Dating and Hooking up: An Analysis of Hooking up as a Campus Norm and the Impact on Women’s Self Perception

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Sarah L. Skrobot
August 2010

© 2010 Sarah L. Skrobot. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
Dating and Hooking up: An Analysis of Hooking up as a Campus Norm and the Impact
on Women’s Self Perception

by

SARAH L. SKROBOT

has been approved for
the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
and the College of Arts and Sciences by

_________________________________________
Debra A. Henderson
Associate Professor of Sociology

_________________________________________
Benjamin M. Ogles
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
ABSTRACT

SKROBOT, SARAH L., M.A., August 2010, Sociology

Dating and Hooking up: An Analysis of Hooking up as a Campus Norm and the Impact on Women’s Self Perception (138 pp.)

Director of thesis: Debra A. Henderson

According to literature hooking up has become the social norm for male and female intimate interaction on college campuses, traditional dating no longer is. Historically, how men and women participate in dating has transitioned alongside larger social changes. Literature suggests that dating trends have changed over time and that the new form of intimate interaction, hooking up, has come to replace dating on the college campus. Research indicates that people are now participating in hooking up, sexual behaviors without commitment with an acquaintance or someone they just met, more frequently than following the customs of traditional dating. However, how these cultural practices affect women’s self perceptions and self esteem is almost non-existent in the literature. The goal of this study was to expand upon this knowledge base as well as discover if hooking up is taking place at a midwestern campus like it is on the East Coast as found in research conducted by Bogle. Through the implementation of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with fifteen heterosexual, undergraduate, women between the ages of 19-24, this research aimed to explore how women defined dating and hooking up and how these interactions affect their perceptions of self and self-esteem.

After analyzing the data through a three step coding scheme proposed by Strauss (1987), the results indicated that women believed hooking up was the campus norm and was occurring more frequently than the traditional date. All of the women were able to define
what a date and dating were but the majority of the women had not been asked out on very many traditional dates. Furthermore, all of the women knew what hooking up was but there was confusion as to the exact starting point, whether it had to be a stranger or friend, and how often it occurred with the same person. Individually women wanted equality for participating in hooking up, however, reflecting on how society views their participation, it was evident there was still a sexual double standard present. Additionally, it became evident that women’s perceptions of self were contingent upon whether the dating relationship or experience of their hook up was overall positive or negative. In conclusion, the current study’s findings support previous research that indicates the campus norm is hooking up, not dating. Additionally, the findings suggest that hooking up is not regionally bound since it was also found at a midwestern university.

Approved: ______________________________________________________

Debra A. Henderson

Associate Professor of Sociology
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my thesis chair, Debra A. Henderson, for all her patience and guidance throughout the hours spent reading my drafts that resulted in a finished product that I am proud of. I appreciate all the sociological wisdom and the words of inspiration that she has provided me since I first took her class as an undergraduate. Thank you Deb for always being there when I felt stressed and overwhelmed, you’re an incredible listener who is a genuinely wonderful and caring advisor to her students.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Christine Mattley who stepped up and provided excellent support throughout the beginning stages of IRB and thesis writing. Thank you for your contributions and insights regarding “the self” which helped to further develop my final document. Furthermore, I would like to thank Thomas Vander Ven who contributed a vast base of knowledge about research on hooking up and drinking. This thesis developed into a stronger piece because of the guidance and encouragement from my entire committee and for that I am grateful.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Cindy Anderson for her contributions on this project. I would like to thank my close friends and wonderful boyfriend who provided support and encouragement throughout the thesis process. Thank you for volunteering your time to revise my thesis “for fun”, which most people would view as a serious chore. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents for all of the love, motivation, and work ethics they have given me. Thanks to you, I have always strived to do better and this thesis is a product of those ambitions. I love you mom and dad.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 3
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 5
Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 8
   An Overview of Courtship and Dating in History ................................................................. 15
      The Calling Era ........................................................................................................... 17
      The Dating Era ........................................................................................................ 18
      The Sexual Revolution .............................................................................................. 35
   An Overview of Current Dating Trends .............................................................................. 45
      Hooking Up ............................................................................................................... 50
      Sexual Double Standards ........................................................................................... 57
   Impact of Dating and Hooking Up on Self Perception ......................................................... 62
Chapter 3: Methodology .................................................................................................................. 67
   Design ........................................................................................................................................ 67
   Recruitment/Sampling ............................................................................................................ 69
   Participants ............................................................................................................................ 70
   Interview Procedure .............................................................................................................. 71
   Interview Analysis ................................................................................................................... 73
Chapter 4: Findings .......................................................................................................................... 75
   Perceptions of Dating .......................................................................................................... 75
      The Meaning of a Date and Dating ............................................................................. 76
      Process toward a Relationship/Dating ........................................................................ 79
      Being Asked on a Traditional Date, Not the Norm .................................................. 81
      Traditional Dating Declining ..................................................................................... 83
      Shifting Gender Roles ................................................................................................. 84
   Replacement of the Dating Norm: Hooking Up ............................................................... 86
      Definition & Ambiguity of Hooking Up ...................................................................... 86
      Perception of Gendered Participation ......................................................................... 88
      Double Standard Still Present But to a Lesser Degree ............................................. 91
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General versus Personal Views: Struggle for Equality</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Context: Frequency Matters for Both Men and Women</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals at Odds: Hooking Up Prerogatives Differ Between the Genders</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Risks for Women</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male and Female Interactions: Impact on Women’s Self Perception</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self and Dating/ Relationships</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Self and Hooking Up</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Directions</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Recruitment Flier</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix c: Interview Questions</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Dating is a trend that has been present for decades in America. According to research the emergence of dating is tied to a multitude of factors. Rice (1995) indicates that the industrial revolution was the most pivotal influence in pushing dating into popularity. Dating changed the realm of male and female interaction as we know it. Prior to the 1920’s men had to “call upon” women and be invited to visit the woman’s home under strict supervision from the family. Calling was a form of courtship that had very clearly delineated guidelines that, men and women were expected to follow (Bailey: 1988). Dating was further assisted by the invention of the automobile, providing young individuals to go out to places away from the watchful eyes of family and community members (England & Thomas: 2007). Bailey (1988) attributes the automobile as a factor that accelerated dating as a national practice but clarifies that the process of dating had began to emerge prior to the automobile. In addition, Laner and Vetrone address that “with the widespread use of cars and the commercialization of dating, men took control over what had previously been a domain under women’s guidance. The initiative and the responsibility for payment, then, became the province of men” (2000: 496). Furthermore, Rice (1995) specifies that after World War I the dating system became less formal and structured and shifted further away from the traditional style of men asking the women out, planning and paying for the date. England and Thomas state “after the advent of dating as a social form, dates were the pathway into romantic relationships, but not every date involved serious romantic interest on either side” (2007: 152). With the emergence of dating in the 1920’s important societal changes over the following decades would further impact the way in which men and women romantically interacted.
Bailey (1988) indicates that dating from the mid 1920’s to World War II was a competitive process that was centered on displaying men and women’s popularity through being a desired date. Willard Waller labeled this competitive dating strategy as the “rating and dating” system (Bailey: 1988: 26). Waller (1937) states that rating and dating had become a cultural practice on college campuses that consisted of men and women ranking each other based on popularity of being a desired or sought after date. With an increased number of women attending college it further influenced the rating and dating complex. Bogle indicates that rating and dating was the social norm and that “most young people looked down on exclusive dating relationships before one was ready to get engaged and marry” (2008: 16). The rating and dating complex dominated college cultural norms and practices of men and women up until the impact of World War II began to take hold on America.

World War II altered the face of dating in American culture as well. During the War many men left college and were off fighting for their country. Furthermore, women were entering the workforce more prevalently than ever before. Bailey states that “two of the most striking changes in postwar courtship were in the increased visibility of teenagers and the ever-earlier ages at which children entered the courtship system” (1988: 47). The impact of the War left a scarcity of men compared to previous years. Due to the shortage of men as well as the new economic growth that occurred after the War it led to a new form of dating that was known as going steady (Bogle: 2008). Bogle (2008) suggests that going steady was exclusive dating with one person and that people could go through multiple steadies before settling down on a marriage partner. The impact of
women having entered the workforce during and after the War led to another social movement during the 1960’s.

Another precedent setting decade in dating was the 1960’s with the sexual revolution, which further pushed for women’s equality and sexual freedom. England and Thomas (2007) indicate that prior to the 1950’s the social norm, or commonly accepted pattern of behavior, was that couples did not have intercourse outside of marriage and if the norm were violated, it was typically only when the couple was already planning on getting married. However, for men and women in college from the 1950’s to 1960’s social change was beginning to take hold. England and Thomas state that “if you wanted sex, except for the unusual ‘pick up’ or ‘one night stand’ situation, dates were pretty much the only way to move in that direction” (2007: 152). However, the sexual revolution provided further equality for women in regards to sexual standards. Oliver and Hyde (1993) attribute the introduction of the pill and more effective contraception methods during the 1960’s as contributors to further liberating women’s sexuality since there was a reduced fear of pregnancy. Since the sexual revolution it has also become more acceptable for women to take initiative in dating and sexual relationships. With the movement towards egalitarianism there have been changes in male and female interaction on the college campus since the 1960’s.

