

**Dating and Hookups:
A Look at Intimate Experiences
among Current College Students**

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Abstract. Romantic interactions are a large part of the college experience for many students, but a recent trend on college campuses shows a progression away from the traditional date and towards the culture of the "hookup." We used an online survey to examine students' dating and hookup experiences at St. Olaf, a small, private, liberal arts college in the upper Midwest. We tested the hypotheses that the traditional date is being replaced by the hookup, that alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups, and that it is more acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups. From our results, we found that there is no difference between the prevalence of dates (outside of a relationship) and hookups at St. Olaf, that alcohol is present in the majority of students' hookup experiences, and that women are viewed more negatively than men for hooking up. Our research adds to the growing body of knowledge about dating and hookups on college campuses and provides a look at the intimate experiences of students in a college setting.

Review of Literature

There is an ever growing body of research about intimate relationships on college campuses, specifically about dating and hookups. According to England and Thomas (2007), the end of the period of courtship and the start of the dating era in the 1920s began what has since been a prominent theme: the ever shifting patterns of the intimate experiences of college students. We now find ourselves entering into a new era as the traditional date, while still practiced, is becoming less common as patterns of intimate relationships among college students are once again changing. Current research indicates a shift away from the traditional dating styles of the past towards group dating and hookups.

Dating is not as prevalent on college campuses as it once was but traditional gender roles and stereotypes still pervade the dating scene today. Bogle (2005) describes the traditional dating script, in which sexual intimacy between college students becomes a possibility only after a period of dating. A defining factor in this traditional dating script is strict adherence to gender roles in which men are the initiators of both the date itself and of sexual intimacy. Rose and Frieze (1989) found that women in the 1980's were likely to wait to be asked on a date and to play a more subordinate role, while men were expected to initiate, plan, and pay for the date, a pattern that Serewicz and Gale (2008) also found in first-date scripts today. Rose and Frieze (1989) discovered other gendered stereotypes, such as a higher concern in men than in women about the appearance of their date, and an overall lower level of acceptability for female-initiated dates than male-initiated dates. While Rose and Frieze (1989) concluded that this maintenance of gender roles was viewed favorably by both men and women, there is some dissent as more current research shows greater gender equality in dating roles and expectations. For example, Petteri and Abplanalp Jr. (2004) discovered that women and men were equally concerned about the physical attractiveness of their date, showing that pressures of appearance are now more equally shared by the two genders.

One divergence from these traditional one-on-one dating patterns is dating in a group setting (Gallmeier, Knox, and Zusman 2002; England and Thomas 2007; Serewicz and Gale 2008). For example, Gallmeier et al. (2002) found that college students who were younger and not in an exclusive relationship were more likely to go on group dates than on one-on-one dates. However, in many cases these group dates were not defined as a "real" date, and nearly 70% of college students reported they were more likely to go out as a couple rather than with a group (Gallmeier et al. 2002). According to England and Thomas (2007), college students thought being invited to a social event such as a fraternity party or a basketball game did not constitute a real date, and in general the term "dating" was reserved for students already involved in an

“exclusive romantic relationship” (2007: 152). Rarely defined as a real date, group dates often provide environments that are likely to lead up to a hookup. For example, Serewicz and Gale (2008) discovered that first date scenarios that took place at a keg party, which is a group date environment, were more likely than a date at a coffee shop to result in expectations of a sexual interaction that involves more than a goodnight kiss.

Another divergence from traditional dating scripts is the shift away from the traditional date and towards the phenomenon of the hookup in college culture (England and Thomas 2007; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000; Bogel 2005; Freitas and Winner 2008). Scholars studying these intimate relations use different definitions of a hookup. Bogle (2005) explains how the hookup represents the “reversal of the traditional ‘date first, sex later’ formula” and claims that college students today are more likely to have a sexual encounter before considering going on a date. Paul et al. define the hookup as “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances,” which may or may not include sexual intercourse (2000: 76). England and Thomas (2007) prefer a broader definition of the hookup, where something sexual happens between two people who likely know each other that usually involves alcohol and may or may not lead to a relationship. Bogle (2005) also cites Marquardt (2001), where a hookup is defined as “when a girl and a guy get together for a physical encounter and don’t necessarily expect anything further.”

