (Aral 2001; Brunham et al. 2005; Either et al. 2003; Renegerus and Uecker 2011; Whitley et al. 1998), at least in part because they are more biologically susceptible to STIs (Aral 2001; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Aral notes that:

Cervical ectopy (the presence on the exposed face of the cervix of a single layer of columnar cells that are typically found inside the os) increases susceptibility to chlamydial infection, HIV infection and perhaps gonorrhea. Cervical ectopy decreases with increasing age... Thus, the risk for [STIs] is increased among young women because of cervical ectopy (2001:212).

In other words, the biological makeup of the cervix of a young woman puts her at a higher risk of contracting an infectious STI in comparison to her male counterparts. Correspondingly, women consistently experience higher rates of the herpes simplex virus (Whitley et al. 1998), chlamydia (Wong et al. 2004), and the majority of STIs more generally, than men (Regnerus and Uecker 2011).

Additionally, women are more likely than men to be socially stigmatized and alienated upon the contraction of an STI, and experience more psychological complications as a result. Smith and colleagues (2008) provided undergraduate students with one of four versions of a fictitious story about an individual diagnosed with an illness. The stories were identical, except the independent variables of gender and illness were manipulated (Smith et al. 2008). Specifically, the story involved either a man or a woman experiencing the same symptoms, illness characteristics, and prognoses, and the story concluded with the illness being identified as either an STI or a nonsexual infection (Smith et al. 2008). As hypothesized, Smith and colleagues (2008) found that STIs were

significantly more stigmatizing than the nonsexual infections, even though the characteristics of the illnesses remained constant throughout each story. One student exclaimed that: “I think [the person infected with an STI] would expect shock and disgust [from others]. I would be grossed out and never have an intimate relationship with them” (Smith et al. 2008:396). Additionally, the researchers found that females experiencing STIs were subjected to the greatest amount of social rejection, social avoidance and negative emotions, when compared to males with an STI (Smith et al. 2008:396). The effects of an STI diagnosis are ultimately more socially damaging for women, as they are more likely to be stigmatized and derogated by their peers as a result.

The diagnosis of an STI can be emotionally devastating to both men and women who are infected, however, research indicates that women experience more mental anguish as a result of a positive STI test (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). An incurable STI diagnosis poses relationship consequences to both men and women, as fewer potential partners will be willing to engage in a sexual relationship with them for fear of the transmission of the STI (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). However, women experience unique fertility consequences, as women with STIs are at a heightened risk of fatal ectopic pregnancies, they risk transferring their STI to their infants during childbirth, and their STI may stunt their reproductive potential altogether by causing tubal infertility (Committee on Prevention and Control of STDs 1997). Evidently, the knowledge that their STI can interfere with their romantic relationships and reproductive capacities can result in emotional distress (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Notably, the “moral devaluation” that accompanies an STI accounts for much of the disproportionate psychological complications experienced by women. Regnerus and Uecker note that:

For some [women], discovering they have an STI – or worse, someone else discovering it – prompts association as a ‘bad girl’ or a ‘fallen women,’ regardless of their sexual activity patterns or number of previous partners. If it’s an STI that cannot be cured – like HPV or herpes – the mental and emotional ‘transgression’ is typically even more difficult to overcome (2011:44).

Female respondents were more than twice as likely as male respondents to report that they would hide their STI diagnosis; “as one female stated: ‘I would be embarrassed and ashamed. I would feel like people would think I’m a slut’” (Smith et al. 2008:398).

An association between STIs and depression has been found, and this association is even greater when the STI carrier is female (Chen et al. 2008). Chen and colleagues (2008) found that there is a significant correlation between women with STIs and depression, and that this depression is consistent among women of all ages and marital statuses. Chen and colleagues (2008) also found an association between males with STIs and depression, however the association was less strong in comparison to women, and depression was only found among single men under the age of 35 with STIs.

Both men and women who participate in the hookup culture jeopardize their sexual health as they risk STI infection. However, women are more likely to experience STIs, are more biologically susceptible to STIs, are more likely to experience social stigmatization as a result of an STI, and are more likely to experience damaging psychological complications as a result of their diagnosis. Evidently, female participants in the hookup culture disproportionately risk contracting an STI and experiencing the associated negative consequences, in comparison to their male hookup partners.

### *Sexual Assault*

Prior research has established that there is an association between heavy drinking in college and an increased risk of sexual victimization (Abbey 2002; Mohler-Kuo et al.

2004; Mustaine and Tewksbury 2002; Krebs et al. 2009). Specifically, alcohol consumption by either the victim or the offender has been found to increase the likelihood of acquaintance sexual assault among college students (Abbey 2002). Krebs and colleagues note that:

Researchers have reported that between one-fifth to one-quarter of college women are raped during the course of their college careers. Moreover, during an academic year, approximately 2-3% of college women experience forcible rape... There is growing evidence of links between victims' substance use and sexual assault. Data from the nationally administered 2005 Core Alcohol and Drug Survey showed that 82% of students who experienced unwanted sexual intercourse during the current academic year were under the influence... when they were victimized. The College Alcohol Study (CAS) found that from 1997-2001, approximately 3.4% of college women reported having been raped when they were 'so intoxicated that [they] were unable to consent' since the beginning of the school year (2009:639).

As previously mentioned, research has demonstrated that there is a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and hooking up (Bogle 2007, 2008a; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Fisher et al. 2012; Grello et al. 2006; Lewis et al. 2011; Owen et al. 2010). In other words, the majority of hookups occur while both hookup partners are under the influence of alcohol. As hooking up typically involves engaging in sexual behaviours with a stranger or an acquaintance while under the influence, and correspondingly, being under the influence increases the likelihood of sexual assault in college, it can be argued that hooking up puts women at a heightened risk for sexual victimization.

The sexual assault literatures of the 1980s and 1990s primarily focused on the prevalence of "date rapes", or the sexual victimization of young women in college by their dating partners or boyfriends (Littleton et al. 2009). For example, Koss and colleagues found that in the 1980s, more than 60% of college women who had been raped reported that the offender was either a dating partner or a boyfriend (1988:16). In the

present university context however, dating is no longer a prevalent mode of male/female interaction, as hooking up has largely replaced dating as the dominant courtship script. Although dating is a less frequent occurrence on campus, “rates of sexual assault among college women have remained unchanged, ranging from 15% to 19% of women” (Littleton et al. 2009:794). One possibility is that the unchanged rates of sexual assault in college suggest that sexual victimizations are becoming more frequent in contexts where casual encounters – such as hookups – occur (Littleton et al. 2009). Although further investigation of this association is required, relevant research findings that investigate hooking up and sexual assault seem to support this notion.

In the contemporary hookup literatures, many scholars are finding that sexual victimizations are taking place in the context of a hookup. Flack and colleagues’ (2007) research found a strong correlation between sexual assault and hooking up behaviours; specifically, students who participated in the hookup culture were more likely to report incidents of unwanted sexual intercourse. Of the women in Flack and colleagues’ study who indicated they had experienced unwanted vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex, 77.8% reported that the assaults occurred within the context of a hookup (2007:146). Significantly fewer sexual assaults took place while on a date (8.3%), or in the context of a romantic relationship (13.9%) (Flack et al. 2007:146).

Another study that sampled female undergraduates found that 22% of the women who indicated that they had been sexually assaulted or raped reported that their experience initially began as a hookup (Littleton et al. 2009:797). When asked about their most recent hookup experience, 7.6% of women in Lewis and colleagues’ study indicated that they did not want to hook up with their partner, or were unable to give their consent

(2011:9). Perhaps due to the association between hooking up and alcohol use, the inability of female students to provide consent is a recurring theme within the dominant hookup literatures. Paul and Hayes noted that many of their female participants “described debilitating effects of intoxication during hookup experiences such that they no longer felt in control of their bodies or could not remember what happened” (2002:657). Similarly, Paul and colleagues (2000) found that 14% of their respondents indicated that they had to rely on their friends’ stories the following day in order to determine what happened during their hookup the previous night. Although the female students in these studies did not, or were unable to provide consent for their hookup experiences, their male partners engaged in sexual behaviours with them nonetheless.

There appears to be a relationship between hooking up and sexual assault, and correspondingly, female students who participate in the hookup culture are risking sexual victimization at the hands of their hookup partners. Males can experience sexual assaults as well, however females are most often the victims of this type of violence (Abbey 2002; Krebs et al. 2009; Mustaine and Tewksbury 2002; Sinha 2013). “Less than 5% of adolescent and adult sexual assault victims are male, and when men are sexually assaulted, the perpetrator is usually male” (Abbey 2002:118). Sexual assault is a crime that most often affects women, and as such, female proponents of the hookup culture disproportionately risk being sexually victimized.

### *Summary*

In summary, the social organization of sex in the contemporary hookup context tends to reflect male interests more than female interests. Women who participate in the hookup culture are at a heightened risk of sexual dissatisfaction, a devalued reputation,

failed relationship expectations, emotional and mental health issues, contracting sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and pregnancy scares, and sexual assault, in comparison to their male partners. These risks do not necessarily apply to every woman who participates in the hookup culture, but these are risks that every woman could potentially face. Evidently, the foregoing discussion presents a paradox; there are high levels of female involvement in the hookup culture, and yet hooking up appears to be a high-risk behaviour for women. Accordingly, it remains unclear why women would voluntarily participate in a courtship script that they perceive to be risky. Specifically, what allows women to negate these physical, emotional, and psychological risks to make engagement in this behaviour non-problematic?

### ***Theoretical Considerations***

The examination of how people participate in behaviours that they themselves believe to be wrong is a problem not unfamiliar to sociologists of deviance. These writers have long noted that individuals can, and do, commit acts that they themselves believe to be wrong, and as a result, employ the use of various techniques in order to present their behaviours as non-problematic (Scully and Marolla 1984). There is a long theoretical tradition in which it is argued that “deviants” utilize rhetorical categories to define their delinquent actions in such a way that reduces their shame and guilt (Scott and Lyman 1968; Scully and Marolla 1984; Sykes and Matza 1957). Sykes and Matza (1957) were the first scholars to demarcate these linguistic constructions as they relate to juvenile offenders, and they referred to the verbalizations as *techniques of neutralization*.

Sykes and Matza’s (1957) theory of techniques of neutralization finds its origins in the works of Sutherland (1955). Sutherland’s theory of differential association

contends that criminal behaviour involves the learning of “(a) techniques of committing the crime...[and] (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes” (1966:81). However, Sykes and Matza (1957) note that the majority of criminologists tend to focus on the processes by which learning these criminal behaviours take place, and little attention is paid to the actual content of what is learned.

The theoretical contributions of Sykes and Matza (1957) emerged, at least in part, as a reaction to subcultural theory. Subcultural theorists argue that deviant sub-cultures uphold a system of values which represent an inversion of the values held by law-abiding citizens (Sykes and Matza 1957). In other words, delinquent behaviours are derived from an independent set of deviant values and norms, which means that delinquents define their delinquency as morally “right” (Sykes and Matza 1957:664). According to Sykes and Matza however, if delinquents view their illegal behaviours as morally correct, “we could reasonably suppose that [juvenile offenders] would exhibit no feelings of guilt or shame at detection or confinement” (1957:664). The vast majority of criminological research contradicts this notion, as findings suggest that delinquents *do* experience both shame and guilt for their criminal behaviours (Sykes and Matza 1957). Additionally, researchers have found that juvenile offenders frequently have admiration and respect for individuals who abide by the law, they often indicate that certain groups of people should not be victimized (i.e., friends), and few – if any – of them are completely removed from the dominant social order and socialization of legality (Sykes and Matza 1957). In sum, it is unlikely that individuals who engage in criminal behaviours have their own set of deviant values and norms, as they often recognize the moral validity of the dominant normative system and frequently “exhibit...guilt or shame when [they] violate its



proscriptions” (Sykes and Matza 1957:666). The implication is that although subcultural theorists believed that deviants are immersed in deviant cultures in uncomplicated ways, their involvement is understood as much more complex than subcultural theorists have assumed.

Quoting Morris Cohen, Sykes and Matza note that “one of the most fascinating problems about human behavior is why men violate the laws in which they believe” (1957:666). The authors attempt to address this problem by explaining why criminal behaviours occur despite the criminal’s more general commitment to social conformity (Sykes and Matza 1957). Sykes and Matza (1957) assert that individuals can avoid the feelings of guilt or shame that follow as a result of their criminal actions by demonstrating that their criminal intent was lacking. Specifically:

It is our argument that much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognized extension of defenses to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not the legal system or society at large. These justifications are commonly described as rationalizations... In this sense, the delinquent both has his cake and eats it too, for he remains committed to the dominant normative system and yet so qualifies its imperatives that violations are ‘acceptable’ if not ‘right’ (Sykes and Matza 1957:666-667).

Sykes and Matza term these linguistic justifications the “techniques of neutralization” (1957:667), and contend that rather than learning a separate set of morals and values which contradict those of the dominant society, individuals become delinquent by learning to use rhetorical techniques. Sykes and Matza note that techniques of neutralization are an integral part of Sutherland’s theory of differential association; specifically, techniques of neutralization are an important component of Sutherland’s notion that “a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of the law” (1966:81).

Sykes and Matza (1957) analyzed the techniques of neutralization as utilized by juvenile offenders, and categorized them into five separate types. The first technique is known as *the denial of responsibility*, whereby offenders assert that their delinquent acts occurred due to forces or circumstances outside of their control (Sykes and Matza 1957). Second is *the denial of injury*, where delinquents neutralize their criminal behaviours by claiming that their crime did not cause injury or harm to others (Sykes and Matza 1957). Third is *the denial of the victim*; an offender will negate their criminal act by denying the legitimacy of the victim and indicating that the victim was actually to blame, or deserved their injury (Sykes and Matza 1957). The fourth technique is *the condemnation of the condemners*, whereby the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from their own criminal behaviours to the motives and behaviours of others who disapprove of their violations – “he may claim...[they] are hypocrites, deviants in disguise, or impelled by personal spite” (Sykes and Matza 1957:668). The last technique of neutralization is *the appeal to higher loyalties*, where offenders assert that their actions were necessary in order to meet the demands of the smaller social groups (i.e. family, friends, religious groups) to which they belong (Sykes and Matza 1957).

Utilizing the foregoing techniques of neutralization allows offenders to negate potential feelings of shame and guilt due to their criminal behaviours. Sykes and Matza (1957) note that techniques of neutralization may not be enough to fully neutralize negative feelings, as juvenile offenders often experience remorse or disgrace as a result of their illegal actions. However, Sykes and Matza contend that these techniques “are critical in lessening the effectiveness of social controls and that they lie behind a large share of delinquent behavior” (1957:669).

Since the publication of Sykes and Matza's (1957) article, several scholars have applied the general logic of neutralization theory to a range of problems. For instance, Ball (1966) sampled both male juvenile delinquents and male high school students, and found that when presented with a series of criminal offences, incarcerated young men were more likely to employ techniques of neutralization in comparison to high school students. Ball's (1966) findings ultimately support Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralization theory, as Ball suggests that although both the incarcerated and the high school boys revere the dominant system of morals and values, the incarcerated sample of boys had learned techniques of neutralization in order to negate any internal or external disapproval.

Priest and McGrath (1970) conducted semi-structured interviews with young adults about their experiences with drugs in order to demonstrate that all social deviants – as opposed to just juvenile delinquents – utilize techniques of neutralization. The researchers sampled young adults between the ages of 21-26, and found that in all of their interviews, each participant employed at least two techniques of neutralization to mediate the negative associations with their drug use (Priest and McGrath 1970:193). Paul and McGrath's (1970) study proved to be an important contribution to the criminological literatures, as their findings suggested that Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralizations are utilized by individuals of all age groups.

Rogers and Buffalo's (1974) research sought to advance the theory of techniques of neutralization by creating an empirical scale with which to measure the concept. This was accomplished by developing a seven-item Guttman scale, which they then tested on a diverse sample of delinquent boys. Similarly, Agnew and Peters (1986) attempted to

further develop Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralization by identifying additional conditions in order for the learning of neutralizations to culminate in criminal behaviours. Specifically, Agnew and Peters asserted that "in order for neutralizations to result in deviance, persons must (1) accept a technique of neutralization and (2) believe that they are in a situation in which the technique is applicable" (1986:81).

Perhaps most notably however, Scott and Lyman (1968) expanded upon Sykes and Matza's theory of techniques of neutralization to formulate a more holistic understanding of how particular linguistic categories are employed when explaining untoward behaviours. Specifically, Scott and Lyman (1968) argue that when behaviours are subjected to "valuative inquiry", individuals are able to reduce internal or external dilemmas by *accounting* for their behaviours in ways which make them acceptable. Scott and Lyman conceptualize an *account* as "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior – whether that behavior is his own or that of others" (1968:46). The authors further stipulate that accounts are not necessary when engaging in routine or commonsensical behaviours, for example, like "married people...maintain[ing] a home with their children" (Scott and Lyman 1968:46). Accounts are more commonly employed when a person is accused of having done something "that is 'bad, wrong, unwelcome, or in some other of the numerous possible ways, untoward'" (Scott and Lyman 1968:47).

Scott and Lyman (1968) differentiate between two types of accounts: *justifications* and *excuses*. Justifications are accounts whereby one accepts responsibility for their behaviours, but denies that the behaviours were problematic. For example, "a soldier in combat may admit that he has killed other men, but deny that he did an

immoral act since those he killed were members of an enemy group and hence ‘deserved’ their fate” (Scott and Lyman 1968:47). Scott and Lyman’s conceptualization of *justification* relies heavily on the works of Sykes and Matza (1957), as the authors note that:

For a tentative list of types of justifications we may turn to what has been called ‘techniques of neutralization.’... Relevant to our discussion of justification are the techniques of denial of injury’, ‘denial of victim,’ ‘condemnation of condemners,’ and ‘appeal to loyalties’ (1968: 51)

Excuses however, are accounts in which one admits that the behaviours were problematic, but full responsibility for these behaviours is denied. “Thus our soldier could admit the wrongfulness of killing but claim that his acts are not entirely undertaken with volition: he is ‘under orders’ he must obey” (Scott and Lyman 1968:47). Scott and Lyman describe four different types of excuses used to mitigate evaluative inquiry. The first excuse is through appeals to *accidents*, whereby responsibility is directed towards unforeseen hazards in the environment, or the inability for humans to “control all motor responses” (Scott and Lyman 1968:47). Second is appeals to *defeasibility*, where an individual might deny responsibility by indicating that they lacked necessary knowledge or intention (Scott and Lyman 1968). Third is *biological drive*; biological or various “fatalistic” forces are to blame for certain behaviours. Fourth is *scapegoating*, whereby one’s behaviour is a response to the behaviours or attitudes of others (Scott and Lyman 1968).

Scott and Lyman’s (1957) contribution to neutralization theory has been adopted to further explore the ways in which people make sense of their behaviours, although they themselves believe said behaviours to be wrong. Some of the most prominent work in this area was conducted by scholars Scully and Marolla (1984). Scully and Marolla

(1984) interviewed 114 males who had been convicted of rape, and subsequently examined the various ways in which these men accounted for their behaviours. Specifically, Scully and Marolla utilized Scott and Lyman's (1968) concept of *accounts* as a "tool to organize and analyze the vocabularies of motive which [a] group of rapists used to explain themselves and their actions" (1984: 531). Scully and Marolla (1984) found that there were two types of participants who would attempt to reinterpret their criminal behaviours as socially acceptable acts: *deniers* and *admitters*.