Current research on college campuses indicates that men and women are more frequently engaging in casual sex or what is known as hooking up. Hooking up carries a level of ambiguity but has been generally defined as a sexual encounter, anything from kissing to having sex, between men and women without implying any commitment
(Glenn & Marquardt: 2001). Bogle (2008) indicates that hooking up is not a new term but it is a slang term that was not referenced frequently in the media until the early twenty-first century. Furthermore, Bogle suggests “there is evidence that the term ‘hooking up’ – and presumably the practice – was being used by college students across the country since at least the mid 1980s” (2008: 7). Research proposes that dating is no longer the social norm on college campuses and that hooking up has become the trend. Glenn and Marquardt’s (2001) national study suggested that there are not widely understood social norms on college campuses to help women navigate dating and approaching marriage. The lack of clearly defined norms is reiterated when Glenn and Marquardt state “as a result, the culture of courtship, a set of social norms and expectations that once helped young people find the pathway to marriage, has largely become a hook up culture with almost no shared norms or expectations” (2001: 6). Therefore, hooking up or casual sex has become a college cultural norm while dating has began to decline in its prevalence.

Research suggests that women have either been on a few dates or have never been asked on a traditional date; where a man extends the invitation, plans, and pays for the activity, while in college (Bogle: 2005). With more women participating in hooking up and premarital sex outside of committed relationships there is debate over whether women are perceived equally to men for their participation in such sexual behaviors. Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (2009) indicate that across industrialized nations there are ideals of egalitarian relationships between men and women present and even though they are not equal yet, change has been significantly moving in that direction. With women
working towards equality they are encountering a double standard in regards to sexual behaviors.

The double standard suggests that when men have numerous intercourse partners it is viewed in a positive light, but if a woman were to have a lot of sexual partners she would be perceived in a negative manner (Marks & Fraley: 2007). According to Crawford and Popp (2003) the ideas of equality through the sexual revolution led to a single premarital sexual standard for youth. However, research on the double standard has presented mixed results with Crawford and Popp’s (2003) research suggesting that the double standard is influenced by situational and personal factors. A possible explanation for the presence of the double standard is the way in which men and women are socialized to approach dating and sexual activity. According to Lottes and Kuriloff “men have been socialized to enjoy their sexuality and to take active roles in initiating sexual activity with women. In contrast, women have been socialized to take passive or reactive roles in sexual interactions and to engage in sexual activity only in relationships characterized by romance, affection, love and commitment” (1994: 204). Therefore, the double standard for sexual activity still presents mixed findings in current research but some research shows that it is contextual and situational and a contributing factor as to the presence of the double standard is the socialization of gender norms for men and women. The presence of the double standard of sexual behavior is evident within hooking up.

According to Bogle (2007) how men and women conducted their sexual behavior is impacted by the double standard. As indicated previously, hooking up has become the
cultural norm on college campuses. Hooking up as suggested by Paul, McManus, and Hayes is some form of sexual encounter between two strangers or brief acquaintances and is usually spontaneous (2000). Therefore, hooking up or participating in sexual behaviors with someone outside of a committed relationship has become common place on campus and both men and women are participating. However, with the looming presence of the sexual double standard that gives women a more negative connotation than men for participating in the same sexual behaviors it will influence their participation in hooking up. Bogle’s research indicated that women were conscious of the fact that their participation in hooking up could lead them to being negatively labeled and stated “this sexual double standard may explain why women were more interested than men in hooking up leading to a relationship. While in a relationship, women could be shielded from peer scrutiny and condemnation for sexual behavior” (2007: 15). With women entering into hooking up in hopes of a relationship developing, it conflicts with the general consensus that hooking up is sexual behavior without a commitment. Therefore, this places women in a situation where participating equally could result in negative labels so potentially developing a relationship with a hook up partner is a way in which to protect themselves. The conflicting expectations and social stigma tied to sexual behavior of women can have negative impacts on how women perceive themselves. The ambiguity of hooking up and dating on college campuses has an impact on how women perceive themselves.

The literature regarding the impact of participation in hooking up and dating in college on women’s self perception is limited. A study on casual sex conducted by Paul
and Hayes (2002) indicated that both men and women expressed a variety of emotions, ranging from positive to negative, in regards to their best and worst hook up experiences. Furthermore, research suggests that women more often than men, mistake hooking up as a stepping stone towards a relationship (Paul & Hayes: 2002). Bogle (2008) suggests that women might be seeking a relationship for a variety of reasons “such as women are ‘more emotional’ or women ‘need that kind of connection’” (101) as well as “another possible reason that women are more desirous of relationships than men is that women need relationships in order to protect their reputation” (103). Another study conducted by Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) suggests that women are likely to experience sexual regret after hooking up especially under two different sexual behavior conditions; having sex with someone only once or having sex with someone the woman had just met. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to explore the impacts of hooking up and on women’s self perception.

This research aims to contribute to the literature on men’s and women’s intimate interactions by examining whether traditional dating and hooking up are occurring on campus and which practice is most common. Through qualitative interviews with women on a Midwestern University campus the purpose of the current study is to not only discover the most common intimate interaction on campus, but also gain a better understanding of how the current dating culture and hooking up affect women specifically and their self perceptions.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

An Overview of Courtship and Dating in History

To gain an understanding of the present form of social interaction between heterosexual men and women we must first comprehend the historical changes in dating and their social influences that have led up to where we are today. It is imperative to examine how dating has evolved historically between men and women to fully understand how hooking up has come to replace the dating era as the college campus norm. Hooking up is a new trend that has emerged from a broader history in dating. The focus of this literature will be to explain the three major changes in dating that led up to the sexual revolution. Throughout history the style and manner in which dating and courtship have occurred has changed with the times. The power structure and dynamics have also gone back and forth between men and women as well. According to Beth Bailey, courtship in the United States was “affected by the changes in relations between men and women in the larger society, as women took on new roles in the public world, and ideas about what was appropriate behavior for men and for women shifted gradually or were jolted into new configurations” (1988: 4). Industrialization and the movement from rural to urban lifestyle created different gender behaviors than were present during agricultural America (Turner: 2003). According to Turner (2003), in agrarian families both genders worked together in running the farm however with industrialization the man began to go off to work while the woman stayed home to care for the children. Rothman (1987) acknowledges that there were changes in male and female interpersonal interactions historically however; courting during the 1900’s was drastically different
than the 1920’s in terms of standards for behavior. Rothman (1987) indicates that never before had there been such a drastic change in such a short time. Rothman compared these dramatic changes by stating, “it was understandable that people who had ridden their wheels around town, danced the two-step at the bandstand, and kissed goodnight on the front porch would be alarmed to see their children go off on joy rides in closed cars, to ‘petting parties,’ or to ‘pictures with hot love-making in them’” (1987: 289). “Petting parties” according to Rothman were a central feature of the 1920’s among high school and college students given that they provided sexual experimentation opportunities set forth by the group (1987: 295). Bailey recognizes that the changes in mate selection, from chaperoned courtship to dating, correlated largely with American societal and cultural changes. Bailey states, “The most important of these is the gradual development of a national system of culture, made possible by the emergence of national systems of communication, transportation, and economy; the extension of education; and the forces of urbanization and industrialization” (1988: 7).

Through developments in communication such as the telephone and the emergence of high speed travel (i.e. the car) there became less written documentation of intimate relationships between men and women because they now had faster ways of interacting with each other than before (Rothman: 1987). Murstein (1974) also acknowledges how these inventions during the industrial era gave youth more options and places to participate in premarital sex. Murstein states “the telephone became a potent stimulus to interpersonal relationships” since youth could communicate over long distances as well as set-up “blind dates” (1974: 420). Another important element in
promoting premarital sex was the automobile. Murstein states that the automobile plays a major role because “not only was it a ‘bedroom on wheels’ if the need arose, but it could transport the couple to another locale where privacy was assured” (1974: 420). However, there have been major historical changes within the realm of dating that have occurred when there have been transitional societal and cultural changes. It is important to look at the cultural changes that occurred throughout history and the ways in which they impacted male and female interaction. In the following section, the three important eras impacting male/female interactions will be addressed: the calling era, the dating era, and the sexual revolution. As will be discussed in the following section, one of the major phases of relationships between men and women, the calling era, occurred from the 1900’s to the 1920’s.