Because in college culture the hookup is a vague and complex concept, Bogle (2005) supports a broader definition of the hookup and criticizes strict definitions that are not inclusive of the range of sexual experiences outside of intercourse or do not take into account the previous relationship, if any, between the hookup partners. Bogel (2005) recognizes that this ambiguity allows college students to talk about their sexual experiences without “kissing and telling,” but also thinks that some sort of universal definition that encompasses all of these complex aspects is needed so that researchers and students alike can eliminate confusion and better describe the hookup culture.

A significant number of college students report having hooked up at least once. Penhollow, Young and Bailey (2007) found that in a sample of 459 college students, 64% of males and 47% of females reported having ever hooked up, and of sexually active students, 35% indicated that they had participated in sexual intercourse at least once in the context of hooking up. However, in a study of 555 undergraduate students, Paul et al. (2000) found that the number of hookups was consistent among college men and women, and 78% of respondents reported having a hookup that included a sexual interaction, but not necessarily sexual intercourse. The range of sexual experiences that falls under the umbrella of “hookup” is further

demonstrated by England and Thomas (2007), whose study of 615 undergraduate students found that 80% reported at least one hookup involving anything from kissing and non-genital touching to genital stimulation, oral sex, and intercourse. Studies have shown that males reported more hookups involving sexual intercourse than females (Paul et al. 2000; Penhollow et al. 2007).

Much of the research focusing on hookups discusses the role of alcohol in hookups. A study done by Marquardt (2001) found that students typically participated in hooking up behavior following the consumption of alcohol. Bogle (2005) went as far as to include alcohol in her definition of the hookup stating that alcohol is available and often consumed as part of the hookup. Paul et al. (2000) reports that there was a direct correlation between the level of alcohol intoxication and the level of sexual involvement in a hookup, with severe intoxication being a distinguishing factor between coital and noncoital hookups. England and Thomas (2007) found that of students who had engaged in hookups, 87% reported the involvement of alcohol, of which 28% were extremely impaired with a blood alcohol content estimated at 0.12 or more. Not only did alcohol cause students to go further sexually than they planned, it also served as a social lubricant to purposely lower inhibitions for those who wished to engage in a hookup.

Along with alcohol, religion appears to have a significant impact on the decision to engage in a hookup. Surprisingly, in their study of 455 students at public schools and private Catholic and Evangelical schools, Freitas and Winter (2008) discovered that among the religious schools, Catholics reported participating in more hookups than students of other denominations. However, the hookup is not exclusive to Catholics as more and more students at religiously affiliated universities are detaching themselves from their religious beliefs and engaging in hookups. Conversely, in a sample of 1,000 college students, Fehring, Cheever, and German (1998) found a strong inverse relationship between religiosity indicators (participation in organized religious activity, church attendance, and prayer) and frequency of coital activity and hookups. Religiosity was strongly related to sexual guilt and inversely related to sexual permissiveness. Similarly, Penhollow, Young, and Denny (2005) demonstrated that for both female and male college students, those who reported less frequent worship attendance and weaker religious feelings were more likely to report participating in sexual behaviors.

This body of literature provides a foundation of knowledge for a better understanding of dating and hookups on college campuses and also varying definitions and contradictory findings that we hope to clarify in our research. This literature spans a broad variety of issues related to dating and hooking up, giving us several themes to consider when formulating our specific research questions. For example, as St. Olaf is a college associated with the Lutheran Church,

our literature provides perspectives on the role of religion in sexual activities such as hooking up that needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting our findings or considering their application to the wider population of American college students. Limitations of the prior studies include exclusion of non-heterosexual couples, lack of racial and ethnic diversity, and multiple ambiguous definitions of hookups.

To examine the culture of intimate relationships on the St. Olaf campus, specifically dating and hookups, we developed definitions for the concepts “date” and “hookup” that incorporate the various definitions that we found in our literature. We wish to determine whether or not the hookup has become more common than the traditional date for St. Olaf students; to investigate the relationship between alcohol and hookups, sexual intercourse and hookups, and the differences between perceptions and experiences of these two variables; and to investigate the difference in social acceptability for men and women engaging in hookups and gender differences in responses. After reviewing this literature, we developed three hypotheses:

1. The traditional date is being replaced by the hookup.
2. Alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups.
3. It is more acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups.