Deniers were those who would deny their crimes and account for their behaviours through the use of *justifications*. In other words, these individuals admitted to raping their victims, but denied that their behaviours were bad or inappropriate. Scully and Marolla noted five key ways in which their participants justified their rapes: "(1) women as seductresses; (2) women mean 'yes' when they say 'no'; (3) most women eventually relax and enjoy it; (4) nice girls don't get raped; and (5) guilty of a minor wrongdoing" (1984:534).

Conversely, *admitters* were those who would admit to their crimes, but accounted for their behaviours by way of *excuses*. Specifically, *admitters* would admit to their crimes and describe their behaviours as morally problematic, although they would tend to "cling to the belief that the victim had contributed to the crime somewhat", thus foregoing full responsibility for their behaviours. Scully and Marolla outlined three primary excuses utilized by participants: "(1) the use of alcohol and drugs; (2) emotional problems; and (3) nice guy image" (1984:538).

Evidently, sociologists of deviance are familiar with the linguistic techniques employed by individuals when attempting to explain their untoward behaviours in ways

which make said behaviours acceptable to them. Most notably, the works of Sykes and Matza (1957), Scott and Lyman (1968) and Scully and Marolla (1984) have addressed the various verbal techniques utilized by people to negate any internal or external confictions which their behaviours may ultimately cause. Correspondingly, it is my belief that these sociological theories of neutralization and accounts can be alternatively constructed and put forth as a useful approach to explain how young women in university rationalize their participation in the contemporary hookup culture. Hookup behaviours present various risks for female participants, and correspondingly, female participants are seemingly aware of some of the risks which they face as a result of their participation. Accordingly, if female proponents of the hookup culture are aware that their hookup behaviours are risky, it seems likely that they would then attempt to construct these behaviours in ways which neutralize or account for the associated pejorative qualities of their actions. In other words, as hooking up presents foreseeable risks for females, it is probable that women who engage in hookup behaviours will feel the need to explain to themselves and to others why they do, or should endure these risks. The implication of this contention is that female engagement in the hookup script is not uncomplicated, but requires constructionist work on the part of the participant in the form of specific linguistic techniques.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the potential cultural and historical activates for the emergence of the hookup culture, and explicated the relevant scholarly literatures as they relate to the hookup script. Additionally, this chapter outlined the major theoretical contributions – namely, the conceptualization of accounts and neutralization theory –

which inform the current study's understanding of female engagement in the hookup script. The following chapter will demarcate the methodological strategies utilized and ethical complications encountered during the research process.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodologies**

The present inquiry into the accounts of female participants in the hookup culture required purposeful methodological decisions that were predicated on assumptions consistent with contemporary qualitative research. Accordingly, this chapter will detail the specific methodological choices and strategies employed throughout the research process. This chapter will also illustrate the rationale for the specific methods and data collection techniques utilized in the current study, along with the emergent ethical challenges to the research.

#### **Qualitative Interviews**

The qualitative interview is a research method that seeks to construct meaning through a series of verbal interchanges between an interviewer and an interviewee (Miller and Crabtree 2004). The interview can be thought of as “a conversation with a purpose”; while the participant dominates the discussion, the researcher directs these oral exchanges in the interest of scientific knowledge (Berg 2012). The paradigmatic assumptions of qualitative interviews embrace the subjective and multilayered nature of co-constructed interpretive data collection, while rejecting the positivistic search for objectivity and “truth”.

Qualitative interviews have been criticized from a methodological standpoint for their perceived weaknesses, lack of rigor, and seemingly “fluffy” approach to the sciences (Angen 2000; Diefenbach 2009; Nelson and Quintana 2005; Sandelowski 1986). However, these criticisms indicate a lack of general knowledge regarding the interview process and the rigorous procedures employed (Diefenbach 2009). Miller and Crabtree

note that the interview "...is not political oratory, storytelling, rap, a lecture, a small group seminar, or a clinical encounter. Rather, it is a conversational journey with its own rules of the road" (2004:187). Specifically, the design of a promising qualitative study involves much time and planning prior to any formal interview encounter. Among other steps, questions appropriate to the research endeavors are developed, the interview schedule is pre-tested with the assistance of other competent researchers, and sample questions must be field tested to ensure that they effectively relate to the subjects. Throughout the interview process interviewers are tasked with systematically directing the conversation towards the topic of interest, while ensuring that their verbal and non-verbal cues remain positive, open, and indicate that the interviewer is interested in the subjects' responses. In sum, the careful planning and expert implementation required of a respectable qualitative study are inherently rigorous, and far from "fluffy".

The employment of qualitative interviews is most appropriate when researchers are interested in understanding the perceptions of their participants, or how individuals ascribe meaning to particular phenomena (Berg 2009:110). Additionally, deciding to use qualitative interviews as a form of data collection "is necessarily linked to the type of research question being asked" (Berg 2009:110). With regards to researching the hookup culture, Plante notes that "quantitative instruments cannot adequately capture the complexity of hooking up, so it makes sense to pose open-ended questions to document emotional, phenomenological reactions and processes" (2006:178).

The aims of the current study were to examine how female students understand and negotiate some of the negative aspects of the hookup culture. In other words, I hoped to "explore in detail people's subjective experiences, meaning-making...and unspoken

assumptions” (Healey-Etten and Sharp 2010:157). In order to best address this research question I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with several female undergraduate students. Qualitative interviews allowed the participants to construct their own narratives about their experiences in the hookup culture in ways that were meaningful to them.

Questions that are typically asked in a semi-structured interview have “some degree of predetermined order but still ensure flexibility in the ways issues are addressed by the informant” (Longhurst 2010:105). Prior to the interviews I developed four broad interview themes that were to be addressed, in order to purposefully direct the dialogue in ways that were relevant to my research question (Qu and Dumay 2011). These themes are as follows: (1) defining hooking up, (2) the nature of hookups on campus, (3) risks involved, and (4) dealing with the risks. I had also developed pre-determined open-ended questions<sup>5</sup> for each thematic category, although I often veered away from these standardized questions in order to tailor the interviews to the experiences of the specific interviewees. As participants spoke of different experiences within the hookup culture, the sequence and phrasing of questions varied; however all participants spoke to each of the four broad themes. Additionally, it is important to note that my active involvement in the interview encounters inevitably impacted the discourse, as it is assumed that all knowledge has been co-constructed by way of the dual social realities of the researcher and participant(s).

Each interview was audio-recorded with the permission of individual participants, and transcribed by the researcher at a later date. Recording the interviews was necessary

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix D.

to accurately represent the perspectives and stories of each participant, and important to capturing the intonation, nuance, meaning, and sequence of the dialogue (Hermanowicz 2002). Barriball and While (1994) note that in qualitative research studies,

Audio taping is frequently the method of choice ...[recordings] help validate the accuracy and completeness of the information collected. Audio taping also reduces the potential for interviewer error by, for example, recording data incorrectly or cheating by logging an answer to a question that was not asked (332).

The decision to audio record the interviews facilitated greater accuracy and detail, while allowing participants to best represent their narratives in words that were meaningful and familiar to them.

Berg and Lune (2012) outline the importance of *knowing your audience* when conducting interviews. This involves understanding the normative cultural practices of the group that your participants belong to, and adapting the wording of your interview questions accordingly (Berg and Lune 2012). As my participants were young female university students, it was necessary to informalize and alter my language in the interviews in order to foster relatable communicative interactions. For example, university students do not typically speak about “engaging in oral sex” or “petting below the waist”. Plante argues that students:

...engage in the behavior, but they do not use this language...If researchers are asking about things like ‘petting’ it is a dead giveaway of a particular point of view (perhaps more conservative), and student respondents may guess that the researcher does not really want to hear about the details of hookups (2006:169).

Correspondingly, it was necessary to avoid conservative or clinical language, and at times, to utilize profanity, or to employ colloquialisms such as *wheeling*, *bros*, or *blow jobs*.

## Sampling Techniques

The purpose of this study was not to use the data to make external statistical generalizations or inferences, as is typically the case with research projects predicated on more positivistic assumptions (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). Instead, this research project has attempted to gain insight into the social and sexual practices of young women, and the accounts that they give of their experiences with hooking up. I was interested not only in the events and behaviours which take place in the hookup culture, but also how young women make sense of these behaviours, and how their understandings influence their subsequent participation. Onwuegbuzie and Leech argue that “if the goal [of a research project] is not to generalize to a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events...then the researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that increases understanding of phenomena” (2007:242). As probability samples were not required for a research project of this nature (Maxwell 1998; Onwuegbuzie 2003; Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007), I utilized non-probability sampling – specifically, convenience and snowball sampling techniques.

The initial phase of the sampling scheme employed convenience sampling to recruit female undergraduate students at a medium-sized Canadian university. The decision to sample *students* was made partially due to the ease of access to this group, but also in part due to the relevant literatures which indicate that the hookup script is most salient in the lives of undergraduate students (Bogle 2008b; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Paul and Hayes 2002). It is important to note that the university from which this sample

was drawn has a reputation for attracting white middle-class students, and its Arts and Science program has a female to male gender ratio of approximately 2:1.<sup>6</sup>

I began recruiting interviewees by approaching university professors and requesting an opportunity to speak with their large undergraduate classes about my research project. I spoke with three undergraduate classes in total; two of these classes were in the sociology department, and one was a class in computer sciences. One of the sampled classes was a 200 level course, one was a 300 level course, and the last was an introductory level course comprised of predominately fourth year students. I had an overwhelming response from the students as a result of these in-class solicitations, and the majority of my participants were recruited by way of this sampling method. In an attempt to recruit additional interviewees I also placed posters around campus with general information about my study and my contact information. These posters were displayed on bulletin boards in the campus athletic facilities, as well as on the office doors of my supervisor and other colleagues in the Department of Sociology.

Additional participants were recruited through the use of snowball sampling. At the close of every interview encounter I would ask the respondent if she knew of any friends who might also be willing to participate in my research project. Rather than requesting that respondents immediately provide me with the contact information of future potential interviewees, I simply asked them to let their peers and colleagues know about my research, and to have them contact me if at all interested. A few participants were ultimately recruited using this sampling technique.

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<sup>6</sup> The overall gender ratio at Eastern is 2:1, women to men, however these ratios vary by department. Fine arts (6:1), biology (3:1), psychology (8:1) and sociology (6:1) all have overwhelmingly large gender gaps with women dominating the classrooms.

The interview solicitations were somewhat vague regarding the nature of my research, as the term “hooking up” was deliberately left out of all recruitment information. Rather, I informed students that the interviews would involve discussions about “partying and male/female relations on campus”. This decision reflected the need to ensure some sample variance with regards to levels of participation in, or understanding of the hookup culture. The use of such vague language is an accepted practice when researchers are interested in analyzing hooking up behaviours. For example, Bogle (2008a) also remained ambiguous when soliciting participants for her research project,

...in the hopes that a wider range of ‘types’ would volunteer for the study. For example, I did not want only those who were completely immersed in the hookup culture to volunteer; I also wanted to talk to those who did not hook-up or rarely did so (188).

### **Sample Characteristics and Methodological Decisions**

The final sample was comprised of 30 female undergraduate students attending a mid-sized university in Ontario, Canada. The decision to sample 30 respondents was made for a number of reasons. Although the sample size may appear to be small, sample sizes

...used in qualitative research methods [are] often smaller than [those] used in quantitative research methods. This is because qualitative research methods are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on *meaning*... (Dworkin 2012:1319).

Collecting smaller sample sizes when conducting qualitative research is a widely adopted practice among reputable social scientists (Backstrom et al. 2012; Dworkin 2012; Guest et al. 2006; Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). In fact, some scholars contend that qualitative researchers should explicitly avoid large sample sizes because “it is difficult to

extract thick, rich data” (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). To garner the quality and depth of understanding required of a qualitative research project of this nature, only a moderately sized sample was necessary.

The methodological choice to interview 30 participants was also made to ensure that data saturation would be reached. There are several ongoing debates concerning what sample size is most appropriate for qualitative research endeavors, and many scholars contend that the concept of data saturation is the most important factor to consider (Dworkin 2012; Guest et al. 2006). For example, Guest, Bunce and Johnson’s study of data saturation found that “after analysis of twelve interviews, new themes emerge infrequently” (2006:74), and data saturation was salient. Thus Guest and colleagues (2006) argue that when studying a relatively homogenous population, a sample size of twelve should suffice. However, Dworkin (2012) notes that with regards to sample size:

There is indeed variability in what is suggested as a minimum. An extremely large number of articles, book chapters, and books recommend guidance and suggest anywhere from 5 to 50 participants is adequate (2012:1319).

In 2012, the associate editor of *The Archives of Sexual Behavior* published a sample size policy with respect to written submissions (Dworkin 2012). Specifically, Dworkin (2012) outlined that 25-30 interview participants is the minimum sample size required in order to reach data saturation, and thus the minimum sample size required of research manuscripts submitted to the journal. This sample size guideline of 25-30 participants was ultimately employed for the purposes of the current study.

The final sample size was also partly a function of the number of available subjects willing to volunteer their time. After conducting interview solicitations, distributing posters and snowballing, a total of 38 eligible students indicated that they



were interested in participating in the current study. However, after providing me with their contact information, seven students failed to respond to my subsequent emails, and one indicated that she would not participate without remuneration. While still acknowledging the minimum standards set forth by *The Archives of Sexual Behavior*, I sought to conduct interviews with every student who was available and interested in participating, and in the end the sample size was 30.

Interview times ranged from 30 minutes to just over two hours, and the length of an interview encounter was primarily dependent upon the openness and comfort level of the respondent. For example, one particularly shy respondent – whose participation yielded a short, 30 minute interview – revealed afterwards that she was a student in the class for which I was hired as a teaching assistant. This likely inhibited her level of ease during the interview, resulting in shorter responses. The average interview time was approximately 60 minutes in length, which is consistent with the scholarly dictum that “great interviews should normally last between sixty and ninety minutes” (Hermanowicz 2002:487).

The methodological decision to interview female students was influenced by the nature of my research question. Specifically, I was interested in how *women* make sense of, and neutralize potentially risky aspects of the hookup culture. The relevant literatures suggest that men and women have differing perceptions of, and feelings about hooking up, and correspondingly, that male students lack insight regarding the understanding of young women’s participation in the hookup culture (Bogle 2008a; Epstein et al. 2009; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Lambert et al. 2003; Owen et al. 2010). Accordingly, it was deemed that interviewing solely female students would be most appropriate, as

speaking with men would not likely have advanced our understanding of the research question.

In addition, past research has confirmed that the personal characteristics of a researcher – specifically, the interviewer’s gender – can affect what a participant will disclose or withhold during the course of an interview (Lee 1997; Padfield and Procter 1996; Williams and Heikes 1993). Williams and Heikes indicate that males interviewed by female researchers tend to be “...more diplomatic in phrasing their opinions” (1993:288) when discussing issues such as sexism or the mistreatment of women. In an attempt to collect “trustworthy”<sup>7</sup> data that were most meaningful and accurate to the respondents it was necessary to exclude male participants from the study.

None of the women in the sample self-identified as bi-sexual or lesbian, and each young woman spoke only of desires and personal sexual experiences with male partners. As such, it is presumed that all 30 participants are heterosexual. The lack of representation of the LGBTTI community within this sample was not intentional, but may have reflected the wording of the interview recruitment materials. Specifically, the request to speak to young women about their experiences with “*male/female* relations on campus” may have discouraged some individuals who do not identify as heterosexual from participating.

While participants were not asked to identify their racial or ethnic identities at any point during the interview process, the overwhelming majority of respondents were white. The overrepresentation of white subjects in the sample is not assumed to be

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<sup>7</sup> The relevant scholarly literatures in qualitative research reject the term “validity” for its origins in positivism. Instead, the term “trustworthiness” is employed when referring to the ability of the researcher to persuade her audience of the plausibility and accuracy of the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1999).

problematic, as this reflects the demographic character of the university population more generally. Out of 30 interviewees only five could be categorized as “visible minorities”, although the invisible ethnic or racial identities of all sample members are unknown.

Sociology majors were vastly overrepresented within the final sample. Twenty-one respondents identified as sociology majors, four as double-majors in sociology and psychology, two as psychology majors, and one each as English, life science, and economic majors. The overrepresentation of social science interviewees affected the way in which respondents understood or articulated issues like gender inequality, stereotyping, evolutionary theory, and courtship behaviours. The majority of participants indicated that they held liberal views regarding sex, and demonstrated their ability to critique social constructs like the sexual double standard. One respondent even indicated that she was well read in the scholarly literatures on hooking up, as she developed an interest in the topic after my supervisor had discussed my research in one of his lectures.

Fourteen interviewees indicated that they were in their second year of university, twelve were in third year, and four participants were in fourth year. First-year students were not sampled, as the majority of freshmen at this particular university are under the age of 19. This was a relevant concern as the legal drinking age in Ontario is 19 years old, and bars and nightclubs have been identified as hotspots for the initiation of hookups (Bogle 2008a; Garcia et al. 2012; Glenn and Marquardt 2001). A singular interviewee who happened to be 18 years old however, indicated that she owned and utilized a “fake ID” in order to gain admittance to drinking establishments. All participants reported that they had been to a bar or a nightclub before, and most specified that they attended bars or nightclubs frequently.

Prior research conducted in the United States has demonstrated that rates of hooking up increase with each year of college experience (Flack et al. 2007). As such, the decision to exclude first year students from the sample may have subsequently excluded individuals who are not as experienced, or as fully immersed in the hookup culture. However, the majority of respondents in this research study indicated that female participation in the hookup culture happens most often in first and second year, and that hookup behaviours begin to decrease as female students enter their third and fourth years of study. Following a two hour interview with one participant – who is in her fourth year – she later reflected upon our discussion and realized that she had more she wanted to say about hooking up. Jordan wrote me via email, and explained that:

In terms of who is more likely to “hook up” with one another, in my opinion and from what I observed in my personal university career, hooking up more often takes place with first year students. I feel this is in large part because arguably [the] majority of ‘partying’ takes place in first year as stated in my interview. Don't get me wrong, there are still quite a few students in their 4th year who may go out every weekend, but I would say on average, most “partying” occurs in first year which I believe leads to “hooking up”.

The findings from this study indicate that the majority of hooking up in the Canadian context likely happens when female students are in first and second year. Thus the decision to exclude first year students from the sample may have successively disregarded the experiences of individuals who hook up the most on campus. However, further research on the Canadian hookup culture is required to confirm or disconfirm these inferences regarding the correlation between hookup behaviours and years of experience in university.

## **Data Analysis**

Interview recordings were manually transcribed, and the data were subsequently coded and analyzed in accordance with Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory approach (1990, 1998). This method of data analysis is largely inductive and "grounded in the experiences and perceptions of the interviewees" (Bogle 2008a:189). Overarching theoretical constructions or hypotheses regarding the interviews were not formulated and tested during analysis. Rather, data were initially analyzed using the process of open coding, whereby the transcripts were examined line-by-line to identify similarities and differences among the respondents (Strauss and Corbin 1998). This process of coding involves:

...generating codes and categories directly from the data; codes and categories are not selected prior to data analysis...but, rather, data interpretation and category development are driven by conceptual concerns in the data" (Kendall 1999:746).