The Calling Era

Prior to the 1920’s a very formal style of courtship was present. This style of courtship is known as the calling era, when men would ‘call on’ women at their homes to request making a visit. According to Bailey, “when a girl reached the proper age or had her first “season” (depending on her family’s social level), she became eligible to receive male callers” (1988: 15). However as indicated by Cate and Lloyd, “a young man and young woman had to be formally introduced before they were allowed to speak to one another” (1992: 20). These arrangements in the beginning were made by the mother or guardian in the family to invite men to call and as time progressed the woman herself was permitted to invite an unmarried man to call upon her as long as they had been properly introduced (Bailey: 1988). At this point the power was in the hands of women to decide
whether a man was suitable enough to accept his requested call. Calling had a strict set of
guidelines and rules for men and women that structured the process and subsequent
interactions. Bailey (1988) indicated that these guidelines covered whether drinks or
refreshments were to be served, when chaperones were to be present, and the designated
amount of time between the call and the actual visit. According to Cate and Lloyd,
“calling upon a young lady was eventually supposed to end in only one goal- marriage”
(1992: 21). This form of courtship left the power and control in the hands of women.
However, in the early twentieth century there was another transformation in courtship
that took place, dating.

**The Dating Era**

The new transition from calling, which took place within a woman’s house, to
dating, going out into the public sphere, put the power and control back into the hands of
the man since he was responsible for paying and taking the woman out. Bailey indicates
that while the traditions and rules for calling gave women the power and control to take
the initiative, the emergence of dating, where couples interacted out on the street and
outside the woman’s home, now gave men the power and initiative to invite women out
(1988: 20). Dating was a process that occurred prior to courtship for marriage because
“dating involved more or less informal associations without a specific commitment to
marry” (Murstein: 1974: 386). Dating was a concept that was invented by youth, that
simply meant men and women enjoyed each other’s company without any serious
commitment involved (Burgess & Wallin: 1954).
What further separated dating from calling was that dating meant “going out” to public places, which required money, instead of visiting the woman at her home (Cate & Lloyd: 1992). Additionally, “it removed couples from the implied supervision of the private sphere- from the watchful eyes of family and local community- to the anonymity of the public sphere” (Bailey: 1988: 13). Dating also played an important role in the freeing of sexual norms and behavior from the 1920’s to the 1950’s (Schwartz & Rutter: 1998). Prior to the shift from calling to dating youth were following Victorian attitudes about sexual behavior that labeled sex as taboo. Thus, references to sexual behavior were not to be spoken about publicly, if at all (Turner: 2003). Additionally Turner (2003) indicates that sexual activity was supposed to be saved until marriage. Furthermore, Cate & Lloyd argue that “at the turn of the century it was still up to the woman to keep sexual behavior in check. Sexual restraint was important, and the ideology of woman as sexless still held sway” (1992: 21). The 1920’s brought forth a time for women that acknowledged their sexual needs and rights for the first time (Turner: 2003: 8).

According to Schwartz and Rutter, “dating teens obtained playful, independent experience with intimacy, often including kissing and touching but rarely including intercourse. Boys were initiators: they called the girls for dates. But the couple negotiated plans and intimacy” (1998: 77). Dating therefore changed the way in which men and women interacted since it not only put the power back into the hands of men, but it also removed the formal rules and adult supervision that were present in calling.

With the emergence of dating, the first change in the power and control relationship was the loss of parental control that led to increased freedom for youth
(Bailey: 1988). Turner (2003) adds that with the popularity of the automobile and the emergence of dating, young people were away from the watchful eyes of parents and were able to go places away from the home. Furthermore, the power shifted from women making the initiative to men taking initiative. In calling, the women extended the invitation to a man, and never the reverse, but in dating it was the man’s responsibility to invite the woman to go out with him (Bailey: 1988). In calling the mother or daughter could request that a man call upon the daughter after a proper introduction (Cate and Lloyd: 1992). Dating moved the process of courtship out of the home and into the economy. As stated by Cate and Lloyd “dating meant ‘going out’ to do things rather than visiting in the young woman’s home, and going out in public required money…when courtship was centered in the home, the woman was more in control, but as courtship shifted to the public sphere and the need for money arose, control also shifted to the man” (1992: 22).

The emphasis on money within dating and the power relations tied within it led to the view of dating as a system of economic exchange (Bailey: 1988). Bailey stressed that this economic exchange was imbalanced and further elaborated that, “what men were buying in the dating system was not just female companionship, not just entertainment-but power. Money purchased obligation; money purchased inequality; money purchased control” (1988). Therefore, the emergence of dating led to men maintaining a little more of the power and control compared to women in the courtship process since they remained the initiators and had the economic means to take a woman out.
Despite the shift in power between the genders, Turner (2003) indicates that during the changes of the 1920’s “women experienced much more freedom in selecting a mate, and for most partners of both sexes, love and affection became pivotal features of the relationship” (9). Turner indicates there was a re-emergence of romantic love that was popular among youth. According to Rothman (1987), love and affection were important because there was a shift towards greater acceptance of premarital sex when the couple was in love. Love was the element that made premarital intercourse less deviant. Rothman states, “Middle-class Americans had long considered love a ‘necessary condition’ for sexual intimacy; what changed now was not the condition but the ‘point in the courtship process when it is applied’” (1987: 297). Therefore, sexual intimacy prior to marriage was deemed more socially acceptable when it was coupled with love. Along with the changing power relations in courtship there were cultural changes that contributed to the emergence of dating and the ideas that support it. To further examine the shift in dating trends it is important to understand the cultural changes that impacted how dating evolved.

According to research, dating emerged from the limits and opportunities of urban life and thus completely changed courtship in America by replacing the tradition of calling almost entirely by the mid-1920’s (Bailey: 1988). During the 1920’s and 1930’s dating had become a public activity that people of all classes participated in. According to Cate and Lloyd, “dating involved informal, unchaperoned, male-female interaction with no specific commitment. The rules of dating were established by the peer group rather than the community at large” (1992: 22). Dating differed from calling in that it
didn’t have formal guidelines, chaperones, or parental influence in deciding how a man and a woman should pursue each other. There were also cultural changes that were occurring during the transition from calling to dating.

One of these cultural changes was more equality between men and women, or the “emancipation of women” (Burgess & Wallin: 1954: 27). According to Bailey, “many more serious (and certainly respectable) young women were taking advantage of opportunities to enter the public world- going to college, taking jobs, entering and creating new urban professions” (1988: 19). So with the emergence of women in the public sphere, where they were now making their own money, the dynamics of power relations and male/ female interaction were changing. Since women were now part of the public world during the day they wanted more access to the public world in general (Bailey: 1988). An important concept to address is this era of dating was a process that was separate from courtship for marriage in that dating was how people got to know someone before becoming an exclusive couple (Cate and Lloyd: 1992). The goals of dating and courtship were different during the twentieth century. According to Cate and Lloyd, the goals for “courtship focused on finding a mate who exhibited the traits of emotional maturity, honesty, genuineness, and a desire for a family life” while the goals of “dating focused on success and increasing one’s popularity without becoming emotionally involved (1992: 24). A major contributing factor to the rise of dating as a new form of courtship was the emergence of the automobile.

The automobile changed the face of American life: “it affected where people lived and worked, what they did for fun, how they defined success, and, not incidentally, the
way they conducted their courtships” (Rothman: 1987: 204). The automobile provided transportation to activities outside the home and for young people created more privacy from parents. While dating practices were already occurring before the arrival of the automobile, Bailey (1988) indicates that “the automobile certainly contributed to the rise of dating as a national practice, especially in rural and suburban areas, but it was simply accelerating and extending a process already well under way” (19). The composition of people in rural versus urban contributed to differences in dating. Since people in rural areas grew up together with similar values and ideals by the time couples started dating they knew each other well or at least could relate because of similar backgrounds. Since dating in cities consisted of people from various backgrounds, according to Burgess and Wallin, it meant that couples “needed to be able to understand each other’s problems and points of view, to have personalities that could live together comfortably” (1954: 27). Dating emerged during a time of social change where America was becoming more industrialized and urbanized.

Additionally, dating emerged because of other changes taking place within America. Through the process of industrialization it contributed to changing the nation from once being dominantly rural to a largely urban civilization (Burgess & Wallin: 1954). City life brought people from various backgrounds together in one location. Burgess and Wallin emphasize two important reasons for the differences in dating between rural and city life: first, city life provoked individuality and more specialized interests; and second, young people realized they needed more than just romantic love, but also to have more in common and understand each other to have a successful
marriage (1954). In rural communities, Burgess and Wallin also indicate that, youth typically selected mates within the family’s social network based on community standing therefore mate options were limited and not solely the choice of the young person. Therefore, the shift to dating in urban settings provided a variety of people from different communities as well as a plethora of potential partners to select from. During industrialization Burgess and Wallin indicated that youth were no longer satisfied with keeping steady company since in urban settings there was not much time to become familiar with the person of interest before falling into “the practice of keeping steady company” (1954: 27). According to Burgess and Wallin, “In the oldtime rural society, this did not create a problem. Young people knew each other and their home backgrounds from the early years of childhood. Cultural backgrounds were relatively uniform” (1954: 27).