Methods

In order to describe the dating and hookup scene on college campuses and to explore our research objectives, we collected data from an online survey questionnaire that was administered in the fall of 2008 to students at St. Olaf College, a small, private, liberal arts college in the upper Midwest. Questions included fill in the blank factual questions, an experiential checklist, Likert-scale style attitude questions, and two brief multiple choice demographic questions. Questions focused on the central concepts of dating and hookups in terms of students’ experiences and perceptions, focusing specifically on the variables of alcohol and gender in hookups.

Students were prompted to respond about their experiences relating to traditional dating and the more recent trend of “hooking up.” Respondents first reported the number of dates they had been on after prompted with the definition of a “date” as “a one-on-one encounter that occurs during school terms with the same or various partners. It is arranged in advance with romantic intentions and can include anything from a planned ‘Caf date’ to a more ‘traditional date.’” They also reported their perceptions of the college dating scene by rating their agreement with the following statements using the Likert scale options of “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat

Agree,” Somewhat Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree”: “At St. Olaf, dates mainly occur between people already in a relationship,” and “Students go on dates often at St. Olaf.”

Respondents reported the number of hookups that they had had so far during their college experience after prompted with the definition of “hookup” as “a sexual act that may or may not include sexual intercourse between two people that are not currently in a relationship and do not have expectations of a commitment.” Hookup experience was assessed using a measure we adapted from Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000) in their study of hookups. In our study, students were asked to think back to a typical hookup and check all that apply on a list of descriptors: “Involved alcohol,” “Involved sexual intercourse,” “Was with someone you knew for less than 24 hours.” To compare perceptions to reality, participants were also asked to rate their agreement with the following statements using the Likert scale response options “Most hookups involve alcohol,” and “Hookups usually involve sexual intercourse.”

In order to examine the perceptions of gender relating to hookups, respondents were asked to rate their agreement using the Likert scale for the following statement: “It is more socially acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups,” “Men engage in more hookups than women,” “Women engage in more hookups than men,” “A woman gets a bad reputation for hooking up often,” and “A man gets a bad reputation for hooking up often.” We also asked students to indicate their self-identified gender in the demographic section.

To ensure the success of our research and our ability to generalize it to the St. Olaf student body, we addressed issues of validity and reliability. In order to achieve face validity, a measurement that indicates an understanding and acceptance of constructs and measures by those in the social scientific community, our research questions and measures were reviewed multiple times by ourselves, by our peers who are currently researching in the same field, by Kate Virkler, a student statistics fellow from the Center for Interdisciplinary Research, and by Ryan Sheppard, our professor and supervisor. To address content validity, which is a measurement representing all of the characteristics of a theoretical description of a construct, we used conceptualization, operationalization, and further peer review of all aspects of our concepts (Neuman 2007:118). We developed our constructs and measurements based on our objectives and hypotheses: the hookup occurs more often than the traditional date, alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups, and women who engage in hookups are viewed more negatively than men.

To improve reliability, and to ensure that we would obtain similar results if our study was repeated with a different sample in a similar population, we used four key points from Neuman (2007) as a guide. We clearly conceptualized our concepts through several revisions, we

increased our levels of measurement by asking students to fill in numbers of dates and hookups instead of using an arbitrary scale, we used multiple indicators for our variables when we investigated gender difference in the acceptability of engaging in hookups, and we pilot-tested within our research methods class as a trial run to get feedback before the survey was administered to the larger student body (Neuman 2007: 116). We also created definitions for “date” and “hookup” to clarify our questions and to make measures related to them more dependable and consistent.

The larger target population for this study is American college students and the accessible population is St. Olaf College students. To obtain a sample from our population, we used a simple random sampling procedure, meaning each student had an equal and independent chance of participating in our study, with some exclusions. Students in our research methods class (Soc/An 371 A & B) and those who are currently studying abroad, under 18, not studying full-time, and who participated in the focus groups we conducted as preliminary research were excluded from our sample. Susan Canon, Director of Institutional Research at St. Olaf, then ran a random sample of this modified population using a computer program, providing us with an e-mail alias of students that we could reach anonymously for participation in our survey. Our attempted sample size was 540 students, which accounts for about 20% of the total student population at St. Olaf after exclusions. Out of this initial number contacted for participation in the study, 315 responded, resulting in a response rate of 58.3%. Excluding missing data, the demographic characteristics of our sample were similar to those of the entire student body: 37 % male (119), 61 % female (193), 0.3% other (1), 24 % first-years (77), 26% sophomores (81), 23% juniors (73), 21% seniors (67), 4.8% other (15). Our sample was mostly white 91% (280), 3% Asian American (10), 1% Black/African American (3), 1% Hispanic (3), and 4% other (13). 91% of our sample was heterosexual (285), 3% homosexual (10), 3% bisexual (9), and 2.5% other (8).