After open coding the first few transcripts and identifying the major emerging themes, I recorded each topical area of interest from these initial interviews and refined the interview guide accordingly (Bogle 2008a; Strauss and Corbin 1998). For example, after many respondents reported that they had neutralized their increase in participation in the hookup culture following the end of a romantic relationship, subsequent interviewees were probed regarding similar experiences. All coding and analyses were done manually to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the data, and outlying cases and categories were noted.

## **Interview Environment**

As the interview environment can "be crucial for shaping the interpersonal dynamics and interview data" (Broom et al. 2009:56), much thought was put into

appropriately staging the physical interview space. The majority of the 30 interviews took place in a boardroom with a long singular table and many large comfortable chairs surrounding it. All of the chairs in the boardroom were the same size; this was important to avoid physical representations of the inequitable power dynamics between the researcher and the researched. Specifically, it was necessary for the interviewer and interviewee to sit in similar sized chairs. When the boardroom was unavailable interviews were held in unoccupied private offices, and if similar sized chairs were unavailable, it was essential that interviewees sat in the larger, more dominant chair.

The most fruitful interviews took place in the boardroom, and one particular office that is decorated with couches and a coffee table. The couches created a more relaxed atmosphere, similar to that which is found in a living room. Interviews held outside of the boardroom or the office with couches were also effective, however rapport building was typically a longer process and respondents required more time to address their own participation in the hookup culture.

As previously mentioned, all 30 interviews were audio recorded with permission of individual respondents. Some scholars contend that interviewees can become “nervous and uncomfortable around tape recorders” (Hermanowicz 2002:496), which is why it is important for researchers to help respondents establish similar levels of ease with the presence of an audio recording device. After obtaining consent to tape the interviews and subsequently turning the recorder on, I mindfully placed the audio recorder on the table in front of us, but out of the direct vision of the respondent. It appeared that many of the interviewees quickly forgot about the presence of the recording device, and were comfortable disclosing their personal hookup experiences (Hermanowicz 2002:496).

Past studies have demonstrated that the appearance of an interviewer can alter the nature of responses elicited from an interviewee (Bateman and Mawby 2004; Berg 2009; Skelly 1954). Specifically, the interviewer's clothing, makeup, and hairstyle can provide non-verbal "information used by an interviewee to confirm or deny expectations about what an interviewer ought to be like" (Berg 2009:131). My physical attributes – specifically, as a young blonde female – could be perceived as potentially undermining a traditional sense of authority. In order to attempt to counter-act these stereotypical perceptions while in professional settings, I often wear my hair up, and dress in blazers, pants, and dress shirts.

For the purposes of these interview encounters however, my physical attributes proved to be beneficial, as Berg (2009) notes the importance of possessing similar characteristics and experiences to that of your subjects during the interview process. During my interview with Ariel, she conveyed – although accidentally – that I possess comparable physical characteristics to many of her classmates:

Kathleen is an absolutely gorgeous girl and is just amazing, but she is a bigger girl. And especially, ugh, *especially* in the Eastern community that's not necessarily the easiest thing to be. You know, if you're not [provides physical description of a 'typical' Eastern girl] – *no offense!* [laughs] Um, I was like, oh my gosh what am I saying [to you]?...but to be anything other than that is really hard.

As clothes can provide reflexive insight into "the identities, values, moods, and attitudes of the person in-communication" (Stone 1962:101), I also made a concerted effort to dress casually and 'student-like' when conducting interviews. I would wear leggings or jeans with a casual cotton top, often with a pair of tall boots and an oversized gold watch in order to parallel the appearance of many of the female undergraduates at this university. Additionally, if a student indicated that she was a sociology major, I would

inform her I was a very recent sociology graduate “in order to establish some sense of common ground” (Berg 2009:130).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to each interview respondents were provided with a letter of information<sup>8</sup> to ensure informed consent. The letter of information: (1) included a general description regarding the nature of the study, (2) included wording intended to reassure the respondent of the confidential character of the study, and (3) outlined that there were no known risks associated with the project. The letter of information also informed respondents that all participation was voluntary. Although the students volunteered for this study, the letter of information reinforced the voluntary nature of the respondents’ cooperation. More specifically, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and that they were not required to answer any questions they did not wish to address. I spoke with each respondent about the letter of information and its contents while highlighting both the informed and voluntary aspects of their participation, and also asked that the interviewees take some time to review the letter on their own.

Attached to the letter of information was a consent form.<sup>9</sup> After reading the letter of information and posing any questions they might have had, interviewees were asked to sign the consent form and thereby formalize their participation. Respondents were asked to provide two separate signatures; one indicating their free and informed consent, and another allowing their interview to be audio recorded. All 30 participants subsequently volunteered both signatures.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix C.



Students were not offered remuneration in exchange for their participation in the study. Providing monetary incentives was avoided due to the common assumption that doing so may compromise the voluntary nature of a subject's participation (Head 2009; Tri-Council Policy Statement 2010). Although I was initially concerned that students would not want to participate without the offer of remuneration, I received an overwhelming response to my recruitment efforts. Prior to each interview and immediately following, I was sure to verbally thank each respondent for graciously donating their time. In response to my thanks, some subjects indicated that they had signed up for the project because they "felt bad" for me. Chloe, who is involved with student council, reported that she was participating because she understands "how hard it is to get people to sign up for things". Other interviewees indicated that they signed up because they found my research topic exciting, and were searching for ways to "make sociology interesting". Jordan, who was a former student, participated as an act of reciprocity. Jordan wrote to me and said:

I am interesting in (sic) helping you out for the interviews you are having to conduct...Not sure if you remember me...but you were an amazing TA and really took time to send in depth emails and give advice when I had questions regarding the assignments.

Interviewees had a number of divergent reasons for participating in the current study, however students did not sign up due to the promise of financial gain, and all ensuing interviews were voluntary in nature.

Several measures were taken in order to protect the privacy of interview respondents. Subjects were assured both formally in the letter of information and verbally at the time of the interview that any record of their participation and all subsequent interview materials would remain strictly confidential. In order to ensure confidentiality,

tape recordings, field notes, and participant consent forms were locked in a securely stored filing cabinet, to which only my supervisor and I have access.

In addition, each student was assigned a pseudonym for the purposes of transcription and all future presentations and publications. Systematically changing the actual name of a subject to a pseudonym or a case number is a common research practice to assure participant confidentiality (Berg 2012). The decision to assign pseudonyms rather than case numbers or codes was made due to the emotionally charged nature of the subjects' narratives. An arbitrary number or code could not sufficiently convey the humanistic qualities of each participant's account of their experiences. The names of hookup partners, friends, roommates, and family members were also changed to protect not only the identities of participants, but also the identities of those discussed by participants. Some interviewees identified as members of a club or sports teams on campus, or indicated that their friends or hookup partners are members of a club or sports team; the names of these clubs and teams were also changed to further protect participant privacy. Lastly, in order to maintain absolute confidentiality, the name of the university where this research took place was changed to "Eastern University".

The Department of Sociology's Research Ethics Board (REB) and the university's General Research Ethics Board (GREB) approved the study design, the interview recruitment techniques, and all proposed interview questions.<sup>10</sup> Although the inherently personal and sexual nature of hooking up might imply a tedious ethical process, this study was approved with relative ease. A full-board ethical review was avoided by indicating that students would not be asked questions about their own sexual practices

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A.

unless interviewees first disclosed this information. For example, participants were not asked to comment on whether or not they had ever contracted an STI; however, once an interviewee indicated that they had contracted an STI, dialogue regarding this experience ensued.

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

All 30 interviews took place within the Department of Sociology which is located in an on-campus building. The decision to conduct the interviews in the Department of Sociology rather than elsewhere on campus was made purely on the basis of ease of accessibility. After recruiting participants by various means, many sociology undergraduate and graduate students became aware that I was seeking interviewees for this study. Subsequently, if I were seen walking through the hallways with a student, there were times when peers, colleagues or other students would casually ask me if I had just completed an interview. Although these inquiries were seemingly made for the purpose of encouragement and support of my research, this dialogue unintentionally placed me in an ethical quandary, as I was essentially being asked to breach my respondents' confidentiality.

In order to best address these inquiries I relied upon a number of strategies. First, it is important to note that at the time of the interviews I was also employed as a teaching assistant, and it was not uncommon for me to meet with students to discuss issues related to their courses. Consequentially, if I were seen with an interviewee and later asked if I had just conducted an interview, I would often reply by indicating that the subject was actually a student of mine, and not a participant in my research project. Second, for the duration of an interview I would purposefully post a sign outside of the room which read:

“exam in progress: do not disturb”. This was done to evade questions regarding whether or not the student I was with was a research participant, as others were hopefully under the impression that I was proctoring an examination. As a last resort, I had to engage in frank conversations with certain individuals regarding participant confidentiality, and it was necessary to politely inform them that I could not discuss such matters without breaching the ethics of my study. In hindsight, the decision to hold interviews in the Department of Sociology – where colleagues, peers, and students often congregate – was ethically problematic. For future research projects I would conduct interviews in a variety of different buildings in order to avoid these problematic interchanges.

As previously mentioned, I was employed as a teaching assistant during the time that I recruited and held interviews for the current study. Although I did not purposefully recruit participants from the class that I was hired to assist with, some of my students had acquired knowledge about my research through their peers and through other classes. Two of my own students at the time – whose work I was responsible for grading – had contacted me and indicated that they were interested in participating in my research. Although I was, and still am, very appreciative that my students would want to help me, I decided that it would be inappropriate to interview them due to the potential conflict of interest (Tri-Council Policy Statement 2010). The Tri-Council Policy Statement notes that:

Undue influence and manipulation may arise when prospective participants are recruited by individuals in a position of authority. The influence of power relationships (e.g., ...teachers and students...) on the voluntariness of consent should be judged...since the individuals being recruited may feel constrained to follow the wishes of those who have some form of control over them (2010:28).

Due to the nature of our student-teacher relationship, it is possible that my students may have felt an inability to refuse to answer questions or to terminate an interview once it had already begun, thus inhibiting their ability to voluntarily consent to participate. Additionally, I was concerned that if a student of mine were to participate, she might have felt some entitlement to leniency or reciprocity with regards to the way in which I graded her assignments and examinations. I firmly believe that the purposeful exclusion of my current students from the study was the most logically sound decision in order to avoid ethical complications as a result of my position of authority.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided a thorough explication of the methodological strategies employed in this research project. Specifically, I have detailed the use of qualitative interviews, the recruitment techniques, the sample, the data analyses, the interview environment, and how ethical dilemmas were negotiated during the research process. In the following chapter I discuss the findings and results of the study, noting the risks experienced by participants as a result of their hookup behaviours, along with the five primary techniques employed by respondents to negate the potential risks of hooking up, so as to facilitate their participation in this culture.

## Chapter 4

### Findings and Analysis

This chapter describes how female university students ascribe meaning to the cultural norms and beliefs characteristic of the hookup culture. Through personal narratives and understandings of peer behaviour, respondents discuss the risky nature of female participation in this courtship script. Accordingly, participants articulate techniques intended to neutralize the negative aspects of their hookup experiences, and in doing so, it is argued that they are able to facilitate their participation in this culture. Specifically, this chapter will detail the ways in which participants define the term *hooking up*. Afterward, an effort will be made to outline the ‘hookup scene’ on campus. After a discussion of these preliminary matters, I will consider the risks which women associate with hooking up behaviours, and outline the five primary techniques they employ to negate these risks and thereby facilitate participation in the hookup culture.

#### **Defining Hooking up**

##### *Spectrum of Sexual Activities*

Consistent with the relevant scholarly literatures, data from the current study suggest that the term *hooking up* is ambiguous as it lacks an agreed-upon definition (Bogle 2007, 2008a; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001). Participants reported that *hooking up* can be used to refer to varying sexual practices and contexts, and can infer a multiplicity of meanings by its user. Despite the lack of consensus regarding a universal use of the term, all participants conveyed a general understanding that to “hook up” is to engage in some degree of sexual intimacy.

A few participants indicated that *hooking up* was synonymous with kissing or making out with a partner. For example, when asked how they define *hooking up*, Chantel and Shannon respectively respond: “I would just assume it was making out with someone” and “My sense of hooking up is like, you make out with someone and that’s it”. Conversely, some interviewees suggested that hooking up is merely another term for sexual intercourse. Justine states that when she and her friends utilize the term *hooking up*, they are exclusively referring to “having sex”. Similarly, Michelle notes that:

Hooking up can mean a lot of things to different people. I generally consider hooking up to be sex [pause] if not sex, then close to... So making out doesn’t qualify hooking up for me. There’s a word for that and it’s ‘making out’ [laughs].

Most participants however, identified the ambiguous nature of the term and indicated that *hooking up* can refer to a wider spectrum of sexual acts ranging from making out to with a partner, to engaging in sexual intercourse. Here, Emma describes the variance in her understanding of *hooking up*:

Um [pause] well I know that a lot of people use it differently. A lot of people either mean just like making out at the bar, or bringing the person home and having sex or whatever. But I think it can kind of encompass all of that. Just a very casual relationship, from like the extent of making out to having sex. But I think it just means a very casual relationship of like, basically just physical encounters [laughs].

Ariel explains her thought process when the term ‘hooking up’ is used:

I mean... if someone is like ‘oh I hooked up with this guy last night’ I imagine something sexual in nature happened. Whether they had sex or they were just kind of fooling around and making out, that’s the sense I get from it... I think yah, if one of my friends was like ‘oh I hooked up with this guy last night’ I’d be like ‘did you sleep with him or did you just fool around?’ [laughs]. Define it for me – tell me exactly what happened. But yah, the general sense is that something sexual happened.

A particularly thoughtful student, Kylie, notes that:

It's a very complicated term because I think people interpret it in different ways, and they use it in different ways too. I think when somebody is referring to hooking up it's very important to recognize that it might not be what you're assuming. Or it possibly is, because once it becomes a construct then people have an image of what that means. And even if it does have a similar kind of connotation for everybody, the way that it's expressed and practiced might be different too. So it's one of those interpretable ideas... I mean, assuming that hooking up means having some sort of sexual encounter, which is I guess the generally assumed implication. But again, what does that mean? This is something I have definitely thought about... you can be hooking up and it can characterize a whole number of relationship experiences. That's basically what it boils down to... Let's just assume it encompasses a few kinds of sexual things and we can agree on that.

Evidently, many female students recognize that *hooking up* can vaguely characterize a number of intimate experiences, and they accordingly include a range of physical and sexual encounters in their interpretations of what it means to *hook up* with someone.

#### *Requirement of Clarification*

Many participants reported that because of the ambiguity of the term, some additional clarification might be required when others speak of their hooking up experiences. Specifically, respondents indicated that when a friend reports a hookup experience some interpretation is necessary to determine the degree of sexual intimacy which took place. For example, Leslie explains that: "if someone was like 'oh I hooked up with him', you have to be like 'so what did you do?' [laughs]. You'd have to define it further." Likewise, the necessity of further inquiry when peers describe personal hookup scenarios is elucidated during an exchange with Anne:

...But [hooking up] is a very confusing term and like, when my friends use it I'm like 'what do you mean by a hookup? Do you want to explain?' because they don't always want to give details [laughs].

SHANLEA GORDON (SG): Some of your friends might say 'oh I hooked up with this guy' because they don't want to give the details?



ANNE: Yah. And it's like, ok, well *where* did you hook up with him? And then you kind of have to figure out the context of the situation, and then you kind of figure out what they did and didn't do.

Many interviewees ultimately acknowledged that *hooking up* can refer to a number of sexual acts, and accordingly, its meaning cannot be assumed when interacting with peers.

### *No Strings Attached*

According to the participants, it is implicit in the notion of *hooking up* that there are no obligations of future relations, relationships, or even communications once the sexual exchange has taken place. In other words, hookups are inherently casual sexual encounters. This however is not to say that future hookups or commitment are not *desired* by one or both hookup partners; merely that hookup partners – particularly women – must be cautious post-hookup not to appear as though they have expectations or hopes for future relations. To do so is to risk being portrayed as “clingy”. For example, Emma stresses that a hookup is a “very casual relationship”. Similarly, Lorna explains that a hookup entails:

...like, just doing [pause] you don't have a relationship with this person. Like, you might be acquaintances, but you just do sexual activities and that's it. There's no follow up to it, or maybe there are more sexual encounters. But there's no personal relationship where you get to know somebody with hooking up.

Despite the implicit notion that a hookup is a casual ‘no-strings-attached’ encounter,

Caitlin explains some of the complications involved in the negotiation of expectations of a hookup partner:

...it just gets so complicated with the whole like, how do you know the boundaries of it? ...like you're not going to go out of your way to be like ‘so are you hooking up with other people?’ There's that like, where do you draw the line between how attached you can and cannot get to the person? So I feel like I know for me personally, that I'm really guarded in that sense. Even though in my head I

might be like ‘oh that was really fun! I hope that I see them again!’ I try not to think of it or like hope for it in the long run. I just think we’re at such an age that I don’t think that girls know at all what guys are thinking. And maybe they’re thinking they just want to hook up with random girls. And so it’s hard to see it in the long run as working out if you don’t know them on a personal level enough, I guess.

SG: So you mentioned that you wouldn’t ask ‘oh are you seeing other people?’ Why would you maybe be hesitant to ask that?

CAITLIN: I feel like it’s kind of like [pause] clingy, I guess is the right word... I think it’s also kind of weird looking at past generations where like if you were with somebody you’re kind of sharing an intimate moment. Like it is weird to just not talk to them again or not see them again. But at the same time the idea of like, ‘so who are you seeing? Who are you talking to?’ seems very invasive I guess. Because you would hope that they’re not seeing anybody else, but there’s a chance they are. And if you don’t know them well enough then there’s no way you can know whether or not they’re doing that.

Likewise, Chloe explains her hesitation to initiate conversation with a partner post-hookup:

I feel like the guy does have more control because [pause] as a girl I feel like we’re more intimidated to take things seriously because we’re all like ‘oh well the guy came just for a hookup, I’m not going to be one of those clingy girls who wants to talk to them after...’ you’re kinda more hesitant to do that... But I think if the guy sparks conversation it’s easier to get to know them, as bad as it sounds.

Although it is widely understood that there are no obligations placed on partners post-hookup, participants often expressed a desire for future communications and additional hookups or relations, and were expected to appropriately “manage” these thoughts in order to conform to the implicitly casual definition of a hookup.

### *Evolving Definition*

After defining *hooking up*, some participants noted that this definition had evolved throughout their years at university. Specifically, when respondents were younger *hooking up* might have included acts such as making out or kissing, however

over time the term gradually implied that more advanced sexual activities had taken place. Jordan explains:

I would define hooking up as having sex. *Now*. Before I might have thought it's just making out, but I think my definition of hooking up has changed throughout the years. But yah, I would just say that it's a [pause] casual sexual relationship with someone.