Along with the social changes associated with industrialization and urbanization there were also developments in sexual attitudes and behaviors. As noted previously, prior to the 1920’s sexual activity was not something to be discussed openly or participated in unless the woman and man were married. However, according to Cate & Lloyd (2003) during the 1920’s American youth culture was presenting and upholding a new more liberal view of sexual behavior and attitudes. According to Bailey, “‘petting’ and ‘necking’ were the major conventions youth contributed to courtship in the years between World War I and the sexual revolution of the 1960’s. A significant percentage of young people had premarital intercourse during this period, but it did not become ‘conventional’ behavior among youth until the mid-1960s” (1988: 80). According to
Bailey the term necking was generally understood as any stimulation or touching above the neck while petting was any stimulation below the neck and could consist of anything with the exception of intercourse (1988). Additionally, Bailey addresses that these sexual acts and behaviors were not new but it was the significance in the names applied to them and the importance that they carried for American youth that was new. Bailey further associated dating as being one of the contributors to the continued normalization of sex among the youth culture. Furthermore, Bailey states, “dating meant, in practice, that young people had many partners- and these were all potential necking or petting partners. New norms were reinforced gradually as youth encountered similar expectations of sexual behavior from many different people” (1988: 81). Therefore, part of the dating culture was participation in necking and petting with your partner. The more liberal attitudes toward sexual behavior were further emphasized by Cate & Lloyd when they indicate how the 1920’s were a period of sexual and social revolution that was not seen again with that strength until the 1960’s. Cate and Lloyd demonstrate that during the 1920’s sexual and social revolution “sex was the dominant theme of movies and literature, the code of behavior for women liberalized (e.g., women initiated dates), the incidence of premarital intercourse was on the rise, and legal rights for women took hold” (1992: 24). The increasing acceptance of sexual behaviors among youth did not come without repercussions.

Cate & Lloyd also addressed the issue of a double standard in sexual activity that put women at blame for any lapse in sexual judgment. The double standard created a view of women in that if they abstained from improper sexual behavior they were viewed
as wholesome but if not, they were seen as available to be pursued for sexual purposes (Cate & Lloyd: 1992). An issue that needs to be addressed when analyzing the double standard during the early nineteenth century is the power relations between men and women in the dating culture and men’s expectations. According to Bailey “dating was an unequal relationship: the man paid for everything and the woman was thus indebted to him. According to many, boys and men were entitled to sexual favors as payment for that debt; the more money the man spent, the more petting the woman owed him” (1988: 81). Therefore in dating, petting was how a woman was expected to pay back the man for taking her out for the evening. Cate & Lloyd further support this norm within the double standard by indicating “such a depiction of the sexual natures of men and women failed to recognize the increasing pressure placed on women to repay the debt engendered by a man’s spending money on a date” (1992: 25). With these sexual standards and expectations set into motion among youth culture there was also a competitive nature arising in dating among college students that trickled down into high school practices as well. With the shift towards dating being dependent on money Cate & Lloyd state “perhaps the best example of this economic basis of courtship comes from Waller’s (1937) classic study of the rating and dating complex on the Penn State campus” (1992: 23).

**Rating and Dating**

During the dating era the courtship style became extremely competitive and less focused on courtship and more focused on thrill-seeking dating relationships. Willard Waller (1937) conducted a study on college dating during the 1920’s and 1930’s and
found a clear distinction between dating and courtship. Waller indicated that “college students feel strongly the attractions of sex and the thrills of sex, and the sexes associate with one another in a peculiar relationship known as ‘dating.’ Dating is not true courtship, since it is supposed not to eventuate into marriage; it is a sort of dalliance relationship” (1937: 729). However, Waller does acknowledge that there is a possibility that true courtship can sometimes come out of the dating process. With women now in college and both men and women delaying marriage, the system of rating and dating emerged. Rating and dating was a form of social competition that required individuals to retain a high status or rank within society in order to be viewed as popular. Waller stated, on the scale of dating desirability, Class A men were supposed to date Class A women and this was based on how they fell on the hierarchy of campus values (1937). For example, Waller (1937) states that co-ed’s and fraternity men that have money, are well dressed, have an active social life are people that would rank Class A and a number of categories could be created below that depending on how people perceived social distinctions on campus. This trend of dating led to exploitative relationships in which men were seeking sexual favors and women were seeking gifts or were labeled as gold diggers benefiting from the men they dated.

Waller specifies, “one of the persons may exploit the other for thrills on the pretense of emotional involvement and its implied commitment” (1937: 728). The exploitative nature emerged with this dating style through what Waller (1937) referred to as the thrill-dominated, competitive process in rating and dating. A “thrill” as defined by Waller is “merely a physiological stimulation and release of tension” (1937: 728). The
exploitation within rating and dating was present because of the changing moral order along with activities such as dancing, petting, and necking, all allowed courtship practices to consist of thrill-seeking (Waller: 1937). More importantly, Waller indicated that “status in the one-sex group depends upon avoiding exploitation by the opposite sex” (1937: 731).

Waller indicated that in order to be ranked as Class A, men “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” (1937: 730). For women to be considered Class A or high ranked, they had to dress well, dance well, have a smooth line, and the most important factor of all was to be popular as a date (Waller: 1937). Women have to appear popular, wanted, and not overly available. Popularity in rating and dating meant, “it was not earned directly through talent, looks, personality, or importance in organizations, but by the way these attributes translated into dates. These dates had to be highly visible, and with many different people, or they didn’t count” (Bailey: 1988: 29). Additionally, to be popular as a date a woman should not be available for a last minute date nor be seen with the same man too many times since it could potentially discourage other men from asking her out (Waller: 1937). Social status played a key role in determining an individual’s ranking. Within rating and dating competition was an essential element. Bailey elaborates the importance of competition by stating that “you had to rate in order to date, to date in order to rate. By successfully maintaining this cycle, you became popular. To stay popular you competed… You competed to become popular, and being popular allowed
you to continue to compete. *Competition* was the key term in the formula- remove it and there was no rating, dating, or popularity” (1988: 30). Therefore rating and dating was a system in which competition was key and the woman’s popularity depended on how frequently she was seen being out with different Class A men. Waller stressed that this system varied from college to college. In comparison to the college in his research, he suggested that “going steady” was the more common form of male and female interaction in colleges that had a more equal sex ratio (Waller: 1937: 732). Going steady became America’s youth’s method of male/ female interaction after WWII due to the social impacts that the war had on the nation.

**Going Steady**

During World War II men were scarce in numbers because they were fighting overseas in the War. As stated by Bailey, “The departure of 16,354,000 men (including virtually every physically fit male between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six by early 1943) for military service” left women with less potential partners to choose from (1988: 34). This led to a decline in the rating and dating system simply because there were not enough men around to participate in ranking and maintaining popularity. Cate and Lloyd (1992) stressed that the decline of rating and dating was tied to a variety of factors that included the declining college enrollment rates, women entering the work force in mass, as well as putting courtship on the back burner for college-aged Americans since men and women were upholding their civil duties. Since so many young men had died in the War, after World War II there were more women than men for the first time in the United States (Bailey: 1988). Additionally, men who were in the armed forces were meeting
women abroad. Turner (2003) indicated that sometimes men married these women and either stayed in their country or brought their wives back to America with them. Turner (2003) ties the changes in dating during the War to the fact that both men and women had been introduced to people from different parts of the country and world. Men’s views on dating changed as well. Upon returning home from the War and reentering the college scene, men dated but not in the competitive sense of rating and dating that existed before the War (Bailey: 1988). Bailey further addresses that returning veterans were not interested in the competitive atmosphere of the previous dating system. These men wanted genuine and sincere women, not women who tried to compete for male attention through games and popularity. In other words, men were looking for more serious relationships rather than competition based styles of dating.

By the end of the War dating had taken on a transformation. According to Rothman (1987) “going steady” had begun and “indeed, with the marriage age dropping to an all-time low, large numbers of young people were moving through the dating system directly-and immediately- into marriage” (301). Furthermore, Bogle supports Rothman’s argument when she states, “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” (2008: 17). When looking at a younger age of marriage after the War, Cate and Lloyd suggest that, “whether fueled by a desire for stability after years of upheaval, the much publicized ‘man shortage,’ or a desire of youth to assert their independence, the increasingly younger age at marriage had important effects on courtship and dating”
(1992: 26). Going steady, or exclusively dating one person, did not necessarily result in marriage and it was not uncommon for people to go steady with a variety of individuals before they decided on their marriage mate (Bogle: 2008). However, because people were getting married younger, it resulted in youth starting to date earlier. Cate and Lloyd (1992) indicated that dating activities such as group dates were starting to occur at an earlier age. The post-war era consisted of a teenage population that followed the dating pattern of going steady however during this era going steady carried a different meaning than it did before (Bailey: 1988).

