Hookups, Shame and Gender

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Abstract

This descriptive study aimed to identify variables that play a role in the hookup culture of SUNY College at Oneonta's students. The sample included 57 students (16 male, 40 female, 1 no response). An online survey was employed for gathering data. The information gathered included demographic information (gender, age, and sexual orientation). Participants were asked to describe a recent hookup using guiding questions such as, "where they met, the use of drugs and whether or not it was their first time involved in a hookup". Additional questions to identify emotions associated with hooking up were established. It was predicted that drug use would be a very prevalent factor in college hook ups. The prediction was supported by the data, with alcohol proving to be widely used by 52.6 percent of our sample. No conclusions can be drawn from the data, however it does provide us with insight.

Results

Descriptive data was collected and graphed. Females were the most responsive to the survey, being 70.20% of the data. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 23 years old (98.20%) and 87.70% of the participants identified as heterosexual. Participants were asked if they were acquainted with their partner before the hookup, in what setting they met, and whether alcohol or other drugs were involved. Eighty six percent were acquainted with their partner, while 35.10% met at a house party or club and 70.20% admitted to having used alcohol or other drugs.

Participants were asked to think of what happened after the hookup, specifically whether they saw the person again, if their feelings about the hookup were positive, negative or neutral and whether they told anyone, and whom. Eighty four percent saw the partner again, 57.90% said their feelings towards the hook up were positive, 15.80% negative and 26.30% said their feelings were neutral. Eighty nine percent of the participants stated that they told someone about their hookup (56.10%, 15.80%, 3.50% told a friend, roommate, and family member, respectively). The primary reaction of the people who the participants told of their encounter was support (24.60%), the least common reaction was laughter (5.30%). Closing questions asking the participants whether it was their first time and if they would engage in a hookup again showed 78.90% having had a previous hookup, and 54.40% saying they would hookup again.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify what variables play a role in the hookup culture of SUNY College at Oneonta. It was hypothesized that drug use would be a strong variable in hooking up. The results supported this hypothesis, with the majority of participants admitting some drug use, and the drug of choice, for those who responded was alcohol.

Littleton et al. (2009) in previous research found that alcohol and other drugs are typically involved in a hookup. That finding overlapped with our observance of alcohol being the major drug in hookups. There is evidence contrary to the findings of Townsend and Wasserman (2011), that females tend to leave a hookup with negative feelings, however in this study it was observed that the majority of females reported having positive or neutral feelings.

There were certain limitations to this study. The design did not take into consideration racial demographics, or class level of the participants. The small sample size of the study was also a limitation, even more so because there was not an even male to female ratio. Not being able to draw conclusions was a big limitation on this study, it might have delivered us with even more insight into the hookup culture at SUNY Oneonta.

To improve upon this study, a larger sample size would be beneficial in applying the observed factors to a larger population. Expanding this study to middle aged or older adults could give insight into whether that age group also engage in the behaviors associated with hooking up. A cross cultural approach, would examine what factors are at play in hookups in other countries versus the United States.

Introduction

A hookup has been described by Paul and Hayes (2002; 2000), as "a spontaneous sexual encounter, with or without intercourse, between two individuals with no prior romantic relationship." Much of the research evaluating the phenomenon of the hookup culture often focused on the regret that college women face, with very little emphasis being placed on college male’s emotional affect.

"College students appear to be increasingly engaging in casual, non-committed sexual relationships" (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales & Backstrom, 2009). According to Rhoads (2012) “the vast majority of [women] seem very unhappy with the dominant hookup culture.” Research has stated that men and women get a very different feedback when they engage in hookups. Women tend to have negative feelings and memories, while men have more positive feels, which would stimulate them to continue hooking up (Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Most college students believe that alcohol or other drugs are typically involved in hookups (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales & Backstrom, 2009).

The current study aims to identify variables that play a role in the hookup culture of SUNY College at Oneonta’s students. Based on previous research we are looking to identify emotional affect in males as well as females. It was hypothesized that drug use would be a prominent factor in hooking up.

Method

The participants in this study consisted of 57 students (16 male, 40 female, 1 no response) who were recruited using flyers around campus. All participants were between the ages of 18-25 years of age and were presented with an anonymous online survey. Participants were only included in the study if they provided informed consent and identified that they had an experience much like the one described by Paul and Hayes (2002; 2000). Participants were also encouraged to utilize the Health and Wellness Counselling Center if they experienced strong feelings as a result of the survey.

The survey, which included basic demographic questions such as age, gender, and sexual orientation, focused on asking participants to describe a recent hookup in as much detail as possible (where did you meet, were drugs involved, etc…). Participants were asked on the survey not to provide any identifying information for themselves or their partner, in order to better protect their identities. The survey was open and available online for 50 days.

References