SG: So now, hooking up means sex?

JORDAN: Yah. Or at least like, oral sex. Or intercourse [laughs].

Likewise, Cheryl and Denise respectively note how their conceptualizations of *hooking up* have changed:

Years ago I would have said [hooking up meant] anything, like kissing someone counts. But now it's more going farther than that. Hooking up at a bar is like kissing I guess but anywhere else it's usually just sex. That's how I look at it.

In first year I'd say it'd probably just be making out. And in second year it's probably split between making out and sometimes going back and doing more but not always meaning sex, and a lot of the time not meaning sex. And then in third and fourth year...if they're coming home, then they're coming home to have sex.

Perhaps contributing to the ambiguity surrounding the term, many women reported that their definition of *hooking up* advanced throughout their university careers so as to eventually exclude more innocuous sexual practices like kissing or fondling, and to refer more exclusively to oral sex and sexual intercourse.

## **The Campus Hookup Scene**

### *Hooking Up as the Dominant Courtship Script*

Consistent with the relevant literatures, participants reported that hooking up is the dominant courtship script on campus (Bogle 2008a; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Owen et al. 2010; Paul and Hayes 2002). The majority of respondents outlined that meeting someone at a party or bar and subsequently hooking up

with them was the primary mode to forming intimate heterosexual relationships with other university students. Leslie – a beautiful girl with long blonde hair – reported that she had not been asked on a date while in university. When I then asked her how she meets male students in order to form romantic connections, she replies:

Umm.. [laughs]... I don't know if I'm a good example [for your study]. It's just like, all my friends and I have found that you'll like meet someone at a party or at the bar or whatever... obviously like a bit drunk, and then you'll either, you may exchange numbers, and they might like...[pause]. Ok, usually it's like if you're into them you'll end up kind of hooking up with them, and then you may not hear from them the next day... That's how we [my friends and I] find the situation [laughs]. But it's not like... unless it's like, [pause] no, I don't even know. I've never known anyone who has met someone just like through friends, and they're like 'I really like you, let's go out' [laughs]... No. Unless they're older. If the guys are older they'll [ask you out], but not in college. Not in university.

While hooking up is the most typical method for Leslie and her girlfriends to meet and form romantic relations with other Eastern students, it does not guarantee that they will “hear from” the partner post-hookup. It is noteworthy that she does not know of anyone at Eastern who began dating after meeting through more traditional means; in fact, Leslie finds humour in this notion. Similar to Leslie, Chloe also conceptualizes hooking up as the dominant courtship script on campus, and knows of few people who have formed relationships otherwise:

...it's more common to hook up first. We're not really in a setting where we can meet people and like have conversations. The only time we do that is when we go out to the club or go to a kegger. It's really rare, like, I think I know maybe *one* friend who's met someone through a [school organized] club so they got to know each other first. But usually it's 'I met him at a kegger or I met him through a friend when we were all at the bar' and then they hooked up.

Once more, Anne – who had a boyfriend at the time of our interview – explains how the majority of Eastern students form romantic relationships “backwards”:

When people move away from home and they live on campus, I feel like traditional dating is very scarce. Like, I have one friend where she was hooking

up with this guy for a while, and then they just stopped because he wasn't into a relationship and that's what she wanted. And so she kinda got hurt. But then this year they had a random hookup again...she slept over at his house and everything *then* [they started dating]. So I feel like to me, it's kinda way backwards. When you're at school I feel like a lot of rules are thrown out the window, and like, a lot of people I know bring guys home or bring girls home, and then things start from there... I feel like if I wasn't dating my boyfriend and I was here too, like, I don't think I'd be dating people... it wouldn't be traditional dating. You just all of a sudden go from hooking up with someone to in a relationship.

There was a collective understanding from all participants that hooking up is the primary mode by which men and women get together romantically in university. However, it was dually expressed that a typical hookup would not culminate in a monogamous long-term relationship.

Challenging the status quo, one respondent initially reported that the most promising way to form romantic relations with male students was to get involved in extra-curricular activities. However upon further probing, she quickly recanted:

SG: Would you say that you or your friends have been asked on a fair amount of dates at Eastern?

KYLIE: Oh no absolutely not [laughs]... I think that guys rarely ask girls on dates.

SG: So if that's not really happening anymore, how do girls [at Eastern] meet guys?

KYLIE: Oh it's very hard [laughs]. It's *very* very hard. You really have to put in effort to put yourself out there to meet people... my most successful experience with meeting guys, and this did not necessarily translate into anything that resembled dating, but it's just participating in extracurricular activities. As long as you're involved with something you will start meeting people who are doing the same kinds of things. Sometimes it doesn't really go much beyond acquaintanceship or friendship, but that's the way to meet people around here.

SG: Oh that's interesting. Do you know of anyone who has met a guy through extracurriculars at Eastern, and then they've wound up being boyfriend/girlfriend?

KYLIE: Um [pause] hmm. The stories that I hear are really much more random than that. For example, one of my close friends who has been dating her boyfriend

for three years...they met on the bus ride home during Thanksgiving or one of those major holidays. And he actually goes to [a nearby college], so that's not even an Eastern dating experience. But they met on the train, and apparently they connected, so that was a really special story that I remember. Um [pause]...I would say that most of the encounters that are really substantial relationships that have lasted, happened in totally spontaneous situations. There's no sort of organized channel to meet people... so [to meet guys] you start doing a lot of extracurriculars, but a lot of times it's sort of to advance your own ambitions anyways. You want to do as many things as possible, you want to get involved. But sometimes that's not necessarily the best way to meet people either. And then you have classes, and that's sort of hit or miss whether you meet people or not. [pause] It's interesting now that you're asking me to think back about my friends that are in couples...

Although Kylie originally described a culture at Eastern whereby relationships between men and women are predominantly facilitated by way of extracurricular activities, upon further analysis of personal and peer dating experiences, she came to the conclusion that this is not the case. Kylie does not participate in the hookup culture for moral reasons, and later during our interview explained that likely as a result of her choice to opt-out of this culture, she has had very few sexual or romantic interactions while at Eastern.

### *Dating Culture is Dead*

As hooking up appears to be the dominant courtship script in university, participants made it known that they are either infrequently, or have never been asked out on a date by an individual with whom they had not previously hooked up. Interestingly, many respondents conceptualized a spontaneous invitation for a date as “strange” or “weird”, and others understood it as a particularly extravagant romantic gesture. Claire explains:

I remember in first year, I don't think I was *ever* asked on a date. People are just like ‘oh I'll see you at the party’ or like ‘let's go to the party together’ or ‘let's meet up at a predrink’ and I'm like ‘that is *so* sweet! I would love to!’ And then like, you think about it and you're like – that is not a date really. I got asked out once in second year to go on a *date* date, and I was so like weirded out. I was like ‘oh my god! What a crazy grand gesture! This guy is insane’...It felt like such a

grand gesture just in comparison to everyone else. And it stood in my mind as being like the most romantic thing ever, but in reality, it was just someone asking you on a date.

Stacey expressed that being asked out on a date is rather atypical at Eastern, and if the invitation were to be extended while sober, it would be especially “weird”:

Even if they meet and don’t hookup, they meet at a party or something like that, I think it’s less awkward. I almost think it would be weird if you were in a classroom and someone comes up to you and asked you out. I think a lot of people would see that as weird, even though it’s not. But I think people would see that as weird if someone did just out of the blue...not in a drunk situation... like ‘oh what was that?’ or ‘that was strange!’ I can picture people saying that. Whereas if someone just starts making out drunk you’re just like ‘ok cool’. Which doesn’t make any sense. But I can picture us being like ‘oh that was strange – where did he come from?’

Participants collectively expressed that males and females do not initiate romantic relationships in university by way of dating invitations. These responses are consistent with prior research indicating that dating culture is ‘dead’ in the contemporary university context, and although the term *dating* is still employed, it is used only to describe couples that have already established serious romantic relationships through other means<sup>11</sup> (Bogle 2007; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Reid et al. 2011). In other words, unless both parties had previously engaged in sexual exchanges with one another, being asked to “go out” on a formal date appears to be a particularly uncommon occurrence at Eastern.

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<sup>11</sup> With reference to how women form serious romantic relationships while in university, three primary themes emerged from the data. First, some women entered university with a previously established relationship from high school. These relationships were subsequently carried through to their university careers. Second, many women noted that upon returning to their hometowns for the summer or for holidays, serious relationships were then fostered with individuals from “back home”. Lastly, participants indicated that romantic relationships were initiated by way of hooking up with another university student. This initial hookup would then result in multiple hookups, escalating to a “seeing each other” or “dealing” phase, which infers some degree of commitment as hookups become more consistent, but partners are not necessarily sexually exclusive. In time, one hookup partner eventually initiates “the talk”, and if well received, this conversation formally transitions partners into a committed monogamous relationship. The term *dating* is then employed to refer to boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, which are most commonly formed through one of the three aforementioned approaches.

### *Presence of Alcohol*

Consistent with past research, participants consistently reported that the consumption of alcohol prior to a hookup is a necessary component of these sexual exchanges (Bogle 2008a; Fielder and Carey 2010a; Lewis et al. 2011; Vander Ven 2011). Alcohol acts as a “social lubricant” allowing students to lower their inhibitions, fostering a state of confidence and impulsiveness that is most conducive for hooking up (Bogle 2008a). Kathleen explains:

Alcohol for sure has a lot to do with [hooking up]. I’ve never really heard of anyone going out to the bars sober and just randomly making out with someone. Like, it’s always like, liquid courage! Liquid confidence. It’s for sure totally different. If anyone were to ever go to [the bar] sober, things would not play out the same way [laughs].

Likewise, Leslie stresses the importance of being under the influence of alcohol during a hookup:

I don’t think that most people will go sober to a bar, and go home with a stranger and bang them without, just for no reason. You do that if you’re intoxicated in some form.

Serena explains that being under the influence of alcohol is integral to her definition of what it means to *hook up* with someone:

For some people I find they think that hooking up is having sex with the guy. But I think it’s kind of just anything. Like making out with him...if I said ‘I hooked up with somebody’ I would think anything really. It’s usually when you’re drunk though that it happens [laughs] ...like if you were on like a date with a guy, and you kissed him or something I think you would use different terms for that. Like a sober date is not hooking up. Does that make sense?

All participants reported similar sentiments regarding the intrinsic role alcohol plays in the hookup culture.



### *Acquaintance versus Stranger*

Many participants distinguished between hookups involving acquaintances and those with strangers. In the former case, hookup partners are already acquainted with one another, and an unplanned sexual encounter emerges out of a night of drinking.

Acquaintances might also purposefully plan to “meet up” at a party or a bar with the hopes that a hookup will transpire. At other times, hookup partners are strangers who meet for the first time at a party or bar, and subsequently decide to “go home” together and hook up. To illustrate, Jordan explains her hookup with an acquaintance:

Like I have hooked up with people but usually it’s people that I’ve known from before...like one example – you can’t tell anybody [laughs] – well my brother had a bunch of friends up to our cottage in the summer a few summers ago... He had pretty much that same group of friends up [at the cottage] for the second year in a row, so I started talking to this one guy. And then at Eastern, I went to [the bar] and I saw him and we started dancing with each other and then I went back with him. I didn’t have sex with him, but I mean, I did other things.

Jordan was previously acquainted with her brother’s friend, and it was by chance that they encountered one another on the night that they hooked up. Claire experienced a similar hookup scenario with an acquaintance, however they had purposefully planned to meet at a party. She explains:

It was the Christmas break, and then when I came back he didn’t ask me on a date he was just like ‘just meet me at this party’. And I was like ‘ok’. I didn’t really think anything of it. But I met him at this party and got super drunk and don’t remember anything, I just woke up at his house... And then like the next night he asked me to go out and meet him at a bar again, and then the same thing happened.

Ariel however, describes a different hookup situation in which her friend had not previously met her hookup partner:

She likes sex [laughs]... and she’s just very comfortable with herself. And yah, it’s amazing to watch her. We go to the bar and sometimes within *ten* minutes of being there’s she’s like ‘yah we’re going to head out now’. And I’m like looking

like, 'what? Where did you even meet this guy?' [laughs]. And I worry about her in a sense 'cause it's like, you don't know these people, and for all you know...

Notably, the majority of participants indicated that hooking up with an acquaintance is more socially desirable than hooking up with a stranger. Specifically, when subjects identified themselves as participants in the hookup culture many of them felt the need to quickly specify that they, as Chloe puts it: "don't really hook up with *random* people".

### *Dancing at The Bar*

When asked to describe a typical hookup scenario at Eastern, several participants spoke about dancing or "grinding" at a bar. Specifically, it was often suggested that hookup partners first connect on a dance floor, begin to make out there, and perhaps eventually leave the bar to engage in further sexual activities at one of their homes. Some participants noted that this often takes place with very little conversation. Sexualized dancing appears to be a way to signal sexual interest to a dancing partner. Marianna explains:

It's a way of showing that you're interested. If you're dancing with a guy, clearly there's some interest. Like, even if it's just like 'oh this guy is hot'... So I feel like for males, maybe if they're dancing with a girl it's kind of like a signal for them that the girl's already, like, maybe not *completely* interested, but already finds them attractive enough to dance with. So I guess [pause] dancing would facilitate later hookups.

Ariel similarly states:

Like there's people who come up and try to kind of talk to you while you're dancing, or like offer to buy you a drink or whatever. But then there are the people that literally just want to dance and don't even want to have a conversation. And you see the people who start dancing and like two seconds later they're like making out with other, and like you didn't even say a word to each other!... Like, my housemates have drunkenly done it before. Like all of a sudden I'll be like 'Katherin who was that?' she's like 'yah I don't know! We just started kissing'. And I'm like – really? [laughs]. I mean I guess I probably did it once or twice in second year too, but like yah. I think everyone, well maybe not *everyone* ends up making out but, but I've never seen people who don't end up grinding on

the dance floor in some form or another. When you're at a club I just feel like that's the atmosphere.

Although hookups are often initiated with a dance, participants also reported that they would frequently go to a bar and plan nothing more than a fun evening of dancing with their girlfriends. As a result, many women noted their dissatisfaction regarding the regularity with which they experienced unsolicited or even aggressive touching while on a dance floor. Participants indicated that men do not always ask them if they would like to dance, but rather approach them from behind and initiate a kind of dancing known as “grinding” which involves the man rubbing his genitals against the female’s buttocks without prior consent. Kelly explains that men often approach her on the dance floor:

Especially when I’m just with one of my roommates. ’Cause like sometimes that’s just the way it works out. I find they tend to target you when you're just two girls, or like one girl – ‘where are my friends?’ [laughs]. Definitely. I never have guys come up and like ‘oh like can I dance with you?’ it’s always just like ‘*rawr* I’m just going to grab you and like rub up against you’ ... if they’re super aggressive then it’s like, ‘ahhh go away’.

Likewise, Chloe has similar experiences when dancing:

These guys will just come up and they’ll grab you like you're just there for them, and they have this option to choose whoever they want. And it’s like ‘no? Excuse me? I’m with a bunch of girls, you can’t -’. I would appreciate maybe if you tapped me on the shoulder and be like ‘would you like to dance?’ But they just grab you from the back, and I don’t, I’m not very good with that [laughs]. So I don’t like it too much. But yah, that’s another thing too that we found being like, being in relationships last year. We avoided the clubs specifically because there was no respect for that. Like, they wouldn’t come up and approach you and talk to you. They would just assume you were at the club to dance and pick up guys so they just come and grab you.

Stacey reports that her friends often use dancing to find a hookup partner while at a bar.

However, she also likens women’s experiences on a dance floor to sexual assault:

STACEY: I have two friends in particular who... their ultimate goal when they go to [the bar] is to bring someone home. Like they’ll say that before we go out [laughs]. Like ‘I want to bring home a boy tonight’. So generally we go in and

people are dancing, and the goal would be to get them dancing with someone and then we go drink. So yah it's crazy. The second you're on the dance floor, you're just available apparently because people just come up and take hold of everything [laughs].

SG: People will come up to you while you're dancing?

STACEY: Yah like if I'm dancing with my friends people will just come up and grab you and start dancing with you. And you're like 'alright'...then there's always this expectation that they're going to turn you around and then you're going to start making out with them. And then oh – and then you're probably going to go home with them. Which people do [laughs] but it's a crazy phenomenon. Did you see that sexual assault thing? They were showing that there were sexual assaults between [street name] and [street name]. I've just seen it on Facebook. The police put up that there's some guy going around like, touching girls. And it made me think of [the bar] because I was like, that's so funny. 'Cause in [the bar] you walk in there and you're free ground...apparently you can be touched anywhere. But it's not fine [outside of the bar].

In one sense, the dance floor is a contested terrain; some individuals utilize the dance floor as a way to signal their sexual availability and desire to hook up, while others utilize the dance floor merely to dance with friends. What is clear however, is that regardless of the woman's intention, when she steps onto the dance floor she can expect to be sexually "targeted" and "touched anywhere".

### **Risks of Hooking Up**

Previous chapters have examined the various risks that women potentially face as a result of their involvement in the hookup culture. Accordingly, findings from the current study confirm the presence of these risks in the hookup scene at Eastern. All participants indicated that either they themselves, or a close friend had experienced one or more substantial risks as a direct result of hookup behaviours. These risks include: sexual dissatisfaction, a devalued social reputation, failed relationship expectations, emotional and mental health issues, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies and pregnancy scares, and sexual assault. Most notably however, the

subjects' experiences with the aforementioned risks confirm that female students are aware of the potential negative consequences associated with participation in the hookup culture.

### *Sexual Dissatisfaction*

The literature suggests that women are not likely to be sexually satisfied in the context of a hookup, and that sexual satisfaction is much more likely to be achieved while in a committed romantic relationship (Armstrong et al. 2012; Backstrom et al. 2012; England 2011). One possible reason for women's lack of pleasure during a hookup is the male tendency to disregard their hookup partner's sexual satisfaction more generally. This lack of regard for female pleasure in the context of a hookup is manifested most obviously in the lack of reciprocity of oral sex (Backstrom et al. 2012). In other words, women give, but often do not receive oral sex when with a hookup partner. Mariana's experiences support this notion:

I think the typical hookup, right now is mostly like, engaging in making out, and like fellatio, and like, *mostly* just the *male* [pause]. I feel like females give into that ...more so like, male oral sex is more accepted as a hookup. You know 'oh yah, I gave him head, or whatever, and then I went home'. I think that's the typical, in my opinion, that's what most girls do.

SG: So it's more *guys* getting oral sex?

MARIANA: Yah.

SG: Why do you think that might be?

MARIANA: Um, I feel like...it's more normalized in a way. It's more normal for a girl to engage in like oral sex with a guy, than to have a guy give a girl oral sex. It's just, it seems more [pause] private in a sense. So, that's why I think. It's just more accepted...I feel like in a relationship it is more both ways.

Although Mariana cannot precisely articulate *why* fellatio is "more normal" and "accepted" in the context of a hookup or why cunnilingus is "private", her experiences

illustrate that although the former is a “normal” part of the hookup, the latter is not. In contrast, Mariana suggests reciprocal oral sexual exchanges are commonplace in a committed monogamous relationship.