It is important to acknowledge that going steady was not a new trend, however the meaning of going steady had changed from the historical context (Bailey: 1988). Prior to the War going steady or “keeping steady company” meant dating someone as part of the process leading towards marriage (Bailey: 1988). As further explained by Bailey,

“By the early 1950s, going steady had acquired a totally different meaning. It was no longer the way a marriageable couple signaled their deepening intentions. Instead, going steady was something twelve-year-olds could do, something most fifteen-year-olds did. Few steady couples expected to marry each other (especially the twelve-year-olds), but, for the duration, they acted as if they were married. Going steady had become a sort of play-marriage, a mimicry of the actual marriage of their slightly older peers” (1988: 49).

By 1950, going steady had replaced the previous trend of rating and dating. In order to marry younger, dating and seeking out potential marriage partners had to begin earlier. The postwar years brought about a new teenage generation and their dating preference was going steady. Going steady also established a set of rules and regulations that were followed by adolescents. According to Cate and Lloyd “going steady brought a whole new set of rituals, including tokens of commitment (such as a class ring), a specified
number of telephone calls and dates each week, and the implication of greater sexual intimacy (1992: 26). During this era of dating, youth had many steadies before finally settling down into marriage.

Since dating activities began at a younger age by the time children had entered junior high school they had encountered experiences in group dating, or the first stage in dating, where they went out in groups, but might pair off at one point during the evening (Rothman: 1987). Rothman indicates that since youth were encountering the first stages of dating younger by the time they entered high school, they began to take dating more seriously with a focus on finding someone to go steady with (1987). Interestingly, this trend emerged partially because the older American youth no longer wanted to delay the emotional and sexual gratification of marriage and were abandoning the traditional idea that men should be financially stable and mature prior to considering marriage (Bailey: 1988).

Through the process of going steady in high school, a lot of women who didn’t go to college were married shortly after high school graduation. For women who did go to college it was clear that they had the intention of securing a man by their senior year (Cate and Lloyd: 1992). Rothman indicates that college students during the post war era “might not have talked about ‘going steady,’ a phrase with more currency in high school than collegiate circles…” (1987: 303). With the passing of the G.I. Bill in 1944, the number of men and women in college had dramatically increased and followed the idea of “going steady” without labeling it as such (Rothman: 1987). Additionally, Rothman suggests that “one of the great attractions of steady dating for teenagers was that ‘sex and
affection can be quite easily combined”; and that especially for the girl, sexual behavior was “made respectable by going steady”” (304). Bailey further supports this notion of sexual behaviors being more acceptable in a steady relationship by stating that “as going steady was a simulated marriage, sexual relationships could and did develop within the protection of its (even short-term) security, monogamy, and, sometimes, its love” (1988: 52). The dating trend of going steady created a level of acceptability for sexual behaviors within monogamous relationships during the post-war era. However, the way men and women perceived the acceptability of sexual relationships was not equal.

As indicated earlier, a double standard was present in regards to sexual behavior between men and women. Rothman (1987: 304) states that during the 1940’s and 1050’s the “ideal girl,” or the woman that men preferred and viewed as wholesome, was the one who had not had intercourse while going steady which represented the majority of women at the time. Overall women during the 1950’s were not having intercourse until they were engaged. Rothman further explains “boys may have been more sexually experienced (more than twice as many boys as girls had coitus in their teens), but they were also more conservative, in the sense that they were more likely to embrace the traditional double standard which sanctions conduct in men that is condemned in women” (1987: 305). Therefore, the traditional double standard was being implemented in that premarital intercourse was more acceptable for men than it was for women. Rothman (1987) addresses that by 1959, college men were displaying a “single standard” in which they saw women having premarital intercourse only with someone that they were in love with or engaged to as being acceptable. While college men by the end of the 1950’s were
more liberal in their views on women’s premarital intercourse, it is important to note
women’s perceptions on intercourse prior to marriage. Rothman further states “…while
women’s attitudes were shifting towards the ‘traditional double standard- coitus is all
right for men under any condition, but it is acceptable for women only if they are in
love’” (1987: 307). This indicates that while men were becoming more accepting of
women’s sexual behavior, women were beginning to adhere to more of a traditional
double standard. Therefore, not only was there a shift in attitudes about sexual behavior
among college students there was also a shift in gender relations occurring. Along with
the shift from rating and dating to going steady after the War there was also a shift in
regards to the gender power dynamics within relationships.

The gender power relations during this time period reflected a challenge to the
traditional gender roles of men being the providers and protectors of women, which
impacted trends in dating and going steady. After the War during the 1950’s and 1960’s
youth culture was dominated by purchasing goods to display success and “furthermore,
girls and young women were more able to participate independently in this sphere; they
were ever less dependent on men (except fathers) for access to these symbols of success”
(Bailey: 1988: 56). During the post-war era men felt a threat to the traditional ideas of
masculinity since the economy required behaviors such as teamwork, conformity, and
cooperation, which were traditionally viewed as feminine (Bailey: 1988). In addition,
women entering the work force and taking part in the economy, which was previously a
male dominated entity, posed a threat to masculinity. Cate & Lloyd (1992) further
support the assertion that men felt their masculinity had been threatened in postwar
America since women were more independent and were participating in the workforce. However, men were still able to maintain power and dominance in dating since they still asked women out on dates. If women did not uphold men’s ideals of masculinity and femininity, men could simply not date or take women out (Bailey: 1988). During the postwar era, marital bliss meant a “return to the passive female. In courtship this meant that women had to demonstrate their frailties- their need to be protected and their inferior mental capacity. The new etiquette of courtship further reinforced a man’s right to be dominate and made female submissiveness a requirement in a date” (Cate & Lloyd: 1992: 28). These ideals would not hold true for long with the revolutionary changes to come during the 1960’s with the rise of the sexual revolution.

**The Sexual Revolution**

While the increase of sexual intimacy emerged within going steady, throughout the remainder of the twentieth century another shift in dating and cultural beliefs was occurring. The 1950’s may have been viewed as a great time for youth after the War however, it led to struggles between men’s and women’s ideals. During this time, traditional sex roles were being redefined and there was discontent between the two sexes (Mintz & Kellogg: 1988). A few factors that contributed to women’s dissatisfaction during the 1950’s was women had the same education as men and had done men’s work outside the home, but after the War they were expected to return to their role as housewives and put their family first (Mintz & Kellogg: 1988). Women were upset that they were expected to raise a family instead of pursuing a career and were their work in the home was not recognized as important (Mintz & Kellogg: 1988). With women so
discontent with their regressed social expectations it led to women uniting together to fight for equal rights and recognition. According to Cate & Lloyd “as the women’s movement progressed, marriage and childbearing were increasingly couched in terms of oppression and exploitation of women” that would later have a major impact on how men and women dated (1992: 28). The late 1950’s and early 1960’s was a time period where women were dissatisfied with their social position in American society. However, during this time of discontent of American women, there was a youth culture emerging that made it a point to differentiate themselves from their parents, while taking a more liberal approach to premarital sexual behavior (Cate & Lloyd: 1992). Furthermore, ideas about sexual behavior that contributed to the 1960’s sexual revolution were seen through different channels such as fashion, movies, and media (Cate & Lloyd: 1992). According to Turner, “sexual revolution refers to changes in thinking about human sexuality that focused on gender roles as well as specifically on sexual behavior” (2003: 14).

During the 1960’s serious social change was occurring and the women’s movement was under way playing an important role in fighting for women’s sexual freedom. Women during this era were challenging the status quo on a variety of levels. According to Mintz & Kellogg (1988) “in general the feminists awakened American women to what they viewed as the worst form of social and political oppression-sexism” (208). Furthermore, Mintz & Kellogg (1988) indicated that many women did not come forth and declare themselves as feminists but were influenced by the beliefs and ideals behind the message of female empowerment. Feminists argued that women should have the freedom to choose to be sexual within marriage as well as outside, and not be looked
down upon for their actions. The sexual revolution created relaxed attitudes towards “contraception, divorce, abortion, premarital and extramarital sex, cohabitation, and homosexuality” (Turner: 2003: 14). These relaxed attitudes thus provided more equality for women because they were less harshly criticized for participation in behaviors such as premarital sex.

Through the relaxed attitudes towards premarital sex of the sexual revolution it became evident that there was an increase in sex prior to marriage. Having an active social and sexual life outside of marriage can be attributed to, “the trend toward postponement of marriage, combined with increased rates of college attendance and divorce, meant that growing numbers of adults spent protracted periods of their sexually mature lives outside of marriage” (Mintz & Kellogg: 1988: 209). Cate & Lloyd (1992) address that women’s sexual behavior prior to marriage was increasing during the sexual revolution. According to Cate & Lloyd, “the timing of intercourse changed; whereas in the 1950’s women were likely to have premarital sex during engagement, by the 1970’s they were more likely to engage in sexual intercourse while going steady (1992: 29). Also, during this time period birth control became more available (Bogle: 2008). According to Turner (2003) the sexual revolution brought forward a new way of thinking for adolescent dating and sexual behavior. Turner further stresses that dating now was more spontaneous and less structured than it had been in previous decades. Sexual encounters and relationships outside of marriage were becoming less taboo during this time period and there was an increased acceptance towards individual sexual freedom. It was also during this time that American youth focused less on the adult expectations and
came to believe in personal choice. As premarital sexual behaviors were changing so were dynamics in dating.