Before the survey was administered, the St. Olaf Institutional Review Board (IRB) examined and approved the survey according to federal regulations and the St. Olaf Code of Ethics. The purpose of the IRB is to respect and protect project participants and take into consideration the legal and ethical implications of the research. Two main ethical issues in our study were privacy and informed consent. To attend to privacy, our online questionnaire survey could be completed privately and at the student’s leisure. The anonymous alias ensured that personal information was not linked to the completed surveys we received. We presented all potential participants with a cover letter explaining our research and the implications of their participation in our survey. By completing the survey, students indicated their agreement and

consent after reading the cover letter. Special populations, such as students who were not 18 years of age, were asked not to participate (Neuman 2007: 55). While there was no coercion to participate, we encouraged participation through the chance to win one of five \$20 gift cards to the college bookstore. Students that chose not to participate were not penalized, and during the survey process students had the right to withdraw at any time without explanation or negative consequences.

Results

To describe the dating scene, we found that 57% of students surveyed reported having gone on at least one date, 43% had never been on a date, and the mean number of dates of all students was 10. Of students who had been on at least one date, 28% responded that none (0%) of those dates were with someone they were already in a relationship with, and 28% responded that all (100%) of those dates were with someone they were already in a relationship with. The mean percentage of dates in a relationship was 60%. Using the data from two variables, “number of dates” and “percent of dates in a relationship,” we calculated that 41% of students surveyed had been on at least one date with someone they were not currently in a relationship with. The mean number of dates students experienced outside of a relationship during their time at St. Olaf was 2.1, and of students that had been on at least one date outside of a relationship (excluding responses of “0”), the mean number of dates was 6.9. When asked about their perceptions of the dating scene at St. Olaf, 81% agreed with the statement, “At St. Olaf, dates mainly occur between people already in a relationship.” In response to the statement, “Students go on dates often at St. Olaf,” 43% agreed and 57% disagreed.

In terms of hookups, 42% of students reported having engaged in at least one hookup, 58% had never engaged in a hookup, and the mean number of all hookups was 2.9. However, of the students who had engaged in at least one hookup (excluding responses of “0”), the mean number of hookups was 7.2. The highest number of hookups reported by one person during their time at St. Olaf was 60. In the typical hookup experiences reported by St. Olaf students, the majority involved alcohol (73%), involved two people who knew each other for more than 24 hours (75%), and did *not* involve sexual intercourse (79%). Male respondents had engaged in a mean of 3.4 hookups while women engage in a mean of 2.6 hookups. Interestingly, 93% of students agreed with the statement, “Men engage in more hookups than women,” while only 10% of students agreed with the statement, “Women engage in more hookups than men.”

To test our first hypothesis that the traditional date is being replaced by the hookup on the St. Olaf campus, we first graphed the distributions of the total number of hookups and the

total number of dates not in a relationship (calculated by using the total number of dates and the percent of dates in a relationship). The responses were greatly weighted around zero which we thought might skew our means, so we decided to remove the zeros before running a paired-sample *t* test (see Table 1). A paired-sample *t* test was calculated to compare the mean number of dates outside of a relationship excluding zeros to the mean number of hookups excluding zeros (see Table 2).

Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics Comparing Number of Dates and Hookups

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|----------------------------|--------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pair 1 | Number of Dates not zero | 6.9108 | 63 | 10.00535 | 1.26056 |
| | Number of Hookups not zero | 7.22 | 63 | 7.210 | .908 |

Table 2: Paired Samples Test Comparing Number of Dates and Hookups

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|---------|-------|----|-----------------|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 Number of Dates not zero - Number of Hookups not zero | -.31143 | 10.94179 | 1.37854 | -3.06708 | 2.44423 | -.226 | 62 | .822 |

The mean number of dates outside of a relationship excluding zeros was 6.91 (*sd* = 10.0), and the mean number of hookups excluding zeros was 7.22 (*sd* = 7.21). With *p* = .822, we are not able to reject the null hypothesis, as no significant difference between number of dates and number of hookups was found (*t* (62) = -.226, *p* > .05). Our hypothesis that the traditional date is being replaced by the hookup was not supported.