My conversation with Kelly was particularly noteworthy, as the sexual experience from one of her hookups was so dissatisfying that she opted-out of the hookup culture for an extended period of time. Kelly explains:

I was dating this guy from high school, it was my first boyfriend, in grade 11. And then we were still dating in first year. Probably middle of the year, and it was rough... So yah we broke up and then we were like, ‘oh but we still like each other’. But like, we were broken up and I was just like, I’ve never been with anybody else - I want to try it. And I knew this guy on my floor really liked me and we were friends. So we started hooking up and like having sex. And it was ok. Then like, I started talking to my first boyfriend again [laughs] and we tried to make it work again, but like, it didn’t obviously ... So then that like blew up around exam time... So then that was done. And then my friend’s friend from high school was a floor below us, and I knew him as well. This was probably [pause] a month after [my relationship] blew up, I hooked up with him and it was *really* bad. It just deterred me from random guys. Like, he wasn’t really that random because I knew him...but yah. That was a really bad experience, and I was just like – never again [laughs]. Yah. Then I just started serial dating I guess...

SG: So you mentioned with the second guy it was really bad – what do you mean?

KELLY: Yah [laughs] the sex. My first boyfriend was really attractive and like fit, and I was never with a guy that [pause] *wasn’t*. Like, it’s not like he was disgustingly fat [laughs]...he was just like, he had a bit of a belly. And he was really drunk, um [pause] so obviously [pause] yah.

SG: Were there erectile dysfunction issues?

KELLY: Yes. Erectile dysfunction issues. Yes. That was like, not that great, and when you’re used to relationship sex, versus – you’re really sweaty and you don’t know what you’re doing, and this is awful. So yah. It didn’t last very long [laughs]. I was like ‘please leave my room’ [laughs] honestly I was really shy and quiet at the time so I was just like ‘I want to go to bed now’ ... I’ve known a lot of girls and I’ve told them about my experience, and been like ‘this is probably why I don’t go home with guys’, even if I’m like extremely drunk. I’m always like attuned to like ‘I don’t know, he’s kind of weird’. So I guess I’m really apprehensive when it comes to that now.

Consistent with the hookup literatures, Kelly notes the difference between “relationship sex” and “really sweaty and you don’t know what you’re doing” sex with a hookup partner, evidently suggesting that relationship sex is much more desirable and satisfying (Armstrong et al. 2012; England 2011). Kelly also points out another underlying problem with hooking up which may affect the quality of sex which heterosexual women are experiencing. Specifically, although the consumption of alcohol is requisite prior to hookups, alcohol can simultaneously create physiological problems like erectile dysfunctions. Of course, not all women I spoke with had experiences like Kelly’s, however there was a general sentiment that sexual exchanges become increasingly more pleasurable over time with the same partner, and that relationship sex is most preferable.

#### *Devalued Social Reputations*

Several subjects identified the prevalence of the sexual double standard within the hookup culture, noting that although men are regarded positively for hooking up with many partners, women are often negatively labeled. Jordan explains:

But then it’s such a double standard too, because everyone judges the girl and the guys get high-fived for sleeping with the girl the first night. But usually when I hear about it, I think the guy is kind of slutty too...but a lot of people will applaud guys and say that the girl’s really trashy...I think that kind of sucks. ‘Cause I mean, I do think it’s trashy but I think that the guy should be equally as judged. But they’re never going to be. Like, I don’t think *ever* in society they’re going to be judged the same for doing the same act.

Kathleen explains how men are raised onto a “bro pedestal” for hooking up with multiple sexual partners:

I’ve met some pretty like, bro-ey, douchey guys that are just like ‘oh yah let’s get my kill count up’ [snapping fingers for emphasis]. Like, you know? ‘I’ll hook up with a different girl every weekend’.... I don’t know. The way I look at it is like, ‘oh gross.’ But like... it’s like ‘*oh like you’re the man bro. Look how many girls you had sex with*’ [lowers voice to impersonate]... It’s like ‘*oh yah. Nice one! You hooked up with that girl*’ [lowers voice to impersonate]... I don’t know if it like

raises them onto some bro pedestal? I'm not sure how that works. Like, calm down, you know? You don't make anything special when you just spread the seed wherever [laughs].

There was a collective understanding from interviewees that although men can participate fully in the hookup culture – and are in fact encouraged to do so by their peers – there are limits placed on the extent with which women can do so. Participants noted that it is not socially acceptable for women to hook up with many different partners, especially within a short time span. Justine describes two fellow female students who had experienced tarnished social reputations as a result of their overt participation in the hookup culture:

Yah. I have some friends that have a *very* bad reputation. This one girl, I haven't spoken to her all year, but last year she would go out like four nights a week and every night she would hook up with a different guy. And she definitely has a bad reputation. I mean, people try to avoid her, unless they're like a guy that's just looking to hook up with someone and know that means nothing and know they don't have to treat her well.

SG: So people at Eastern know about this person?

JUSTINE: Yah definitely. Yah.

SG: What are some things that they say about her?

JUSTINE: They just pretty much say she's disgusting. I mean, I don't know really. I have another friend... she's one of my good friends...and [laughs] my friends told me she developed a nickname. People would call her 'the cum dumpster', which is really sad. And I mean, she's one of my very good friends, but I didn't know what to say [when] I heard this...

Justine infers that negative attributes have not been ascribed to the multiple men who hooked up with her first friend and “don't have to treat her well”. Additionally, Justine explains that this friend has established a negative reputation around campus as a result of her many non-relational sexual partners. This friend appears to have experienced social repercussions as a result of her devalued reputation, as “people try to avoid her”; Justine has even disassociated herself from this individual. Justine's second female friend who



regularly participates in the hookup culture has acquired the nickname “the cum dumpster”, which seemingly likens her genitals to a garbage dumpster with in many men are welcome to dispose of their excess semen. Without question, Justine’s second friend has acquired a negative reputation as a result of her seemingly excessive participation in the contemporary courtship script.

In addition to hooking up with multiple partners within a short period of time, women are also at risk of being negatively sexually labeled for hooking up “too aggressively”<sup>12</sup> or for hooking up with two or more individuals in the same friend group.

Ariel explains:

I would say [getting a bad reputation] definitely happens more for girls than for guys...some people you *know* on campus for hooking up a lot. You just know them because of that. And I wouldn’t necessarily say they have a bad reputation for it, but I’d say some of the girls who are maybe more *aggressive* about hooking up, or the girls who are maybe more into it than guys – like I know Kathleen a lot of the times *she’ll* suggest going home. Or she’ll walk into the bar, she’ll find her guy and then they’ll go. Like she has that one purpose in mind, and I think that creates a really bad reputation as compared to a girl where you like buy her drinks all night and you talk to her all night, and *then* you take her home. I think people view them a lot better than they view people who are there for the sole purpose of hooking up and who seem to do it just for the sex, as opposed to the people who got won over with all these drinks and great conversation [laughs].

According to Erica:

I have some friends that sometimes just want to find a guy...like I have a friend, if she wants someone or if she likes someone she’ll *go for it*, and she’ll get it, but it always looks bad on her part. Like ‘oh you’re a slut, you put out’...There’s a completely different perspective of girls and guys. A guy wants to sleep around it’s totally fine, if a girl wants to it’s like ‘what the hell are you doing? You’re a slut’...Like last year I wasn’t with my boyfriend, we kinda took a break, and I had a few little experiences – not like sex – just little things. And like two of the guys I made out with were in the same group of friends. Which didn’t look good, but I didn’t know that at the time – and so like word got around...sometimes they’ll have their comments but I’m like ‘really? Seriously? Most people are 20 now like get over it’ [laughs]... I don’t even know what they said, but it’s hard...

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<sup>12</sup> Referred to in the literatures as hooking up “like men” (Bogle 2008a:103).

Both Ariel and Erica describe friends who are more “aggressive” when finding a hookup partner, and these peers have accordingly experienced the devaluation of their respective social reputations on Eastern’s campus. Erica indicated she has also been a victim of negative sexual labeling at Eastern as a direct result of her participation in the hookup culture. Specifically, for hooking up with two friends within the same peer group Erica was subsequently chastised and given a negative sexual label. Evidently, as a woman at Eastern, there are limits placed on what is considered “acceptable” participation in the dominant courtship script. Consistent with the hookup literature, these results indicate that women who participate in the hookup culture risk social repercussions and the acquirement of a negative sexual reputation (Armstrong et al. 2010; Bogle 2008a; Kreager and Staff 2009; Plante 2006).

#### *Failed Relationship Expectations*

The vast majority of participants in the current study indicated that they are not interested in seeking one-time sexual encounters with strangers. Female students overwhelmingly reported preference for either traditional dating relationships, or at the very least, some form of commitment such as multiple hookups with the same partner. However, many participants noted a common disparity between male and female desires post-hookup. Specifically, although women might form expectations for further relations after a hookup encounter, more often male hookup partners fail to reciprocate. Olivia explains:

Like, guys just are like ‘oh I’ll just get a random girl and hook up with them...and then I won’t see them again’. Whereas girls are like ‘oh that guy was really cute, he was really nice to me. Yah I hooked up with him. Like, maybe he’ll call me later. And he asked for my number, and that’s a good thing. That means that he wants to talk to me’ or whatever. But they really don’t want to I guess.

Confirming Olivia's narratives, Stacey describes a hookup scenario experienced by one of her best friends:

Ok, well my one friend she went home with him and got this guy's number. She was like 'should I text him?' and I was like 'oh I don't know'. Then she said that they woke up in morning sober, had sex again, made out, cuddled for hours, and she's like 'oh I should go' and he's like 'no no, stay a bit!' And then she goes and they walk her out, she texts them and they don't text her back. But it's weird 'cause she said in the morning it always happens where they're sober, and they're acting like they're [interested]. Like she was going to get up and go, and he's like 'oh let's like, whatever again' and then she will. Sometimes they text back but sometimes they don't... she'll like ask them 'are we going to do this again?' and they'll say 'yah!'...and then they don't...I don't know what he said to her, but I know they had sober conversations in the morning and they still don't talk after...she was pretty put off.

Stacey's description of her friend's hookup contains elements common to many other narratives reported by participants. Often following a hookup the female partner is interested in further relations and communications, and the male partner is not. Even when male hookup partners behave as though they are interested in future hookups or perhaps even some form of commitment, hookups are implicitly non-committal and these behaviours do not guarantee future social interaction.

Even when hookup partners are well acquainted with one another, females still risk experiencing failed relationship expectations post-hookup. Caitlin describes one of her personal hookup experiences:

...he lived down the hall from me, and I get along with guys really well so I have a lot of guy best friends...And then, I don't know how, we just are really similar so we started hanging out alone and just talking a lot and texting and messaging and blah blah blah. And then there was this kinda tension, that kind of sexual tension, that there was something more there. And everyone kind of kept pointing it out to like both of us...and then finally I said something to him. And then we kind of agreed like 'ok let's try it, but like we're really close and we don't want to ruin anything'. And then we hooked up and [pause] he just didn't feel it I guess. And so it was kind of like, alright. Whatever, we tried. And then over the summer we were just friends again, and then again this year we hooked up, and then again it was like 'you know what, that wasn't really working'...on an emotional and

personality level I definitely put him on a pedestal. But then on every other facet it's like, hmmm, but we don't work in that way...

SG: Were you hoping that maybe it would turn into something?

CAITLIN: Oh 110%. Definitely. But I'm at a point where I'm like over it now. But it's still kind of tough to every once in a while look at him and like 'ugh, it could of worked'. It just didn't.

SG: So you're over it now, and at the time when you hooked up with him how were you feeling?

CAITLIN: When I hooked up with him I was like ecstatic, I was so happy about it. And then afterwards, 'cause it happened that we went to some party and there was some girl there who he had kind of been infatuated with from afar for a while. And we always joked about her being like 'oh there's that girl!'... and then at this party they finally talked. And apparently he was just crazy about her. And then I kind of realized that it wasn't going in the right direction... I was really upset at that point. 'Cause it was kind of like, I'd built up this whole imaginary situation. Like everything worked out well and blah blah blah, and then it just *didn't*. I was really upset about it.

Caitlin knew her hookup partner prior to their sexual exchanges and the pair engaged in a seemingly mature discussion about not wanting "to ruin" their friendship as a result.

However, after the hookup it appears as though Caitlin and her hookup partner had divergent ideas about the future of their relationship. Caitlin notes that she had "built up this whole imaginary situation" whereby "everything worked out", meanwhile her hookup partner was more interested in pursuing a relationship with someone else, notably, at a party in Caitlin's presence. Caitlin expresses considerable emotional upset as a result of her failed relationship expectations.

In more general terms, following a hookup, female students desire *some* form of commitment or further relations with their hookup partners. While not all respondents are hooking up in search of a serious connection, at the very least, they expect that their hookup partner will contact them afterwards and show interest in engaging in subsequent

hookups. However, respondents note that after a hookup has taken place, their male partners often have desires quite different from their own regarding future relations. As a result, the woman is often upset and disappointed. According to the participants in the current study, experiencing failed relationship expectations is a common occurrence at Eastern and a prominent risk for female participants in the hookup culture.

### *Emotional and Mental Health Complications*

Interviewees reported that hooking up can cause emotional and mental health issues. When participants experienced failed relationship expectations they commonly reported negative emotions or mental anguish. Specifically, participants described experiencing lowered self-esteem, regret, disappointment or sadness. For example, Caitlin notes that after her experience with failed relationship expectations she was “very upset”, and that even a year later she continued to regret that a relationship did not evolve from the hookup. Similarly, Mariana notes her friend’s lowered self-esteem following a hookup:

I have some friends...and I feel like they do get attached, and the next day they're like ‘oh he hasn’t texted me back. Is he going to text me? Should I text him?’ One of my friends has gotten in touch with one of the hookups she had, but he kind of pushes her away. He doesn’t really seem to want anything out of it... It kind of made her feel like she wasn’t pretty enough, in a way. It got her down. I think it did kind of in a way hurt her self-esteem.

Consistent with the scholarly literatures, participants did not typically experience negative emotions *immediately* following a hookup (Owen and Fincham 2011). Rather, these negative emotions emerged once interviewees realized the improbability that they would engage in future relations with said hookup partner.

Although the majority of negative emotional responses to a hookup resulted from failed relationship expectations, some women experienced damaging emotional and

mental health complications irrespective of a desire for future commitment. Ariel explains how her housemate Kathleen experienced regret and subsequently feelings of depression as a result of a hookup:

SG: Has Kathleen ever talked about regretting a hookup before?

ARIEL: Definitely. One guy she hooked up with in first year... a bunch of his girl friends ended up making like, really horrible weight comments about her on his Facebook wall. And they were like, said something about him going home with a beluga whale or something. And that really got to her, because then the guy treated her really horribly too like the next time he saw her. That became a really awkward situation. And certain guys that she brings home who, you know, are maybe like mean in the way that they leave. Like most guys are like 'ok this was fun see you later'. That doesn't bother her. But if they just like get up and leave without saying anything, and literally just act like 'I'm done with you', that will upset her. But yah. She's had some definite bad experiences...

SG: The ones that she has regretted...did she talk to you about these situation at all?

ARIEL: Well like the one in first year where the girls were calling her a whale on Facebook, they also in-person when they saw her were like pointing and laughing. And that put her into like, I don't want to say *depression* because that's really a harsh word, but she was really affected by that for a while. She didn't leave her room for a little while, and she constantly tells us that in that time period she ended up gaining more weight because she just felt horrible about herself. Now that she looks back on it, she talks about it a lot more but at the time she didn't really talk to us about it. She just kind of retreated for a couple of months...she retreated quite a bit. But now she has no issue talking about it with us. It still bothers her but she can talk about it...

As a result of a hookup, Kathleen was socially harassed by a group of girls at Eastern and later treated poorly by her hookup partner. Ariel notes that Kathleen became socially isolated, felt "horrible about herself", and gained a substantial amount of weight. In sum, subjects in the current study confirmed that an association does exist between negative emotional complications and hooking up.

## *Unwanted Pregnancies and Pregnancy Scares*

The vast majority<sup>13</sup> of participants have never been pregnant, and indicated that pregnancy was not a prominent concern due to the widespread use of hormonal contraceptives. However, an overwhelming number of subjects reportedly experienced pregnancy scares. These scares were often catalyzed by a delay in the onset of the menstrual cycle, by failing to use a condom, or by the misuse of the birth control pill prior to a hookup. Subjects who had experienced a pregnancy scare typically reported a negative emotional response. To illustrate, Caitlin explains a pregnancy scare she experienced following a hookup, and her resulting worrisome thoughts:

I know for me and like my housemates we're all very cautious, like we're all on birth control. So getting pregnant does not worry me... As far as getting pregnant goes, I think that, well I know a couple of my friends have had like pregnancy scares. If they get their period like the day after they're freaked out. I think people freak out about it but I don't think it's as big of an issue as they let them get to it in their mind.

SG: Have you ever experienced a pregnancy scare?

CAITLIN: Ok well last year, I'm on this weird birth control... it's just progesterone, it's not estrogen as well. And so I haven't gotten my period in almost a year I think...but I didn't realize this at first. And so last year I slept with this guy...but then afterwards when I was supposed to get my period – I had like been on the pill, but then I didn't get my period and I didn't know this was how it worked. And so it was the kind of thing where like, this physically cannot be happening, but why haven't I gotten my period yet? And like I took a test and everything...it was nothing. It was just because of the pill...

SG: What was going through your head when this happened?

CAITLIN: Definitely a lot of it is like reputation. Like what is going to happen when I'm the girl who's like 19 and pregnant? And then also my parents – my parents would *flip out*...and then also just your future. Like would you have to drop out of school? What would you do about a job? What would you do about this and this. It's very like long term, like what the heck would happen? And then

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<sup>13</sup> Only one participant indicated that she had previously been pregnant. This pregnancy occurred while the participant was in a committed relationship, and resulted in an abortion. She explained feeling “relieved when it was done”.

with the guy, if it's with somebody random do you go say 'hey guess what? I'm pregnant!'...so just how it affects every facet of your life...all within the span of like two minutes too [laughs].

Several participants noted the use of *Plan B* – an emergency contraceptive pill – when experiencing a pregnancy scare following an evening of hooking up. Stacey, like other participants, explains that she often accompanies her friends to purchase *Plan B* when they become concerned about potential pregnancies:

...well the one last year who was in first year, I went to get the morning after pill with her twice 'cause she couldn't buy it herself. So I'd say to her 'maybe you're not old enough to be [laughs] if you can't walk in the store'... Same with [another friend]! I went with her at the beginning of the year to buy Plan B. I've been three times and I've never had to damn take it!...That's just a whole other situation in itself.

SG: So your friends who are buying Plan B, why are they buying it?

STACEY: Generally 'cause they didn't use a condom or anything. Even the ones who don't, I'll ask them 'oh well you're on the pill right?' and they're like 'no I fucked it up this week' and they say that all the time. Like...I don't know, that's just a general answer. They always screw up their pill and then they can't remember if they'd used one.

SG: Used one?

STACEY: Can't remember if they used a condom. They have no idea. And Irene is like 'I wonder where he came?' Well I would love to know too! Do you want to go to Shoppers?... Either they're too drunk to remember if they did [use a condom], or too drunk to do it.