According to Cate & Lloyd (1992) going steady and dating were still practiced and were essential elements of male and female interaction from the 1950’s through the 1980’s. However,

“Adolescents of the 1970s did not date as often and they began to date at an older age than they had in the 1950s (average age for females of 13 in 1958 and 14 in 1978). The first experience with going steady, however, was occurring at slightly younger ages, dropping from age 17 in 1958 to age 16 in 1978)” (1992: 29).

In addition to dating beginning at a younger age, Rice (1993) presents three other changes that affected dating after the 1960’s. First there were increased opportunities for males and females to interact on a daily basis informally within a social setting like the college campus. Second the process of dating and going steady was no longer clearly defined like it had been prior to the 1960’s. And third “earlier generations followed a fairly consistent pattern: casual dating, steadily dating, going steady, an understanding (engaged to be engaged), engagement, and marriage” (114). However, post 1960’s this pattern was not as strictly adhered to by youth. Nonetheless, Rice acknowledged that some couples still followed the above mentioned traditional progression; however dating post 1960’s varied in its patterns and processes. Rice further established that not all couples followed the pattern of formal engagement leading to marriage but pursued a nontraditional route of living together prior to marriage. Lastly, Rice indicated that dating was not as formal in regards to gender roles as it had been in previous generations (1993). Dating, according to Rice, was less formal in that men did not have to make a formal request for a date but that it could evolve mutually out of a conversation or women could
make the initiative. Cate & Lloyd further support the transition of gender roles becoming more equal by stating, “…the dating system became more pluralistic over time. For example, it became increasingly acceptable for women to initiate dating activities and to be responsible for the economics of the date” (1992: 30). Despite the idea of equality for women especially within date initiation, studies after the sexual revolution indicated gender differences in regards to sexual expectations when women initiated dates compared to men.

A study conducted by Mongeau and Carey (1996) showed that when women initiated a first date, men interpreted it as the women being more likely to engage in sexual activity since she was taking action, however women did not perceive the situation in the same regard. They further illustrate that women who initiate dates are viewed as more casual daters who are more sexually active than women who do not initiate first dates. Furthermore, Mongeau and Carey state, “males, to a much greater extent than females, may approach a first date with heightened sexual; expectations particularly when the female initiates” (1996: 210). After addressing the general changes in attitudes about dating, gender dynamics within dating, and the more liberal attitudes about sexual behavior it’s important to look at how these changes affected college students specifically post 1960’s. A longitudinal study conducted by Sherwin and Corbett further illustrates the impacts that the sexual revolution had on the college campus.

Sherwin and Corbett studied the changes in sexual norms on the college campus over a fifteen year period (1985). Data was collected at three different times, 1963, 1971, and 1978 from the same Midwestern University and the results clearly indicated a change
in campus norms for sexual behavior within relationships. According to Sherwin and Corbett the respondents in 1978 showed a higher degree of sexual intimacy among daters than the 1963 daters. Furthermore, they state, “Indeed, 1978 casual daters are confronting more liberal sexual standards than did engaged couples in 1963. Note that the most impressive change in expectation of intercourse appears connected to a relationship believed to reflect such things as affection or love or monogamous commitment” (1985: 272). Sherwin and Corbett further indicate that the sexual revolution did not create more liberal sexual attitudes in all types of relationships equally but created more liberal attitudes among relationships that involved more emotional commitment versus casual relationships. In addition, Sherwin and Corbett noted that across the fifteen years of research there was a drastic change in women participating in sexual intercourse in comparison to men. The data collected in 1963 showed that sexual intercourse experience was largely male participation. However, in the 1971 study females had drastically began to participate more in sexual intercourse and by 1978 women and men were almost equal in terms of sexual intercourse experience (Sherwin & Corbett: 1985). Overall, the researchers attribute the sexual revolution as an era that provided women emancipation from sexual restraints of the past through more liberal sexual norms. Their research showed that female nonvirgins increased 41% over the fifteen years while male nonvirgins only increased 6%. Clearly the sexual revolution had an impact on women in that they were more liberal with sexual behavior. However, there are additional factors that further contributed to the more liberal sexual attitudes after the sexual revolution.
Another important contributor to the more liberal attitude in dating was the dramatic increase of women attending college. Bogle states, “By 1972, three times as many women were attending college than there had been just twelve years earlier in 1960. Today, women far outnumber men on many college campuses in the United States. Compared to the dating era, men are now a scarce resource on campus” (2008: 23). Additionally, the increase in equality for women had profound impacts on courtship. During the era of the sexual revolution there emerged a new way in which college students were getting together that was distinct from dating in the traditional sense. As stated by Bogle, “College students began socializing in groups, rather than pair dating, and ‘partying’ with large numbers of friends and classmates. Parties represented more than just a social outing; they became the setting for potential sexual encounters” (2008: 20). The new form of social gatherings provoked an environment in which young people could interact with a variety of people in one night. A key change that impacted the way women and men interacted on college campuses occurred toward the end of the 1960’s. As stated by Mintz & Kellogg, “by the end of the decade, a growing number of the nation’s colleges had abolished regulations specifying how late students could stay outside their dormitories and when and under what circumstances male and female students could visit with each other” (1988: 209). By removing these regulations, it allowed women and men more freedom in dating practices. The earlier work by Murstein had similar findings to that of Mintz & Kellogg. In his discussion on college rule changes Murstein states, “Colleges have abandoned the loco parentis role. Sexual interaction is no longer punished, college chaperones are nonexistent, and many college health centers
dispense contraceptives freely” (1974: 534). The removal of chaperones as well as dispensing contraceptives permitted more sexual freedom between men and women. Furthermore, Rice (1993) argued that in comparison to previous decades, colleges were co-ed in regards to dormitories and living spaces as well as academic programs enrollment of both genders. Rice states that because of these changes, “group or paired social activities develop as a natural result of daily informal contacts in residences, classrooms, and social centers” (1993: 114). Along with the changes made by the universities, adolescents were changing their sexual values and there was a shift in adolescent’s view of acceptable sexual behavior. As stated by Turner (2003), young people were shifting from an “abstinence orientation (it is morally wrong for unmarried persons to engage in sexual relations) in favor of the permissiveness with affection orientation (premarital sexual relations are morally acceptable, provided there is emotional attachment between partners) some couples adopted the permissiveness without affection or hedonistic orientation” (15).

This was especially prevalent among college students who adopted the views that sex before marriage was acceptable with or without the emotional attachment (Turner: 2003). Cate & Lloyd further support the argument that premarital intercourse was on the rise for college women during the sexual revolution, “By 1980 upwards of 80% of male and 65% of female college freshmen reported premarital sexual experience” (1992: 29). The increase in premarital sex while in college had increased from the 1950s and along with that increase brought change in perception of the double standard. Rothman indicates that “by 1968, the double standard had not disappeared, but its decline was noticeable” (1987: 307). Therefore, despite a double standard being present, men’s and women’s positive
attitudes about premarital sex were becoming more widely accepted which attributed to the decline in the prevalence of the double standard (Rothman: 1987). Even with more liberal attitudes it is important to look at how men and women are socialized to develop the liberal attitudes. A study conducted by Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) indicate that men and women are socialized differently by family and peers about sexual behavior. Lottes and Kuriloff (1994) found that men received more permissive sexual socialization from their peers while women received a less permissive sexual socialization from their parents despite egalitarian attitudes in gender roles. However, despite a decrease of the double standard in regards to sexual behavior there were still important power dynamics occurring between men and women after the sexual revolution.

DeLamater (1987) suggests that the way men and women perceive sexual activity differs as well as how sexual relationships between the gender’s results in different power control dynamics. DeLamater indicates that men view sexual intercourse as a form of sexual pleasure that can occur in any type of relationship while women view intercourse as an emotional element of romantic or marital relationships. Therefore, men find intercourse acceptable in many circumstances while women prefer intercourse within serious committed relationships. Furthermore because of these different perceptions of sexual behavior, DeLamater states that “for men, most women are perceived as potential sexual partners, including strangers. Women are likely to perceive as potential sexual partners only men with whom they already have a close relationship” (1987: 133). In terms of sexual intercourse between men and women, there are gender differences in partner selection. In addition DeLamater stresses that among college couples, men are
viewed as the initiator of sexual behavior while women are expected to manage it.

DeLamater states “men possess and exercise proactive power and women possess and exercise reactive power in heterosexual relationships” (1987: 134). Therefore, despite progressive attitudes towards equality among the genders after the sexual revolution, men still possess the power in sexual relationships while women are expected to control the sexual advances of men. Christopher (2001) further supports the notion that men are concerned with finding sexual partners while women are concerned with being sexually responsible and not just seeking sexual pleasure like men. Additional research further supports the notion of men being the possessor of power within college romantic relationships.