An independent-samples *t* test was calculated to compare the mean number of hookups of men and the mean number of hookups of women (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3: Group Statistics of Gender Difference in Number of Hookups

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------------------|--------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total number of Hookups | Male | 119 | 3.38 | 7.700 | .706 |
| | Female | 189 | 2.61 | 5.624 | .409 |

Table 4: Independent Samples Test of Gender Difference in Number of Hookups

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Total number of Hookups | Equal variances assumed | 3.246 | .073 | 1.004 | 306 | .316 | .764 | .761 | -.733 | 2.262 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .937 | 196.665 | .350 | .764 | .816 | -.845 | 2.373 |

With $p=0.073$, no significant difference was found ($t(306) = 1.00$, $p>.05$). The mean number of hookups of men ($m = 3.38$, $sd = 7.70$) was not significantly different from the mean number of hookups of women ($m = 2.62$, $sd = 5.62$). We found no significant difference between the mean number of hookups that men and women had engaged in.

To test our second hypothesis that alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups, we used a Rossman/Chance Applet to run a normal approximation to the binomial distribution. This test was calculated comparing the number of respondents whose typical hookup experiences involved alcohol to the number respondents whose typical hookup experiences did not involve alcohol. We tested the probability of getting 96 respondents that answered "yes" out of 132 respondents that had engaged in at least one hookup given that their hypothetical probability of saying "yes" or "no" is equal (50%). Our test statistic was $z = 5.22$, and with $p = 0.0$,

we reject the null hypothesis and obtained a 95% confidence interval of the sample proportion (.651, .803). These results support our alternative hypothesis that alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups.

To test our third hypothesis that it is more acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups, we created a Sexism Hookup Index by combining three Likert variables, “It is more socially acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups,” “A woman gets a bad reputation for hooking up often,” and “A man gets a bad reputation for hooking up often.” Respondents scored 1-4 on each question based on their level of agreement, with possible composite scores ranging from 3-12. A higher score on the index indicates that the respondent believes women are viewed more negatively than men for hooking up, while a lower score indicates that the respondent believes that men are viewed more negatively than women for hooking up. A score of 7.5 would indicate that the belief that men and women are viewed equally negatively for hooking up. A single-sample *t* test compared the mean Sexism Hookup Index score to a test value of 7.5.

Figure 1: Distribution of scores on our Sexism Hookup Index

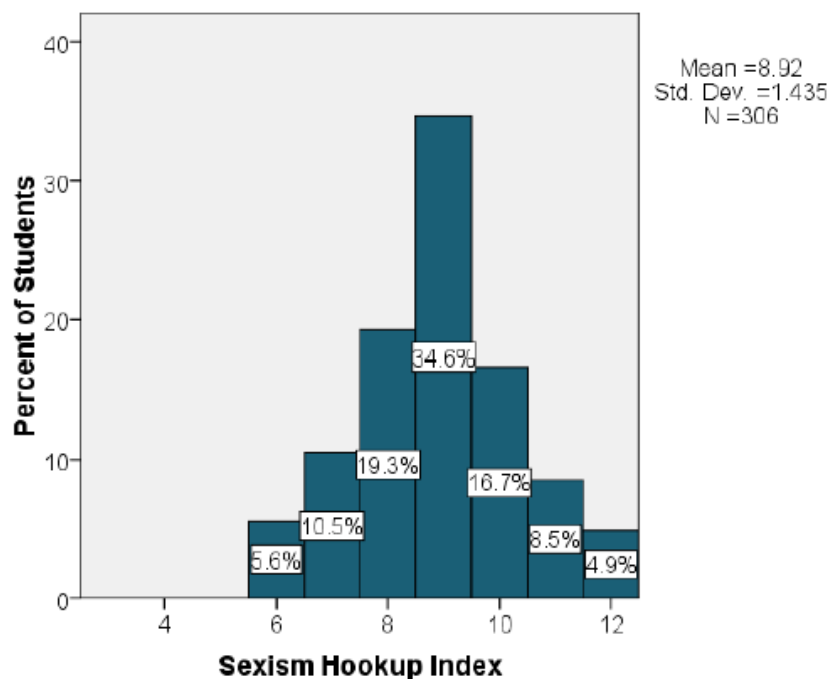


Table 5: One-Sample Statistics of Sexism Hookup Index

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Sexism Hookup Index | 306 | 8.9150 | 1.43469 | .08202 |

Table 6: One-Sample Test of Sexism Hookup Index

| | Test Value = 7.5 | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Sexism Hookup Index | 17.253 | 305 | .000 | 1.41503 | 1.2536 | 1.5764 |

With $p = 0.00$, a significant difference was found ($t(305) = 17.25$, $p < .05$). The sample mean of 8.92 ($sd = 1.43$) was significantly greater than the test mean (See Figure 1, Table 5 and Table 6). We were able to reject the null hypothesis, and our hypothesis that it is more acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups was supported.