Likewise, Claire notes her extensive use of *Plan B* when she worries a hookup might have culminated in a pregnancy:

I am just very stressed out. But I always just go and buy Plan B, which I think eventually, it's just bad for you after so many amounts. 'Cause I like *just* went on birth control 6 months ago... and every time I was like 'did [the condom] break? Am I safe? I don't know. I feel like I look a little fat! And I had my period for like a day. I'm with child!' [laughs] So I'd always take Plan B every time I was unsure. Even though it's not good for you, and it's like *so* expensive. And just the social awkwardness of asking for it, and usually the pharmacist is like 'oh don't



worry!' and they treat you like you're going through this crazy procedure. And it's just a pill...

The current study found support for the notion that a pregnancy scare can be more emotionally traumatizing in the context of a hookup in comparison to a committed relationship (Regnerus and Uecker 2011). For example, Jordan explains that one of her friends experienced an unwanted pregnancy while in a relationship:

...I think there's a lot of people right now who, like I know myself, I don't take [the pill] as consistently as I should. Like I set alarm on my phone 8:00pm every single day, but [pause] I specifically have a friend who got pregnant because she wasn't taking it consistently. Like she was missing *days* of it. But she was dating that guy. And I don't know, I think that's almost – not *better* – but I think then that at least gives you that person that you can sort of [pause] whatever you choose to do, if you choose to get an abortion or something. Like I know he went with her to do that, and I think that really helped her. And *he* was the one that paid for it. But I mean, had it been from a hookup, like that would suck. Because that person is *not* going to still be around for you...So from a hookup, I think it's worse because, just solely because now the girl is stuck dealing with it...I think that from a relationship point of view, if that person got pregnant then you'd have almost better means to get through it.

Claire shares Jordan's sentiments as she references her own pregnancy scares:

...I do *not* want a kid. I don't even think I want one in the future. Um, so [pause] I would be very upset. For sure. If it was like a concrete like, you are going to have a child, like you are pregnant, I would probably get an abortion. No – I *would*. For sure. *For sure*. And my boyfriend, like the one time I thought I was... 'Cause I was like three weeks late and felt nauseous, but it turned out it was just stress... But he was like 'oh I would support you no matter what'. That was nice to know, so it wasn't necessarily as distressing...In terms of support and my boyfriend and stuff, I felt ok. I didn't feel too upset.

SG: Do you think you would be as upset if you had a pregnancy scare with someone you'd hooked up with?

CLAIRE: Oh my god [laughs] I would be *very* upset... I would be like so unhappy. Because you know that person is not going to hold your hand through the procedure, and your friends are going to feel really bad for you, but it may be embarrassing in a sense. That would be really tough. I don't know how I would handle that...

Participants generally understood pregnancies and pregnancy scares to be particularly traumatizing in the context of a hookup, as hookup partners lack the necessary commitment and emotional support required when coping with the stresses that typically accompany an unexpected pregnancy.

Although previous research indicates that unwanted pregnancies are not of particular concern among university women (Scholly et al. 2005), data from the current study illustrate that pregnancy scares are a common occurrence. Pregnancy scares are often accompanied by some level of mental anguish as participants “stressed out” about what they would do if they were indeed pregnant. Noting this, it is made explicit that young heterosexual women who hook up place themselves at risk for pregnancies, and more commonly, pregnancy scares and the corresponding emotional implications.

### *Sexually Transmitted Infections*

When asked to describe the frequency of condom use during coitus hookups at Eastern, participants provided varying estimates. Many participants stressed that Eastern students are intelligent and well-educated individuals, and therefore condoms are routinely used in the context of a hookup. Shelby’s response illustrates:

I will always [pause] unless I know the person, or I’m seeing them, and, I think so because I know people will always have them with them. I know for the most part, if my friends ever don’t [use a condom] I always yell at them. I’m always like ‘k, you’re an idiot’. ‘*Oh I’m on the pill*’ [raises voice to impersonate] - ok well there’s a whole lot of other issues that could arise from that. But yah, I think people are well enough educated... So I think at this school a lot of people do use them. And I think that’s really good [laughs].

Many participants shared Shelby’s contention regarding the association between education and condom usage. However, Shelby’s report of personal condom use in the context of a hookup contains contradictory statements. Specifically, Shelby notes that she

“always” uses condoms, unless she knows her hookup partner or she’s “seeing” him. In other words, Shelby always uses condoms when hooking up with strangers, however for acquaintance hookups or multiple hookups with the same partner, she does not. Although Shelby believes she is adequately protecting herself against sexually transmitted infections, she (seemingly unknowingly) puts herself at risk of contracting an STI by foregoing condom use in specific hookup situations. Shelby’s understanding of widespread condom usage within Eastern’s hookup culture is ostensibly not consistent with her own hookup experiences.

Other participants unequivocally stated that condom use is not prevalent at Eastern. When Justine was asked whether or not she believes condoms are commonly used when hooking up, she replied:

Probably not. I would say none of my friends do. Other girls, I’m not too sure about. I guess girls who aren’t on the pill would [use condoms]. But I think once you go on the pill, you kind of, I don’t know, you take the risk.

SG: So the guy that you’re hooking up with now, are you guys using condoms?

JUSTINE: No.

Justine explicitly states that neither she nor any of her friends at Eastern use condoms in the context of a hookup, and references their use of the pill as the explanation. Although Justine protects herself from potential unwanted pregnancies, she indifferently notes that “you take the risk” of contracting a sexually transmitted infection when hooking up.

While many respondents reported that they often use condoms when engaging in sexual intercourse in the context of a hookup, patterns of overall usage were variable. Consistent with the hookup literatures, participants noted that alcohol use often clouded their judgment, resulting in unprotected hookups (Certain et al. 2009; Hittner and

Kennington 2008). As suggested, several participants noted that condom use was not required when hooking up with an acquaintance or a friend (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009). The implication is that friends practice safe sex and partake in regular STI testing. Additionally, although many participants reported that they often use condoms for first-time hookups, condom usage was said to decrease with subsequent hookups with the same partner, and was essentially non-existent once couples began “seeing each other”. Evidently some female participants in the hookup culture fail to sufficiently protect themselves against STIs when engaging in sexual intercourse, and face various risks to their health as a result.

Despite differences in condom use, all participants were in agreement with the use of barrier-methods when engaging in oral sex. Specifically, *not one* participant had ever used – or had ever heard of a friend or peer using – protection when giving or receiving oral sex. To illustrate, when I asked Ariel whether she uses condoms when performing oral sex, she explains:

No. I don't think I know a single person who has used a condom for oral sex. I know that I haven't ever, which is quite hypocritical when I think about it. But that's something you don't think about. When I think of STDs I think of transmitted through like, *sex sex*. I don't think of getting anything from oral sex. And I honestly don't think I could name a single person who has used a condom for oral sex.

Likewise, Cheryl does not use condoms when giving oral sex to a hookup partner, and is under the mistaken assumption that “different kinds of condoms” would be required:

No. I don't know anyone who [pause], I don't know, I just don't think people really do that. I [laughs] I have no explanation for that. Because wouldn't you have to buy different kinds of condoms? Like you can't just use any kind! 'Cause a lot of them have stuff on the outside and you wouldn't want to eat that [laughs]... No one is really prepared for that I don't think. Like guys aren't going to be like ‘oh don't worry I put on a condom’.

In a similar way, none of the women interviewed had ever used protection from oral STIs when receiving oral sex. Serena illustrates this notion when she tells me that “0%” of people at Eastern use dental dams when receiving cunnilingus in the context of a hookup. What was particularly concerning about this finding however, was that several participants did not know what a dental dam was, or that it could be used to facilitate the practice of safe oral sex. For example, when I asked Shannon if she uses dental dams when engaging in oral sex with non-relational partners, she replies:

SHANNON: Excuse me? Are those like dentures?

SG: Well you know how a condom would protect you against STIs from blow jobs? So a dental dam is used to protect you from any mouth STIs a guy might have when he goes down on you, and also protect the guy from getting an STI. So it’s like a piece of latex that goes over the vagina.

SHANNON: That is messed up. Um that is really weird. First of all like, I don’t get how you would use that properly or how the girl would even have fun. I don’t know how I feel about that. I feel like if someone whipped out a dental dam I would be a little scared and just run away. [laughs] I don’t even know.

Notably, Shannon expresses that the notion of dental dams are “messed up” and that she would “run away” if a male partner were to suggest their use. Shannon was not alone in her lack of knowledge of dental dams. When I asked Justine, Cheryl, and Erica if they use dental dams, they respectively inquired:

(J): What’s that? [laughs] I’ve never heard of it so I would assume not.

(C): It’s like the same kind of thing [as condoms] right – but for girls?

(E): Wait, what’s a dental dam?

The clear absence of knowledge regarding dental dams highlights the problematic nature of oral sex at Eastern.

Varied rates of reported condom use during coitus hookups, and virtually no use of protection during oral sex indicate that female participants in the hookup culture are at risk of contracting STIs. Correspondingly, some participants reported that they know of friends who have previously contracted an STI from a hookup. Serena explicates:

Ok, the girl that I've known since grade 9, she's obviously aware of [STIs] but she does not even care. Like, at all. It's really bad... I know that [my friend] has had issues with it. So like, clearly that's going to happen.

SG: And issues with it, you mean?

SERENA: She has had stuff.

SG: Had an STI?

SERENA: Yah. She's been with so many guys [laughs]

Another participant, who disclosed that she contracted an incurable STI from a boyfriend in high school, has a unique outlook regarding the possible transmission of STIs at Eastern. As someone who is forced to deal with the negative repercussions of a chronic STI, she understandably conceptualizes her female friends who participate in the hookup culture as somewhat irresponsible regarding their sexual health:

Like, I've taken people STD testing [after a hookup]. I don't think they worry enough actually. I don't think they think about it enough at all. Um [pause] yah I don't know, I, this is really, ok like, I don't know [laughs] [pause] [looks at the recorder], I have an STD that I can't get rid of... So that's why [my friends] all come to me when they want to go get STD tests ... when I tell them I have it, they're like '*oh my god! I have to go get tested! I could have this too!*' [shocked tone of voice]. And I'm like, well you're like 12 guys in the year, so yah! [laughs]. When I said it before [prior to disclosing my STI], like 'you should think about getting checked out' they would be like '*oh yah, yah, ok.*' [passive tone]. I don't know, like, *I* know what you could have. And it's just scary to think too like [pause] I think they don't think about it enough. But I was the same...

The participant stresses that prior to her diagnosis, she was symptomless and in a committed relationship, and found out about her STI "by accident".

But yah...I got it from a boyfriend so it wasn't like I was all over the place, but I was way more all over the place than I would and could be now. High school was my shit show [laughs] everyone else is having their shit show now. But like, I [pause] I didn't get it in a weird way. I found out I had it by accident. And when they first told me I was like '[laughs] no I don't? What? Ok?' So [my friends] think if after 10 guys they're fine, then they're like 'well what's another?' But I can't blame them...But yah... It's herpes, just to throw that out there. I don't get symptoms, so that's why I didn't know. Obviously, if there was, it would be obvious. But I kept getting yeast infections. I knew they were yeast infections because I had a youth doctor, and then my regular doctor. My youth doctor, I would go get my pills and whatever. And I would go there and they would do a pap, and they'd be like 'oh we found yeast by the way'. And I'd be like, ok, it's yeast. And I went in one day and finally I was like 'why do I keep getting these?' and they phoned me, and I was like 'oh, yah ok [laughs] thanks'. So that's how I found out.

She goes on to describe some of the difficulties she has encountered as result of her herpes diagnosis. Specifically, the subject reports that her STI has prevented her from participating in the dominant courtship script, and that prior to forming romantic relationships she has had to engage in undesirably forthright discussions with her partners. She explains how she told her most recent boyfriend about her diagnosis:

...I was like, A) why are you coming up here [to Eastern to visit]? Like, yah I wanna see you, B) you've invited yourself and C) there's something I have to tell you that you can't stay in my bed [laughs]. Like, you can't come near me. So like, that came out the day he left. I did it over text message but I wrote a really long one and was like, take as long as you need to think about it. And then he texted me back. He phoned me *hours* later. He went out, got drunk, and phoned me hours later and said 'I want to be with you' and I was like, 'ok'. And that was it. But like, just for the sake of hookups? [laughs] Like, 'oh by the way I have this problem, are you ok if we still do this?' Like, I don't think [that would work out]... But that's why like, I wouldn't hook up. Like, I can't [laughs]. I would give it to somebody, right?

Additionally, she notes that were it not for her inquiry into her yeast infections, she could have unknowingly passed on her STI to multiple other students at Eastern:

I'm lucky I found out because hanging out with these people [at Eastern], 10 000 people could have it by now. But it's one of those things that I found out completely by accident. So if I didn't find that out, like yah, somewhere along the line I probably would have gone home with a couple people...and I wouldn't

have known. And that's what's scary...if I went home with someone that night where I was like 'I wanna go home with a boy', if I went home with him and gave it to him, like, and he's back at [the bar] the next night. Like, I don't know. It's just crazy [laughs]. It's mind blowing...

This particular participant's experience with a herpes diagnosis highlights some of the undesirable complications individuals with chronic STIs must face. Specifically, if she wants to form romantic relationships she is forced to look outside of the Eastern community, as her STI alienates her from participating in the dominant courtship script on campus. Additionally, she must engage in undesirably frank discussions with any potential sexual or romantic partners regarding her STI diagnosis prior to becoming sexually intimate. Lastly, the subject explicates a significantly troubling notion: she has not experienced any symptoms, and if it were not for her chance inquiry regarding her yeast infections, she might have been a full participant in the hookup culture and subsequently passed on her STI to many other students at Eastern.

Taken together, these findings clearly suggest the very real possibility of contracting and transmitting various STIs in the hookup culture at Eastern. Additionally, these narratives offer insight into the problematic social complications an STI diagnosis might have on one's life. Female participants in the hookup culture evidently risk contracting a sexually transmitted infection and experiencing the associated negative consequences.

### *Sexual Assaults*

Consistent with the contemporary hookup literatures, some participants reported that sexual victimizations have taken place in the context of a hookup at Eastern (Flack et al. 2007; Littleton et al. 2009). Below, Justine explains a hookup scenario experienced by her friend which resulted in a sexual assault:



...one of my friends a couple of weeks ago said no, and the guy just proceeded to have sex with her anyways. So I feel like there's really just not much you can do once you're at a certain point in hooking up, I feel like they just kind of expect it. And they won't really listen to you otherwise. Which is pretty sad.

SG: So your friend said no and the guy had sex with her anyways?

JUSTINE: Yah. The entire night she had been saying that. And as they went up to her room she even pulled him aside and was like 'you still know I'm not having sex with you?' and he was like '*yah yah I understand*' [lowers voice to impersonate]... The way she described it, she said he started having sex with her and she figured it was just too late. So she let it happen... He's a big asshole for doing that.

Justine's friend had intended to hook up with this man, but made it explicitly known that she would not partake in sexual intercourse. Although she said "no" to coitus multiple times, her rapist "proceeded to have sex with her anyways". Unfortunately, Justine – and perhaps also her friend who was victimized – is operating under the assumption of a common rape myth; specifically, that once a man reaches a certain point of sexual arousal, "there's really just not much you can do" to control the man's urges.

Like Justine, Ariel too has a friend at Eastern who has been sexually assaulted at the hands of a hookup partner. She explains:

ARIEL: I've had a couple of friends who have been sexually assaulted on campus by either strangers or, you know... I had a friend who took a guy home and the next morning she was just bruised. It was horrible. We had to take her to the clinic, and it was this big thing like – so that worries me a lot. There's a danger. You're taking home a guy who you don't know. I even had a friend one night who was walked home by a guy, and outside the residence building she was assaulted by him. So you don't know. Leaving the bar without your friends with a stranger, anything could happen...

Ariel's friend was violently sexually assaulted by her hookup partner, and the next morning she appeared visibly battered. Ariel's description of the assault indicates that her friend rightfully defined her victimization as a rape, as she sought medical attention and relied upon the support of her friends following the assault. Ariel also spoke of another

friend who was walked home by a man after an evening out – a particularly common occurrence in the hookup culture – and was subsequently assaulted.

One participant, Kathleen, described her personal experiences with *two* separate hookups which seemingly resemble sexual assaults, although she fails to explicitly define them as such. Kathleen described her first sexual victimization in response to a question about safety and hooking up on Eastern's campus:

SG: Do you think girls at Eastern are ever worried about being sexually assaulted when hooking up with someone?

KATHLEEN: I feel like it's more of an after thing. Not a lot of girls would consider sexual assault, because even if they're drunk they've consented, for the most part. I've been in situations where like, things have gone farther than I've wanted them to, just because it was just like a subtle [pause] things just don't stop. Then it's like, ok things *need* to stop here, but they don't and then you're drunk, so you're kind of just like, ok whatever. And that's like a *horrible* thing. That's fully being taken advantage of, and you would never want that to happen to anybody. But yah... it was just a horrible situation. I felt terrible about it for probably like a year. 'Cause it was my first time, and it just *ruined* everything that you built it up to be.

SG: That was when you lost your virginity?

KATHLEEN: Yah. So that's like the worst ... This was not too long before [I started dating someone] in first year. He was a virgin, and I was trying to tell him about it. But I felt so [pause] weird. It's like, 'ok well I'm not a virgin anymore, but I still *feel* like I am'. Like, I almost don't even have that in my memory because I was so drunk. I know what happened, but I don't know anything else about it. I don't know how long it happened for, or what time it was. Like, I have no concept of anything else. I was like, *sobbing* when I first told him because it was so rattling. It was like, man, I feel like I ruined this for us. But yah, for a long time there were a lot of people that I didn't tell. But now it's just like, ok well, this is what *not* to do. I learned my lesson. But now it's not a *big* deal. It's not something that I cry myself to sleep over [laughs], but at the time it was the worst ever. It took a while.

SG: Did you ever cry yourself to sleep because of what happened?

KATHLEEN: Yah, for sure.

Like Justine's friend, Kathleen suggests that she was initially interested in hooking up with this man but did not wish to partake in sexual intercourse; however, "things just [didn't] stop". Kathleen describes the subsequent loss of her virginity as a situation in which she was sexually assaulted while in an extremely intoxicated state. In fact, she notes that as a result of her intoxication she cannot recall the event itself, only that it took place. The degree of intoxication which Kathleen describes indicates that she was unable to provide consent to engage in sexual intercourse. Kathleen emphasizes the emotional trauma she experienced as a result of her sexual victimization, as she describes feeling "terrible about it for probably a year".