Felmlee (1994) examined the power dynamics within college romantic relationships. Felmlee suggested that there were three reasons one would suspect that romantic relationships among college students would be egalitarian after the social changes that developed as a result of the sexual revolution. The three reasons Felmlee (1994) suggests are first that college men and women are about equal in basic resources of income, age, and education compared to married couples. The second reason Felmlee found was that college couples are more likely to embrace more liberal attitudes about gender relations. And finally, college couples typically don’t involve children, which change the power dynamic within marital power relations. Felmlee’s (1994) research indicated that men perceived themselves as the ones with power while women believed the relationship was equal, however, when inequalities were presented both genders labeled men as the possessor of power. Possible explanations provided for labeling men
as the possessor of power is that overall in society men hold the power. Despite economic similarities between men and women, since men are the initiators and cover the costs of going on dates more often than women, it can be seen as a sign of financial power (Felmlee: 1994). Overall, Felmlee states, “our society is still one in which males have more power than do females, and in spite of egalitarian ideals, this fact filters down to influence even the most intimate relationships in individuals’ lives” (1994: 293). Therefore, despite the movement towards equality between men and women there still remains the traditional ideal of men being the dominant figure in a relationship as well as the gender in control. This research further illustrates how broader social ideals impact individuals’ perspectives on dating and power dynamics among college relationships. With the attitude changes towards sex and the delay in marriage, a new form of male and female interaction was emerging.

**An Overview of Current Dating Trends**

Moving into the twenty-first century brings forth a few additional developments in dating. Similar to historical trends during the 1960’s, dating today begins at a young age and is relatively informal and unstructured (Turner: 2003). Additionally, adolescent peer groups now serve as an important location that dating relationships can evolve from. The relationships that developed between youth in peer groups such as class, sports, neighborhoods, etc. can result in romantic interests between peers. Another phenomenon that has emerged in recent years is the coed sleepover. According to Turner, “a coed sleepover is an overnight, mixed-gender gathering of teenagers in the home of one of the participants... when closely monitored and structured, such sleepovers are generally
viewed by parents as permissible and a normal part of the adolescent socialization experience” (2003: 18). Therefore, dating behaviors carried over from the 1960’s but are now less structured and without the formal progression through certain stages such as dating to going steady to engagement.

However, there are some changes in regards to dating and sexual behaviors among youth that have emerged after the sexual revolution. It is important to note that today’s youth are largely impacted by the influence of sex in the media as well as increased modes of communication, such as cell phones and the internet, to meet and get in contact with their dating partners (Turner: 2003). Laner and Ventrone further suggest that “various media provide a steady stream of information about what values should guide interpersonal relationships” (2000: 490). Therefore, media plays an important role in socializing gender role expectations within sexual behaviors as well as relationships. Dating, especially on the college campus, carries a lot more ambiguity and confusion currently than it did historically.

As shown in the transitions of dating through history, dating has followed different styles at various points in time. Christopher (2001) indicates that dating and sexual relationships are centered on gender-role expectations. Christopher states that “even though women’s, and to a lesser extent men’s, roles have been modified in the areas of education, employment, and family life, dating roles have been more resistant to change” (2001: 82). Furthermore, dating today is also used as a way for adolescents to explore their sexuality. Christopher states “as dating is concurrently the vehicle used to establish and explore romantic relationships, many relationship dimensions and
properties become tied to and associated with sexual expression” (2001: 83). Therefore, both historically and presently, dating is perceived as an opportunity to explore sexuality without being negatively perceived by the social world. Furthermore, it is important to note what the goals of a first date today are.

A study conducted by Mongeau, Serewicz, and Therrien (2004) examined what the goals of a first date are for men and women in college as well as how the goals were measured and contextual factors that influenced the goals of the first date. They discovered that first dates are perceived as an opportunity to get to know someone else, have fun, and determine whether there is potential for a romantic relationship with that person or simply friendship. Interestingly, Mongeau et al. (2004) also discovered there were gender differences in first date goals whereby men supported sexual goals more so than women did. Men seeking more sexual activity from a first date is consistent with research presented earlier that indicated men are more frequently looking for sexual activity with any woman compared to women who seek sexual activity within relationships. Mongeau et al. reiterate this point by stating, “sexual goals for women are likely to emerge when they are romantically interested in their partner in the context of a potential future relationship. Men’s goal intercorrelations suggest that in some circumstances they might consider first dates as another context for casual sex” (2004: 134). The research indicates that despite men and women having similar goals in regards to their first date, there is still potential for confusion since men can interpret the first date as an opportunity for sexual behavior when the women doesn’t perceive it the same way. Furthermore, Mongeau et al. (2004) point out that men and women indicate that a first
date is something that occurs as a way of getting to know someone prior to a romantic relationship evolving.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Morr and Mongeau (2004) examined how sex of initiator, alcohol consumption, and relationship type affect sexual expectations on the first date. This study supported previous research that men had higher sexual expectations on the first date than women did. Additionally, Morr and Mongeau state, “As anticipated, the availability of alcohol in the scenario was related to sexual expectations. Participants expected greater sexual intimacy on a keg party date when compared to a coffee shop date” (2004: 23). Therefore, the influence of alcohol increased the likelihood of sexual intimacy occurring. However, the relationship between dating partners, whether they were acquaintances or friends prior to the first date, did not have an impact on sexual expectations (Morr & Mongeau: 2004).

Currently, the word or action of dating carries different meanings on the college campus than it did historically. In a national study of college women and dating conducted by Glenn & Marquardt, researchers discovered that there were four different ways in which the word dating was used and encountered, “while college women today will say that actual dates are rare, the word “dating” is still used by many of them to describe their own or their friends’ interactions with the opposite sex” (2001: 24). Today, dating does not fit into the simple traditional form where a man asked a woman out, picked her up, and paid for their date, it has become more broadly defined.

The first type of dating identified by Glenn and Marquardt was “joined at the hip” (2001). “Joined at the hip” meant that the relationship developed quickly into a serious
relationship in which the couple became exclusive, sexually involved, and spent almost all of their time together studying, eating, staying at each other’s place and so forth (2001: 25). This form of dating clearly indicated that people moved towards a relationship quickly and spent tremendous amounts of time together and thus may be less involved in other forms of social interaction.

The second use of the term dating that Glenn and Marquardt found in their research was the “boyfriend-girlfriend relationship” (2001: 25). Although these relationships were rare they were similar to joined at the hip but they developed much slower. However, there are additional differences present within the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship when compared to the joined at the hip form of dating. While boyfriend-girlfriend relationship couples were also exclusive, they spent less time together, they might not be sexually involved, and they may spend a few nights at each other’s dorms (2001). This form of dating develops less spontaneously and less intensely than joined at the hip dating.

The third form of dating that Glenn and Marquardt (2001) found on college campuses was dating in the traditional sense where a man invites a woman out, picks her up, and pays for the date. Their research showed that in comparison to other forms of dating, the traditional date was relatively rare. Overall, only 37% of women had been on more than six traditional dates during college and a third indicated that they had been asked on two or less dates (2001: 26). What was interesting regarding this type of dating were the two different perspectives women had in terms of traditional dating. Glenn and Marquardt found that some women hoped for more of the traditional dating styles to take
place while other women indicated that they were more attracted to the men who were seen as “players” instead of nice guys (2001: 26).

The last and most common form of the term dating that Glenn and Marquardt discovered was hanging out which carried a lot of meanings in and of itself (2001). Hanging out for women could be spending time with a man alone or going out in groups with him, it could be going to each other’s places or other social functions, and lastly women could be hanging out with several different guys at the same time whether it be through going places with them or spending time with them amongst a group of friends. (Glenn & Marquardt: 2001). This form of dating is much less defined and allows men and women to keep their options open without being tied down. Glenn and Marquardt acknowledge that hanging out in a group can lead to what is known as a hook up, which is different from dating, that then blurs the line between whether the man or woman view the interaction as dating or hooking up (2001). In order to better understand hooking up and its impacts on women and men, the context of what hooking up is needs to be addressed.

**Hooking Up**

Another form of male and female interaction that has recently emerged has come to be known as hooking up. As noted by Bogle (2007) dating and hooking up are two different entities with different meanings, therefore they cannot be used interchangeably. Today hooking up, or the casual sex practice, is the most major element in the environment of college campuses (Paul & Hayes: 2002). Within Glenn and Marquardt’s (2001) study examining women’s attitudes and values about sexuality, dating, courtship
and marriage, the prevalence and definitions of hooking up emerged. In their research, Glenn and Marquardt (2001) discovered that hooking up is an ambiguous term since most women stated it could be anything from kissing to having sex outside of a committed relationship. Additionally, it was determined that hook ups usually occur between two people that do not know each other well, don’t necessarily expect continued hook ups with the person involved and lastly, could happen just once between two people or two people could continually hook up with each other for an extended period of time (2001: 13). Therefore, the ambiguity of a hook up is further supported since Bogle (2007) suggests that it could be only a one time occurrence or become a situation in which the same person hookups regularly with the other person. Bogle further addresses what a hook up is by stating, “when college students use the term ‘hookup’, it generally refers to a man and woman pairing off at the end of a party of evening at a bar to engage in a physical/sexual encounter” (2007: 776). Furthermore, Lambert, Kahn, and Apple (2003) stress that hooking up carries a level of ambiguity within how it is defined and the circumstances under which it occurs. Lambert et al. add a new component of Bogle’s definition of hooking up by suggesting that in hooking up it is probable there is no future commitment (2003). Hooking up clearly differs from dating as described in the 1960s as well as the dating styles presented by Glenn & Marquardt (2001). Hooking up is a term that has been applied to sexual behavior today but the practice of casual sex has been present throughout history.