We used an independent samples t test to compare the mean Sexism Hookup Index scores of males and females to determine the differences in perceptions between men and women of the social acceptability of hookups for men and women (see Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 7: Group Statistics of Gender Difference in Sexism Hookup Index Score

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|--------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Sexism Hookup Index | Male | 116 | 8.6983 | 1.39701 | .12971 |
| | Female | 189 | 9.0476 | 1.44872 | .10538 |

Table 8: Independent Samples Test of Gender Difference in Sexism Hookup Index Score

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sexism Hookup Index | Equal variances assumed | .204 | .652 | -2.072 | 303 | .039 | -.34934 | .16858 | -.68109 | -.01760 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.090 | 250.225 | .038 | -.34934 | .16712 | -.67849 | -.02020 |

With $p=0.652$, no significant difference was found ($t(303) = -2.07$, $p > .05$). The mean score of male respondents ($m = 8.70$, $sd = 1.40$) was not significantly different from the mean score of female respondents ($m = 9.05$, $sd = 1.45$) and we are not able to reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion

Our data provided us with a better picture of the dating and hookup scene at St. Olaf and addressed our three main hypotheses and our other research questions. Our first hypothesis that the traditional date is being replaced by the hookup was not supported by our findings, but our data did support our hypotheses that alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups and that it is more acceptable for men than for women to engage in hookups.

For our first hypothesis, it was unanticipated that there would no significant difference between the mean number of dates outside of a relationship and the mean number of hookups that students engaged in. All of our literature about hookups pointed towards the trend of hookups more or less replacing dating in intimate relationships of college students. One alternative explanation for this discrepancy is the fact that St. Olaf is a college affiliated with the church, which may mean that the correlation between religiosity and sexual conservatism decreases sexual activity outside of relationships as compared to other secular universities. Also, even though our data found that the hookup is not *replacing* the date, it is still a significant aspect of St. Olaf college students' intimate experiences. Whether or not it is *new* phenomenon

or represents an increase from the past is difficult to determine, as it is possible that the hookup has been around for a long time but is only recently being addressed in social science research as an alternative to traditional dating.

As anticipated in our second hypothesis, alcohol plays a role in the majority of typical hookups reported, a finding that is in agreement with previous research (Bogle 2005, England et al. 2007, Marquardt 2001, Paul et al. 2000). One possible explanation is that students that engage in risky activities such as heavy drinking are also more likely to engage in hookups, and students that are very religious are unlikely to engage in both heavy drinking and hookups. Potential explanations for the specific role alcohol plays are that alcohol lowers inhibitions and increases the chances of sexual activities that wouldn't occur when sober, or that it is used as a social lubricant for a student who has already decided to engage in a hookup.

While there was not significant difference in the number of hookups that men and women engage in, we found support for our hypothesis that women are viewed more negatively for hooking up than men. This evidence of the double standard of acceptability for the sexual activities of men and women reflects the maintenance of traditional gender roles in college students' intimate experiences that some of our literature described (Rose 1989; Seal et al. 2003). Also, while we didn't find a significant difference between the responses of men and women on our Sexism Hookup Index, women did have a higher mean score, suggesting that women who hookup more often may be viewed more negatively by other women than by men.

Conclusion

In our study of the intimate experiences of college students, we looked specifically at the dating and hookup scene at St. Olaf College. We discovered that less than half of the students reported going on at least one date outside of a relationship, less than half reported engaging in at least one hookup, and that there was not significant difference between the mean number of dates outside of a relationship and hookups engaged in by Saint Olaf students. We also found that alcohol was involved more often than not in hookups. Finally, even though there is not a significant gender difference in the mean number of hookups, women are viewed more negatively than men for hooking up. Our research adds to scientific knowledge about the intimate experiences of college students. By not indicating a trend away from dating and towards hooking up, our results suggest the need to continue investigation in this field and explore the possibility that hooking up is not new, but is only recently being studied. Our research provides clearly conceptualized definitions for the ambiguous terms "date" and "hookup" that more accurately depict the college experience today.