Unlike Kathleen's initial sexual assault, her second victimization did not seemingly result in debilitating bouts of mental anguish, perhaps due to the fact that her rapist is a "good friend". She explains:

One of my really good friends, we're still very good friends, but like, he *fully* took advantage of me when I was *absolutely* wasted one time. And that was not a person I ever would have considered hooking up with. I was like, literally, I hardly had motor control, and it he was like [snaps fingers] '*ok well, she's single I'm single, I should go for it*' [lowers voice to impersonate]. I'm like, no! You know? That just like, violates '*the sanctity of our friendship*' [joking tone]. Like, that's gross. And I try to explain it to people, like what happened, and like, 'no you *don't understand*, I was *so wasted*. You don't understand'. But a lot of people will say 'you know, that's not an excuse', and then when you're put in that situation I feel like it's different. Literally the only difference between this happening and this not happening was alcohol. So it's not an *excuse*, but you know...it's like a reasoning

Although Kathleen does not identify her victimization as a sexual assault, her descriptions of the events suggest that she was sexually victimized. Specifically, Kathleen explicates that she was so intoxicated during her assault that she "hardly had motor control", clearly noting her impaired state and subsequent inability to legally provide consent. Remarkably, upon describing her rape to her friends, her peers retorted

that alcohol is “not an excuse”, inferring that Kathleen wanted or desired to engage in sexual intercourse with her rapist. While Kathleen has not yet recognized this hookup as an incident of personal victimization, her accounts of this experience suggests that she was sexually assaulted.

The results from the current study are consistent with the contemporary hookup literatures which suggest that sexual victimizations are potential risks in the context of a hookup (Flack et al. 2007; Krebs et al. 2009; Littleton et al. 2009). Notably, some participants describe assaults in which the victims – or the victims’ friends – have failed to label them as incidents of victimizations. Evidently, the sexual assault narratives described by participants emphasize the risk of sexual victimization which women who participate in the hookup culture face.

### **Accounting for the Risks**

As the results thus far suggest, the social organization of sex in the contemporary hookup context is in many respects unfavourable for female participants. Notably, they risk experiencing sexual dissatisfaction, devalued reputations, failed relationship expectations, emotional and mental health issues, STIs, unwanted pregnancies and pregnancy scares, and sexual assaults. The results from the current study confirm the presence of these risks in the hookup culture, as each of the thirty participants reported either personally experiencing, or having knowledge of a friend experiencing one or more of these risks. More importantly however, these findings confirm that female students are aware of the risks that they face. The foregoing discussion suggests a paradox; there are high levels of female involvement in the hookup culture, and yet hooking up appears to be an unfavourable, high-risk behaviour for young women. Accordingly, it remains

unclear why or how women voluntarily participate in a courtship script that they perceive to be risky. Therefore, the current study aims to understand the ways in which women are able to negate some of their personal dissatisfactions, or the potential risks involved with hooking up, so as to make sense of their behaviours and facilitate participation in this culture.

Themes emerged from the data to suggest that participants generally make sense of their hooking up behaviours through the use of one of five primary “neutralization” techniques. Specifically, female proponents of the hookup culture neutralize their hookups with the use of alcohol, their desire for commitment, their desire for fun, as a way to cope with a breakup, and their proximity to their partner in their social network. Each technique is considered in turn.

#### *1) Alcohol Use*

It is apparent that the consumption of alcohol is integral to the hookup and the hookup culture more generally (Bogle 2008a; Vander Van 2011; Vander Ven and Beck 2009). Accordingly, alcohol also plays a significant role in participants’ accounts of their hookup experiences. For several respondents, the use of alcohol was emphasized as a way to explain their participation in this seemingly unfavourable courtship culture. Although many participants acknowledged that hooking up is potentially risky, they were able to neutralize their hookup behaviours by referring to their intoxicated states when hooking up occurred. Alcohol was accordingly utilized to mediate some of the misgivings of the hookup culture in order to facilitate hookup participation. Justine for example, explains her most recent hookup:

Honestly, it was because I was drunk and I didn’t think things through really. I probably wouldn’t have if I wasn’t drunk. And then I tried to justify it later when

I sobered up, thinking that, I don't know, that I hadn't hooked up with that many people recently, and that he was a nice guy.

Justine places significant emphasis on her excessive consumption of alcohol, which seemingly allowed her to overlook some of the negative aspects of the hookup culture and facilitate her hookup participation.

Respondents told similar hookup stories as they relate to friends and peers, noting that their peers also have a tendency to highlight the use of alcohol to account for participation in the hookup culture. To illustrate, Marianna explains why her friends hook up:

I feel like they... use their drunkenness. I feel like that's the ultimate scapegoat route. Like 'oh yah, I had sex with this guy, but I was drunk, whatever'. So, yah. They blame it on their drunkenness. And I feel like hookups happen a lot more when you're drunk, because when you're sober it's a different thinking process, and I don't think it becomes a hookup as much.

Likewise, Erica explains that the vast majority of her peers at Eastern rely on alcohol to justify their hookup behaviours:

I don't think anyone would really admit to a sober hookup. Like [laughs] ever. Especially in university, I don't think someone would be like 'oh I just felt like I wanted to.' It's like '*no I was so drunk and I hooked up with this guy*' [raises voice to impersonate]. It's always that. It's always 'I was drinking' and 'I was drunk'. But I feel like it makes it seem fine. That's what justifies it.

Although several respondents highlighted their private misgivings with the hookup culture, they continued to participate in this unfavourable courtship script by accounting for their hookup behaviours with the use of alcohol.

## 2) *Desire for Commitment*

As hooking up is the dominant courtship script on university campuses, some women participate with the intention of forming romantic connections with a hookup partner. Accordingly, several respondents referenced their desire for a committed

relationship in order to neutralize the risks associated with their hookup participation. Some of the young women I spoke with acknowledged that hooking up has several negative aspects, but continued to hook up because they are seeking a monogamous relationship or some form of relational commitment. For example, when I asked Caitlin – who told me she thought hooking up is risky – why she was hooking up, she replied:

I think it's the kind of thing where like, in the back of my mind, I know [the risks] are there. And I've just gotten to a point where like, alright, I'm aware of it, but I can't hide in a cave forever. You know? You're never going to meet anybody. I'm interested in something like more serious, and if that's the case, then I kind of have to put myself out on a limb a bit. On the emotional side, definitely you kind of have to be like, aware of it in the back of your head. But still be able to put yourself out there.

For Caitlin, hooking up is not a preferable mode of meeting a potential boyfriend.

However, she believes that in order to find a romantic partner she has to face the potential risks by putting herself “out there” and hooking up.

Emma also identified several personal misgivings she has with hooking up.

Despite her acknowledgement of these problematic consequences, Emma neutralizes some of the foreseeable risks by noting that hooking up is the primary mode of forming romantic relationships in university. She explains:

But obviously there's the issue of polygamy I guess, when someone else wants monogamy. I feel like that's the most common kind of hurt you get in a casual hooking up relationship... I mean like, I guess it does sound bad. But [hooking up] is usually the way that it turns into a relationship. Because like, you're not going to just meet the person and start dating them automatically. It's so much less likely on a college campus. So usually you do kind of have to have a pre kind of hooking up relationship... I guess you just have to get the feel of what the relationship is going to be like after [a hookup]. If you can tell the person is not one to settle down and want to commit, then you just kind of have to get out of it and look for the next person.

Emma emphasizes that women who participate in the hookup culture risk failed relationship expectations. However she is able to account for her own hookup participation by noting that hooking up is the dominant courtship script in university.

Several women are able to account for their hookup behaviours by emphasizing that hooking up is the only viable way of forming romantic connections in university. For some participants, hooking up is a reasonable risk to take in order to hopefully acquire some form of romantic commitment. Simply put, when I asked Kylie why her friends endure the potential risks and participate in the hookup culture, she replies: “’cause like, that’s the way they’re going to get boyfriends.”

### 3) *Fun*

Another technique emphasized was the fun aspects of the university experience. In other words, some participants were able to neutralize the associated risks with hooking up by noting that hookup participation is a fun and integral aspect of university life. Chloe’s explanation of hookup participation illustrates the use of *fun* as method of negating the risks:

I think it’s just part of having fun. It’s just the experience. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it. I think if they were careless then [pause] the responsibility is on them. I don’t want to say ‘they have nobody to blame but themselves’ because I’ve put myself in icky situations... You get caught up in the moment and it happens. So I don’t think we really need to convince ourselves or make ourselves feel better about it because it’s like experience...It’s like, whatever. Have fun, you know?

For Chloe, hooking up is merely another aspect of the university experience that is oriented towards having fun. “Icky” situations which may arise as a result of hookups are seemingly unproblematic, as having fun is of greater importance.



Leslie also emphasizes the fun aspects of hooking up as a way to account for her hookup participation. Leslie explains:

It's boring to just sit around and do nothing and stay by yourself forever. At least all of undergrad... I would rather do that [hook up] and go through all the ups and downs and deal with all the drama than like, be bored, and have no stories and a boring life. Not that people who don't hook up are boring...it's fun, and it doesn't always end horribly...But I think it's always worth it to like, take the risk, 'cause then at least you're having fun...*sometimes* [laughs].

Leslie, like several other subjects, explains that hooking up is a fun aspect of university, and even suggests that students who opt-out of the hookup culture are somewhat boring. For Leslie, hooking up and the associated risks are “worth it” because at the very least, she is having fun.

Caroline struggled with the idea that she might have a negative sexual reputation around Eastern's campus for hooking up in ways that others perceive as “too much” or “too often”. Despite personally experiencing some of the risks of the hookup culture, Caroline continues to participate. She explains:

...as for people saying stuff about you, um, I guess that's kind of my situation, is like why do I keep sleeping with people if I'm worried people are going to say stuff about me? But it's fun, and I don't want to not have fun because other people are going to say stuff. My friends know me and they're not going to say bad stuff about me. And so as long as like [my friends] are not saying bad stuff then everyone else, or strangers can say stuff about me and like, whatever...I just don't want to restrain from having fun, and not do what I want to do because other people are judging me.

Although Caroline has experienced at least one of the associated risks with hookup participation, she continues to hook up, and accounts for her behaviours by emphasizing that she is having fun.

Like Chloe, Leslie, and Caroline, several participants acknowledged the various risks they might face as a result of hookup participation. However, these women were able to neutralize the associated risks by highlighting the fun aspects of university life.

#### *4) Coping with a Breakup*

Referencing the recent dissolution of a romantic relationship was another technique employed by respondents to account for their participation in the hookup culture. Although many participants acknowledged the various risks associated with hooking up, they were seemingly able to neutralize these risks by indicating that their hookup behaviours corresponded with the end of a serious committed relationship. Hooking up appears to be a popular way of coping with a breakup at Eastern, and the emotional or vulnerable mental states experienced during these times “explain” hookup participation. To illustrate, when I asked Kristen why some of her girlfriends hook up, she says:

If they just got out of a relationship or were in any other way upset. Like ‘ugh it was such a rash decision and I was just not thinking at the time’ because of these previous circumstances. So, like that’s been another thing where you’re just ‘ugh I was just not in the right state of mind last night...’

Some of Kristen’s friends ultimately account for their hookup behaviours by referencing their distressed “state of minds” following the dissolution of a relationship. Cindy reported similar circumstances regarding her friend’s hookup experiences. Specifically, Cindy noted that her housemate’s boyfriend broke up with her last year, and explains that she began hooking up often because:

...she was like upset for breaking up. So she felt like ‘I need another guy to make up for this’ and like, ‘to make him jealous and to feel better about myself’. But in the end it doesn’t make her feel better about herself because then, when he doesn’t talk to her anymore she’s just upset about it, and reverts back to doing the exact same thing.

Other interviewees reported hookup participation as a method to instill jealousy in their former partners following the end of a romantic relationship. Once more, referencing the dissolution of a relationship was employed as a technique to facilitate hookup behaviours. For example, Erica disclosed that her ex-boyfriend had dissolved their relationship, and by coincidence, two days later they attended the same party. At this party Erica was conversing with two other male students, and she explains that:

...[my ex-boyfriend] texted me and was like ‘oh you’re trying to make me jealous, and I don’t care’. And I was like, [laughs] really not. I honestly was just sitting with these guys. But then when he said that, I was like, ok, and I just went and hooked up with one of them. I didn’t care anymore. Because I was like, I wasn’t trying to make you jealous, but *now* I am.

Although Erica previously emphasized multiple times that she does not often engage in what she refers to as “random nights”, she is able to account for this particular random night of hooking up with reference to the dissolution of her relationship.

Several respondents account for their participation in the hookup culture by highlighting the recent termination of a relationship. For some, the risks associated with hooking up are negated while coping with a breakup. Jordan tells me that women who experience the dissolution of a relationship “are used to having someone there, and if they can’t have that with the ex, then they need to find other means...So that’s how they justify the risks [of hooking up]”.

##### *5) Proximity to Social Network*

Many of the women I interviewed reported a heightened awareness of the potential risks of hooking up, emphasizing risks such as STIs, failed relationship expectations, and sexual assault. Although these women acknowledged the risks associated with hooking up, they proclaimed that these risks are less likely to transpire if

their hookup partner is in close proximity within their respective social networks. Specifically, if their hookup partner attends Eastern, is a friend-of-a-friend, or they have previously met their hookup partner, the risks associated with hooking up are perceived as less severe. To illustrate, Michelle discusses the type of men she usually hooks up with:

Um [pause] it helps if they're my own age. Because then I suspect them less of having some sort of ulterior motive, or being involved for what I consider to be the wrong reasons. So they're coming from the same place as me. So...students. Usually if they go to Eastern that means that they might know someone who I know and I can ask them about their courses, and kind of get a feel for them in general. Know a bit about them...I mostly go for people I already know, like the boy I hooked up with most recently was [a member of the same club as me] so I've known him since he's joined. We've hung out, we've talked, and our social network overlaps quite a bit. So I know he knows people that I consider to be good people, and they like him. So between all of that, I feel pretty good. I feel comfortable that he's not going to screw me over, or, I don't know [pause]. Because while I'm pretty open about my sex life, I don't really want details being talked about, and would hate to have gone home with a guy who then feels totally ok with telling everyone every little thing.

Michelle is rather certain that her most recent hookup partner will not tarnish her social reputation because they have engaged in conversations prior to their initial hookup and their social networks intersect at various points. For Michelle, hooking up with an acquaintance at Eastern ultimately negates some of the perceived risks involved with hookup participation.

Like Michelle, several participants stressed the importance of hooking up with other Eastern students. Specifically, as long as a potential hookup partner is an attendee of Eastern, the risks involved with hookup participation are seemingly less significant.

For example, Siobhan explains why the majority of her friends hook up:

People don't think of risks anymore. And it's like, 'this is Eastern, what's going to happen?' So I think they just feel like safe, or invincible. I think people just think like, it's a university... You just feel safe when you're on Eastern's campus.

It's just a really friendly environment. So I feel like people think that just applies to everything.

Likewise, Jordan stresses the importance of hooking up with Eastern students as a way to negate some of the perceived risks involved with hooking up. Specifically, Jordan – like many other participants – emphasizes that the risks of hookup participation are significantly more prominent when hooking up with a resident of the town, commonly referred to as “townies”. As Jordan explains:

If you meet someone at [name of a popular bar] it's most likely a student, and I guess that's kind of a generalization like students aren't going to hurt other students. But in one of those like townie bars, if you met a townie [laughs]...I would just feel more safe going back to a student's place where other students are living as well, than going back to somewhere in the middle of nowhere, somewhere off of Eastern's campus... If this person was telling me 'oh yah I live at this street and this street' and I don't even know where those streets are then it's probably not located in the student ghetto. 'Cause most streets you know from just walking around and going to friends' places and stuff. So I would definitely say no to going somewhere off campus. And yah, just the fact that you don't know what's in their house. What if you can't get out?...Like you don't know what type of person they are. They could be a criminal that was just let out of jail and you're hooking up with them [laughs]...

Later, when discussing the risk of sexually transmitted infections, Jordan says:

I don't even know how to explain it, I would just think that a student would be cleaner than a townie. Again, I think that might have a large part to do with education. Because I mean, education, you know that you should be wearing condoms and you probably have greater access to that type of thing. Because I mean, [Eastern's sexual health center] for example, they sell at cost condoms, sex toys [laughs] and that type of thing. And they price items like that so much higher in a drug store or in other places, and maybe a townie doesn't think that they can afford that. Condoms aren't that expensive, but that just might be an added expense that they feel they don't need to get. But with education, that would sort of say that – no. If you're sleeping with someone for the very first time...I just think education would be a huge factor in determining whether someone has STDs and whether someone doesn't... And again, maybe townies think that they can't afford a condom. Even though it's to us, not too expensive, but they might be scratching for pennies [laughs], and would practice unsafe sex, in comparison to someone that's educated. Because I think it is on a lot of students' minds that they need to practice safer sex.

For Jordan, hooking up with a “townie” is a dangerous sexual practice which puts one at the potential risk of experiencing sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections, or even kidnapping at the hands of a criminal. However, hooking up with other educated Eastern student is seemingly unproblematic, as these risks are negated due to said student’s social network proximity.

### *Summary*

Many female students are hooking up with the acknowledgement that hookup participation is in many respects a high-risk activity. Accordingly, the current study has sought to understand the various ways in which female participants in the hookup culture negate their private misgivings with hooking up, so as to facilitate participation in this courtship script. Through the disclosure of personal narratives and understandings of peer behaviours, respondents have described various techniques employed to account for hookup behaviours. Upon analysis, five primary themes emerged from the data. The current study suggests that women account for their participation in the hookup culture with the use of alcohol, their desire for commitment, their desire for fun, as a way to cope with a breakup, and with reference to their proximity to their partner within their social network. The implication of these findings suggest that although female proponents of the hookup culture acknowledge that their hookup behaviours are risky, many are able to negate these risks by discursively (re)constructing their hookups to understand them in ways which are non-problematic.

## Chapter 5

### Summary and Discussion

#### **Summary of Findings**

The findings from the current study represent an attempt to address the paradox that is female participation in the hookup culture. Despite the increase in scholarly interest regarding hooking up, it had been unclear why female students knowingly participate in a courtship script which is disproportionately risky and disadvantageous for women. The current chapter reviews the findings of this research, emphasizing the acknowledgement of the risks, and the ways in which respondents neutralize these risks associated with their hookup participation. Additionally, this chapter identifies limitations of this study, and suggests some opportunities for future research.

#### *The Acknowledgement of Risks*

Previous studies have indicated that non-relational sexual liaisons have several risky elements (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Flack et al. 2007; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Owen and Fincham 2011; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Although both men and women are susceptible to several risks associated with engagement in the hookup culture, the relevant literatures suggest that the problems may be greater for women (Armstrong et al. 2012; Bogle 2008a; Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009; Eshbaugh and Gute 2008; Fielder and Carey 2010b; Flack et al. 2007; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Owen and Fincham 2011; Regnerus and Uecker 2011). Specifically, prior research has established that women are more likely to experience sexual dissatisfaction, a devalued reputation, failed relationship expectations, emotional and mental health issues, the transmission of sexually transmitted

infections, unwanted pregnancies or pregnancy scares, and sexual assault, in comparison to their male hookup partners. The current study has confirmed the presence of all of the aforementioned risks which women face in the hookup culture at Eastern. Each of the thirty respondents reported either personally experiencing, or having knowledge of a friend experiencing one or more of these risks as a result of hooking up.

Perhaps most notably however, every respondent was *aware* of the risks associated with hookup participation. Participants' acknowledgement of these risks is exemplified within their personal narratives, which directly indicate an understanding of the risks women face as a result of hookup participation. In sum, this research illustrates that the risks women can experience as a result of hooking up are present within the contemporary hookup culture at Eastern, and furthermore, that female participants in this courtship script consciously acknowledge the presence of these risks.