The results of our study may be used by college administration to get a better picture of current college students' intimate experiences and to better provide for their needs. Many students do engage in hookups at St. Olaf and would benefit from information and resources about safety in sexual intimacy, pertaining to both sexual intercourse and alcohol use. Evidence of the double standard of the sexual activities of men and women could be addressed as a social justice issue in classrooms or used as a platform for seeking gender equality. Finally, the fact that less than half of the participants reported hookup experience may eliminate potential embarrassment or pressure felt for never having engaged in a hookup and may expose the "everyone's doing it" attitude that gets exaggerated in the conversations and thoughts of students when it comes to hookups.

Strengths of our research included the high response rate from our random sampling procedure that resulted in a demographically representative sample of our population and the online survey questionnaire that decreased the risk of bias when responding to sensitive questions about intimate experiences. Extensive peer review and statistics consulting throughout the process increased the reliability and validity of our results. However, limitations included a fairly homogenous sample and difficulties generalizing to the larger American college student population beyond our small, private, liberal arts college associated with the Lutheran faith. Other limitations were the time constraint of developing, conducting, and analyzing our research in only a semester, and space constraints of a shared survey.

Future research on this topic could develop longitudinal, qualitative, or comparison studies to further assess whether or not the trend away from dating and towards hooking up is present on the St. Olaf campus and other college and university campuses. Additional studies may investigate the possibility that hooking up is *not* a new phenomenon and further research the causal role of alcohol in hookups. Looking back, we would improve our Sexism Hookup Index to more accurately measure the gender double standard in hookups, and ask directly how many dates *outside of a relationship* students have been on to more accurately compare numbers of dates and hookups.

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Appendix: Additional Data Analysis for
Dating and Hookups: A look at Intimate Experiences among Current College Students
Kate Virkler

After the final paper for “Dating and Hookups” was handed in at the end of fall semester 2008, further analysis was conducted on the data to investigate some additional hypotheses.

Upon the finding of significant results that alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups, we were interested in investigating whether or not gender played a role in alcohol use. Of the students that reported having engaged in at least one hookup, 33 of 48 males (69%) and 63 of 84 females (75%) said that alcohol was involved in a typical hookup. Since our sample size was relatively small, we used a Fisher’s exact test to compare alcohol involvement in hookups between genders, obtaining a p-value of .543. Therefore, while alcohol is involved more often than not in hookups, there does not seem to be any significant difference between males and females in the use of alcohol in hookups.

Since 79% of respondents who have had at least one hookup said that sexual intercourse is *not* part of their typical hookup experience, we were interested in testing whether people who hookup more often are more likely to have sex during a typical hookup. To test this hypothesis a binary variable was created to identify respondents with high and low hookup levels among people who have had at least one hookup. The median number of hookups for people who have had at least one hookup is 4, so we defined a low hookup level as 1 to 4 hookups and a high hookup level as 5 or more hookups. A Fisher’s exact test was performed and resulted in a p-value of .136. Therefore, we did not find significant evidence to indicate that people who hook up more often are more likely to have sex during a typical hookup.

| Sex During Typical Hookup | Low Hookup Level | High Hookup Level | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| No | 63 (83%) | 38 (72%) | 101 (78%) |
| Yes | 13 (17%) | 15 (28%) | 28 (22%) |
| Total | 76 | 53 | 129 |

We were also interested in investigating whether or not one’s hookup experience affects how they view the hookup experience of other people. We looked at respondents who had reported at least one hookup and compared their personal sexual intercourse experience during a typical hookup to their agreement or disagreement to the statement, “Sex is often involved in

hookups". Of the 28 respondents who reported having sex during their hookup experience, 57% agreed that sex was typically involved, while 43% disagreed. Of the 104 respondents that reported sex was not involved in their hookup experience, 25% agreed sex was typically involved while 75% disagreed. We used a Fisher's exact test since the sample sizes were small and got a p-value of .002. This gives evidence that one's typical hookup experience affects their perspective of other people's hookup experience.

Multiple variables, such as alcohol use, sexual intercourse, class year, and the romantic index data (from Ring by Spring data), were also explored using logistic regression to see if there were any predictors for having a high or low level of hookups. However, none of these were statistically associated with whether or not a person has a high level of hookups.