#### *Accounting for the Risks*

Given the high level of awareness of the risky nature of their participation in the hookup culture, it is puzzling that so many female students subscribe to this courtship script. In other words, female participation in the hookup culture is paradoxical. As detailed in Chapter 2, the examination of how people participate in behaviours that they themselves find problematic is not an unfamiliar sociological problem. Literatures in the sociology of deviance which detail neutralization processes and accounts is used in the current study as an approach to explain how female university students rationalize their engagement in the contemporary hookup culture.

Upon analysis of the data, five primary themes emerged as ways in which female participants make sense of their hookup behaviours. The first technique used to mediate



the risks associated with hookup participation is *the use of alcohol*. Although respondents indicated that hooking up is potentially risky, several young women were able to account for their hookup behaviours by referring to their intoxication at the time that hooking up occurred. The second way that respondents accounted for their hookup participation was with reference to *a desire for relational commitment*. Many of the participants acknowledged that hooking up is largely undesirable, however correspondingly noted that the hookup script is the primary mode by which men and women connect romantically on campus. For some participants, the risks of hooking up are ultimately redefined as they attempt to form romantic connections. The third technique emphasized was an understanding of the *fun* aspects of university. Some respondents neutralized the risks involved with hooking up by explaining that hooking up is fun, and a central aspect of the university experience. The fourth way that participants accounted for their hookup participation was by referencing the recent *dissolution of a romantic relationship*. In these cases, respondents acknowledged the risks associated with hooking up, although they accounted for their behaviours by noting that they had recently ended a serious relationship, and thus hooking up was reasonable in the aftermath. The final technique used by participants to mediate the risks associated with hooking up was by referencing their *proximity to their hookup partner within their social network*. For some respondents, the foreseeable risks of hooking up are negated when their hookup partner is an acquaintance or a fellow Eastern student.

These research findings are consistent with past research addressing neutralization theory and accounts. For example, the *use of alcohol* and *the dissolution of a breakup* reflects themes similar to Sykes and Matza's (1947) technique of *denial of responsibility*,

whereby problematic behaviours are said to have occurred due to forces or circumstances beyond one's control. Likewise, *desire for commitment*, and *fun* are similar to their *appeals to higher loyalties*, as hookup behaviours are said to be necessary in order to meet the demands of various social groups (Sykes and Matza 1947). Although referencing one's proximity to a hookup partner's social network does not seamlessly fall into one of Sykes and Matza's (1947) five techniques of neutralization, Scott and Lyman (1968) would arguably classify this account as a *justification*, as women who make sense of their hookup behaviours in this way ultimately deny the pejorative nature of hooking up when one's partner is an acquaintance or a fellow Eastern student.

Although young women in university are aware of the various risks that they face when hooking up, many women forgo these risks and participate in the hookup culture. The implication of this paradox suggests that female engagement in the hookup script requires constructionist work on the part of the participant in order to make sense of her behaviours in ways that facilitate hookup participation. To my knowledge, there are no studies that have attempted to address the phenomenon of female hookup participation from the perspective of neutralizations and accounts.

### **Other Interpretations**

#### *"Dreads": Humour*

Although the current study is focused on the ways in which women account for their participation in the hookup culture, other noteworthy themes emerged from the data. For example, the emphasis in the present study of "accounts" does not deny the possibility that the hooking up discourse could be analyzed meaningfully in reference to other types of categories. In their examination of social problems discourse, for instance,

Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993) distinguish between the content and style of conversations. One style on which they focus attention is the “comic style”. Such a style also characterizes much student talk about hooking up. When I asked Serena about her housemates and what usually happens the morning following a hookup, she explains:

Like the next morning is the most hilarious thing ever. [laughs]...just in general, whenever there's a guy in our house the next morning, it's hilarious. We're all like 'heyyyy', and like jump in the bed. Depending on who it is [laughs]...Like there's been times when there's been 6 of us the next morning all hanging out in the room, and the guy [laughs], it's hilarious. We definitely have to see who he is before he leaves... At the beginning of the year we wanted to get a wall and take a photo of every guy that's been in our house and paste it on the wall, but it's so hard to get pictures of them...Just to like, document who we've all hooked up with [laughs], but we have zero photos. We always forget. It would be kind of hilarious.

Serena's housemates will congregate to laugh and joke about the previous night's hookup experiences, sometimes in the same bed as the pair who had recently hooked up.

Furthermore, Serena and her housemates have discussed at length how “hilarious” it would be to mount a wall of photos in their home, dedicated to documenting the faces of all of their hookup partners. Evidently, Serena and her friends use humour as style of discourse in the hookup culture.

Joking and laughing about a hookup after the fact is a linguistic style that also allows participants to discuss some of their fears regarding the potential risks of hooking up, while simultaneously deflecting the severity of the situation. To illustrate, Shelby describes her use of humour following a hookup:

... after the fact my friends and I are always like 'oh did you use a condom?' and like 'oh I'll go to the clinic with you if you need anything' [sarcastic tone] as a joke to try and lighten the mood. But yah ... We always do that kind of stuff. I guess to try and lighten the mood a little bit...And the morning after a night out we'll always like crawl into each other's beds and like, laugh about what happened. You know what I mean?

Likewise, in two separate instances, Ariel explains her friend Kathleen's use of humour following a hookup:

Kathleen a lot of times will come into my room and she'll say something really stupid like 'oh if I don't have my period by Thursday you're pushing me down the stairs' [laughs]. Like, she's very like nonchalant about it.

...the guys that leave [the next morning] without saying anything, she'll mention it to us that it kind of upset her...I don't know if she maybe at the time was more upset by it, and when she looks back in retrospect it doesn't seem as bad or she has learned to laugh at it. But I think she changes over time. At first she'll seem pretty upset, and after a couple of days she'll be like 'oh you know, he had a small dick anyways so I don't want him to call me' [laughs] and you're like, ok she's good with it.

When discussing her hookup experiences with Ariel, Kathleen evidently employs the use of humour to negate the seriousness of their dialogue.

One participant, whom I would describe as likely belonging to a "popular" social group at Eastern, noted the use of humour in the hookup culture in much different way.

Justine explains:

...like sometimes [laughs] there was this one guy that, we would call him 'dreads' 'cause he had these like shoulder length dreadlocks. And one of my friends made out with him as a joke at a party. And now he just always texts her and stuff so we kinda just laugh at that. But he's just like [laughs] he doesn't get it. It's really mean but it happened. Things like that, just like funny drunken things that we do. We know they mean nothing.

SG: So she made out with him as a joke?

JUSTINE: Yah. It was kind of like a dare. We were kidding around being like 'I bet you wouldn't make out with him' and she did, so [laughs].

Humour is used not only as a style of discourse when describing hookup behaviours, but Justine's peer group also seemingly hooks up with undesirable men as a joke to laugh about at a later date. Unfortunately, it appears as though the man known as "dreads" was

unaware that his hookup experience was initiated only as a joke, and that Justine's friend likely has little-to-no romantic or sexual interest in him.

*"I was chosen": Self-Esteem*

A second noteworthy theme that emerged from the data was the notion of self-esteem. When male students attempt to initiate a hookup by approaching young women at a bar or a party, this male attention seemingly provides some respondents with a heightened sense of self-esteem. Kelly explains:

It gives you a lot of confidence when a guy comes up to you and is like 'oh you're sexy!' That's a *huge* confidence boost. Especially when like it's one of those nights where you feel like crap and no guy hits on you, and you go home and you're like, 'well that was shitty'. Even if they're gross looking and they hit on you you're like 'yes! I got *one!*' [laughs]. I definitely feel the effects of guys paying attention to you, of course. Like 'oh! I'm attractive!' [laughs].

Likewise, Serena explains how male attention makes her feel good about herself:

Girls are kind of I guess more insecure... The attention is a big one. Like, I'm not going to lie, I do like the attention sometimes to be completely honest. Not like I'll hook up with them, but I'm a pretty flirty person at the bar I think. It's bad and good in some ways... I know I do it out of attention sometimes.

In Caitlin's case, this male attention was so influential to her self-esteem and self-confidence that it persuaded her to engage in hookup behaviours. Caitlin explains:

...And then we're out and I'd been drinking and it was really fun because [pause] I don't know. My housemates are all really pretty and so I find that often guys pay a lot of attention to them. I kind of get like, I don't know...it was kind of nice to like have attention on me by this guy. And I felt really like 'ok this is fun, this is nice'. So I sort of disregarded the whole fact that he was a douchebag 'cause I was getting attention from him, and it was nice to feel that way. And then we hooked up and then afterwards I was like 'that was so stupid'. Like, I am just not a fan of you [laughs]...I think I definitely feel like – I wouldn't use the word *competition*, but like all the girls in my house are *so* pretty and are often approached by guys and stuff. And I don't know, sometimes you can feel kind of shitty when it's like, ok you've been approached by four guys tonight who want to dance with you or whatever. And I don't know, I think I often give off more of an aura of like 'I don't really want to talk to random guys', so I also get that. I probably seem a bit stand-offish at times. But when you get attention from a guy

it's kind of like 'ok, this is nice'. It's good to feel like that I can get attention too, like yah, that I was chosen out of the other people.

Caitlin regarded that her hookup partner was, as she says, "a douchebag", but hooked up with him in spite of this. Caitlin believes that her hookup partner could have easily attempted to hook up with one of her other beautiful housemates, but instead focused his attention on her. Although only one respondent dictated that a heightened sense of self-esteem directly influenced her decision to hook up, self-esteem is seemingly an important aspect of female engagement in the hookup culture and requires further analysis and exploration.

### **Limitations**

The primary aims of this study were largely exploratory in nature, as I attempted to garner rich and in-depth data from the hookup narratives of my respondents. While this study drew on widely adopted qualitative strategies, I cannot claim that my results are generalizable to a wider population. The lack of generalizability of my findings has much to do with the nature of qualitative research, and specifically, the standard sampling methods employed in qualitative studies.

My sample is limited in a number of ways which correspondingly render my findings ungeneralizable. First, the use of non-probability sampling has biased the sample, as not all subsets of the Eastern population were afforded an equal opportunity to be selected to participate. Secondly, as a result of my non-probability sampling methods, the sample was overrepresented by sociology majors. Sociology students are expected to hold more liberal views; perhaps if the sample was predominantly comprised of applied sciences or business majors, the interviewees would have reported more conservative values regarding non-relational sexual liaisons. Lastly, none of the thirty respondents

identified as LGBTTI. Perhaps as a result of problematic sampling techniques – specifically, noting the desire to interview students regarding “*male/female* interactions” – members of the LGBTTI community might have felt excluded from the ability to participate. Had my sample included individuals from the LGBTTI population at Eastern, perhaps a much different outlook would have been offered regarding hooking up or the hookup scene on campus. In retrospect, the lack of a systematic sample has limited my findings in a number of ways.

### **Future Research**

The results of this study suggest several new topics of inquiry for future research addressing the hookup culture. Two areas of inquiry, as previously stated, are the humorous discourse of the hookup culture, and the role of self-esteem in female engagement in hooking up. The findings from the current study suggest that the discourse of humour and female self-esteem are both prominent themes within the hookup culture at Eastern, and require further analysis and consideration.

Future research might also consider the degree to which hookup participation either increases, or decreases with experience in university in the Canadian context. Previous findings addressing the hookup culture in the United States have found that rates of hooking up increase with each year of university experience (Fielder and Carey 2010b; Flack et al. 2007). In other words, university and college students in the United States are experiencing the lowest percentage of hookups during first year, and the highest percentage of hookups while in fourth year (Flack et al. 2007). However data from the current study do not support these findings, as participants consistently reported more hookup experiences as first year students, and significantly fewer hookups as third

and fourth years. These results suggest a variance between the United States and Canadian hookup cultures. Future research might consider further analysis of this discrepancy, and explore other ways in which the Canadian hookup culture is similar or dissimilar from the United States.

Another area in need of further research is the extent to which men experience risks within the hookup culture. The findings from this research clearly outline the risks associated with female hookup participation and the existence of these risks in the hookup culture at Eastern. However, future studies might consider the degree to which men experience these risks as a result of hookup participation. The current hookup literatures arguably take for granted men's enthusiastic participation in the contemporary hookup script, however it is possible that perhaps men are equally as unsatisfied with the modern social organization of sex.

Perhaps most significantly, another area of future research includes the discrepancy between the public and private hookup discourses. Although several scholars suggest that women are happy with the hookup script (Armstrong 2010; Schwartz 2013; Wade 2013), it is important to note that these analyses are predominantly accessing a public understanding of hooking up. Although publically many women exclaim that they are content with hooking up, privately some of these women have several misgivings regarding this courtship script. The overwhelming majority of participants in the current study reported that hooking up is more beneficial for men, and twenty-nine out of thirty respondents exclaimed that hooking up is *not* the most preferable courtship script for women. These findings are supported by the work of Wade and Heldman (2012), whose research reported that the majority of women who participate in the hookup culture are



“reluctant” rather than enthusiastic participants. In other words, women are seemingly dissatisfied with the contemporary hookup script which dominates their university campuses, although publically they might suggest otherwise. The public versus private hookup discourse is evidently an area in need of further analysis and research.

### **Concluding Comments**

This thesis has attempted to address the paradox regarding female participation in the hookup culture. Specifically, I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which young women account for their hookup participation although they acknowledge the risky nature of these behaviours. A theoretical understanding of neutralizations and accounts has been alternatively constructed and put forth as a useful approach to conceptualize how female students rationalize their hookup participation in order to construct these behaviours as acceptable to themselves and to others. Drawing on qualitative methods, the findings from the current study suggest that female participants in the hookup culture account for their risky behaviours in one of five primary ways: (1) through the use of alcohol; (2) by referencing a desire for commitment; (3) by emphasizing fun; (4) noting the dissolution of a relationship; and (5) emphasizing their social proximity to their partner. To date, there are no known studies which investigate the techniques of neutralization employed by young women to account for their hookup participation, and notably, no known sociological studies which explore the hookup culture in *any* respect within the Canadian context. These results provide significant insight into the largely unaddressed area of female engagement in the hookup script, ultimately offering a unique contribution to the contemporary sociological hookup literatures in the Canadian context.

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## Appendix A

### General Research Ethics Board Approval



October 18, 2012

Miss Shanlea Gordon  
Master's Student  
Department of Sociology  
Queen's University  
Kingston ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GSOC-100-12; Romeo # 6007449

Title: "GSOC-100-12 What's Love Got To Do With It?: Campus Hookup Culture and the Negotiation of Risk"

Dear Miss Gordon:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GSOC-100-12 What's Love Got To Do With It?: Campus Hookup Culture and the Negotiation of Risk" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at [https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo\\_researcher/](https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/) and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at [https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo\\_researcher/](https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/) and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or [irvingg@queensu.ca](mailto:irvingg@queensu.ca) for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Stevenson".

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair  
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Vincent Sacco, Faculty Supervisor  
Dr. Rob Beamish, Chair, Unit REB  
Anne Henderson, Dept. Admin.

## Appendix B

### Letter of Information

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Shanlea Gordon under the supervision of Dr. Vincent F. Sacco, in the Department of Sociology at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

The aim of this work is to increase our knowledge of the social lives of undergraduate students in the twenty-first century, particularly male/female romantic interactions.

The study will require one interview session, and will take less than 45 minutes to complete. Participants will not be compensated for their participation.

Participation is voluntary; although it would be appreciated if you could answer all questions to the best of your abilities, you are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You are free to withdraw at any time from the study without prejudice. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you may request that all data collected up until that point be destroyed. There are no known risks associated with this study.

All information you provide is strictly confidential. Your interview session will be tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Audiotapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of my supervisor, Dr. Sacco, and all other data will be secured on a password-protected personal laptop. All tapes and data files associated with you will be assigned a pseudonym; while the findings from this study may be published in professional journals or presented at academic conferences, any such presentations will protect the confidentiality of individual participants through the use of their assigned pseudonyms.

You may retain a copy of the information and/or consent form for your own reference. If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, please feel free to contact Shanlea Gordon (7slg@queensu.ca or 613-533-6000 x 78541); the project supervisor (saccov@queensu.ca, 613-533-6000 x 74492), or the Head of the Department of Sociology at Queen's University (beamishr@queensu.ca, 613-533-6000 x 74475) at any time to discuss these procedures. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics board of Queen's University at 613-533-6081.

Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated.

*This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.*

## Appendix C

### Consent Form

Name (please print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

You may retain a copy of the information and/or consent form for your own reference. If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, please feel free to contact Shanlea Gordon (7slg@queensu.ca or 613-533-6000 x 78541); the project supervisor (saccov@queensu.ca, 613-533-6000 x 74492), or the Head of the Department of Sociology at Queen's University (beamishr@queensu.ca, 613-533-6000 x 74475) at any time to discuss these procedures. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics board of Queen's University at 613-533-6081.

1. I have read the attached Letter of Information about the study being conducted by Shanlea Gordon (under the supervision of Vincent F. Sacco), of the Department of Sociology at Queen's University.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions about my potential participation in this study, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I agree that my interview can be tape recorded.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D

### Interview Schedule

*Although pre-determined questions were devised prior to the interviews, these questions do not represent a standardized set of items that would have been asked in the same order or even posed to all respondents. It is more appropriate to think of this interview schedule as a list of topics most likely to be discussed with respondents, as I typically tailored the interviews to the experiences of the specific interviewees.*

#### TOPIC 1: DEFINING HOOKING UP

What's the nightlife like at Eastern on campus? What about off campus?

Do you and your friends go out a lot?

When you're at a bar or a club, what's going on around you?

- Probe: the dance floor

One of the things I wanted to talk to people about was dating on campus. Would you say you or your friends are asked out on a fair amount of dates at Eastern?

- How do you meet (guys/girls) then?
- (If boyfriend or girlfriend, discuss relationship)

If you had to define the term *hooking up* for someone who had never heard of it before, what would you say?

#### TOPIC 2: THE HOOKUP SCENE AT EASTERN

What is a typical hookup scenario at Eastern like? What happens?

Where do people usually meet up before they hook up?

- (If bars/parties, then: "Does alcohol play a role in hooking up?")

What typically happens after a hookup? Do you talk/hang out?

Can hookups ever evolve into relationships?

- Probe: "the talk"

How do you or your friends feel right after you've hooked up with someone?

- What about a week or two later?

### TOPIC 3: RISKS

Why do you think male students want to hook up? What are they benefitting from it?

Why do you think female students want to hook up? What are they benefitting from it?

- (If ‘desire for commitment’: “Do you think most girls are looking for hookups, or some form of commitment?”)

Do you think hooking up is equally beneficial for guys and girls?

What are some things you or your friends might worry about when hooking up with someone?

- If STIs, probe RE: condom/dental dam usage

### TOPIC 4: DEALING WITH THE RISKS

Do you think that (you/your friends) are generally aware of some of these consequences you’ve mentioned?

Do (you/your friends) ever reflect upon these risks at all?

So if hooking up is seemingly not so great, how come (you/your friends) hook up?

- Probe: (any reasons mentioned earlier on in interview)

Do you ever do or say things that might help to sort of deflect some of these risks?