Lambert et al. (2003) indicate that hooking up is currently perceived as normal behavior on college campuses but historically this behavior was called a one night stand.
and was viewed as less of a social norm since it was sex outside of a committed relationship. Lambert et al. state, “although one-night stands and uncommitted sexual behaviors are not a recent phenomenon, past research has focused on personality traits, attitudes, and individual differences in willingness to engage in such behaviors” (2003: 129). Lambert et al. suggest that sexual behaviors that were historically viewed as negative are now considered normal behavior among college students and are now labeled hooking up.

With hooking up as the normative sexual behavior between men and women on college campuses it is important to examine its prevalence and the impact it has on women. According to a study conducted by Paul, McManus and Hayes, over three quarters of their participants had participated in at least one hook up while a third of their participants had actually engaged in sexual intercourse with a stranger or acquaintance (2000). Furthermore, the majority of participants were under the influence of alcohol at the time of their hook up experience. Vander Ven and Beck (2009) further support the influence of alcohol in hooking up in their research when they state, “Getting drunk and ‘hooking up’ were activities that went hand in hand or were ‘natural.’ Apparently, alcohol intoxication is commonly used as a ‘built-in’ excuse for the behaviors that follow” (30). Other research also indicates that alcohol is typically present during the time of a hook up. Paul et al. further discovered that “while there was no overall sex difference in the likelihood of engaging in a hookup experiences, there were sex differences in the prevalence of coital and noncoital hookup experiences” (2000: 85). Overall, men’s hook up’s involved sexual intercourse more often than did the hook up
experiences of women (Paul et al.: 2000). While Bogle stresses that hooking up and
dating does not mean the same thing and that “these terms cannot be used
interchangeably in research studies on heterosexual interaction” (2005: 4), it is important
to clarify the difference between how dating is perceived today versus hooking up.

According to Bogle, dating follows the trend of going on dates and the possibility
of getting intimate after an emotional attachment has developed (2007). Additionally,
Bogle (2005) suggests that college students who participated in dating first go on a date
and then may become sexually intimate at a later time. However, when hooking up
students engage in sex first then dating may follow. Bogle further elaborates that college
students understand what a date means and refer to a date as “either a man and a woman,
who are already a couple, going out on a date, or attending a fraternity or sorority
function accompanied by a date” (2007: 776). Therefore, dating today is not viewed in
the traditional sense that was practiced historically. Furthermore, as presented previously,
Glenn & Marquardt (2001) discovered that women were participating in four different
styles of dating that ranged in the level of commitment and sexual intimacy in the
relationship. It is important to note that dating and hooking up are not the same. Hooking
up indicates that sexual activity occurs without an emotional attachment and then maybe
there is a chance at going on a date later (Bogle: 2007). It is important to emphasize that
the hook up carries a great deal of variation in the way in which college students describe
how it works. Bogle points to three reasons for this wide variation: (1) there are various
ways in which people meet each other prior to the actual hook up, (2) the hook up
signifies a physical encounter but how much sexual activity takes place differs from
person to person, and (3), there are different outcomes that develop from a hook up (2007). The two terms, dating and hooking up, follow opposite goals and intentions, which can often lead to confusion amongst men and women.

From looking at the different meanings of dating and hooking up it becomes apparent that there are no clear guidelines for how men and women are to interact on campus which leads to a lack of a courtship culture that was present historically (Glenn & Marquardt: 2001). It is imperative to acknowledge that, “because processes for mating and dating are not socially prescribed and not clear, women feel that they must make up their own rules as they go along, but they are trying to act on a basis of essentially private and individual rules in an inextricably social context, a context in which other people’s choices are strongly influencing their lives” (Glenn & Marquardt: 2001: 29). Therefore, interactions among men and women on campuses can lead to confusion with the predominant hook up mentality. The current practice of hooking up carries a lot of ambiguity but furthermore it is unclear as to when it became the norm in male and female interactions in college.

According to Bogle, the time at which hooking up replaced dating as the primary means of men and women interacting together is unknown, however, evidence indicates that the shift was underway by the 1970’s (2008). As stated earlier, hooking up is a term associated with the normative sexual behavior of college students today while historically it was perceived as a one-night stand or labeled as casual sex. There are a handful of cultural and social changes that occurred that led to the emergence of the hookup. First, the ratio of men and women in college has changed historically. The passing of the GI
Bill increased the number of males and veterans going to college, so during the 1950’s there were more men than women, which made finding a prospective husband easier especially since women were depending on men for financial support during the 1950’s and 1960’s (Glenn & Marquardt: 2001). However, by 1980 there were more women than men in college and as a result reduced the amount of potential marriage partners to choose from. Additionally, women being permitted to apply to the same programs as men as indicated earlier has increased women’s drive to attend college. As discussed previously, the 1960’s brought about a more open idea of sex and sexuality. There was less stigma attached to premarital sexual behavior among college students and increased availability for birth control methods. Also, people were dating and going steady younger, which gave them more opportunity for sexual experimentation earlier in life. History indicates that as culture and social ideas have changed so have men’s and women’s interaction in terms of dating and exploring sexual activity. The current dating trends as well as hooking up have once again altered the dynamics of male and female understandings of the type of relationship they share when participating in these two situations.

As previously indicated, the power and control of initiators in heterosexual relationships has changed historically in that after the sexual revolution there was a shift towards more egalitarian views for men and women. Glenn and Marquardt indicate that women do in fact have more social power today however; they might not have as much power in relationships with men as it might appear (2001). According to Glenn and Marquardt,
“Women and men hook up, and men decide whether anything more will happen. A man asks a woman to go somewhere with him, but keeps her guessing about his intentions. Men and women become sexually involved and spend a lot of time together, but usually the woman has to ask (and risk rejection) whether they are officially in a relationship” (2001: 40).

While women have the ability to decline hooking up or going on a date which still gives them power, Glenn and Marquardt (2001) indicate that when the time comes to become a publicly committed couple the power to make that decision falls into the hands of the man. Despite the struggle for equality in power among men and women in dating as well as hooking up the ambiguity that exists with both has the potential to impact the self perceptions of the parties involved. This would be particularly so for the women who still experience the double standard.

According to recent research conducted by Bogle, men and women have conflicting desires in the hookup culture (2008). She found that women are more often seeking relationships or at least something more than just hooking up while men are mainly seeking these non-committed sexual interactions. Furthermore, Bogle discovered that men would not be in a relationship with women who hooked up too much, yet could not define what was too much, even if she was as equally promiscuous as the man. Bogle suggests that because men know women are seeking a relationship from hooking up they have developed ways to indicate they are not interested in a relationship. The conflicting goals of sexual intimacy between men and women are supportive of work presented by Canary and Emmers-Sommer (1997). They found that “women link sex with emotional involvement whereas men associate sex with casual, physical involvement” (67). With women going into hooking up and linking emotional involvement to sex there is the
potential for conflict between men and women. Furthermore, conflicting goals and perceptions in hooking up can lead to a double standard. Women face prejudice when they are active in the hook up culture such as being labeled as “sluts” for being too promiscuous or “easy” or “stupid” for dressing provocatively according to Bogle’s research (2008: 107). Bogle further suggests that women’s terms are viewed negatively while men face terms such as “man-whore” in a joking manner instead of derogatory (Bogle: 2008: 105). How does this double standard make women feel about themselves? Before addressing women’s perceptions, it is important to understand the conflicting sexual expectations and standards that exist for men and women.

**Sexual Double Standards**

The sexual double standard is not a new idea within American culture. As presented in previous sections, the traditional sexual double standard where women are condemned for participating in the same sexual behavior as men was already present and being addressed during the 1920’s. By 1959, college men had transitioned to viewing what was known as a single standard, which meant it was acceptable for women to have premarital intercourse as long as they were in love or engaged to the man. However, women at the time still upheld a double standard. A study conducted by Kaats and Davis (1970) found that after the 1960’s women had more liberal sexual behaviors yet, maintained a double standard, which became more salient as the behavior became more intimate. However, despite research indicating a single standard being held by men Kaats & Davis (1970) found otherwise, in that there was “a converging sexual behavior or sexual equalitarianism, a newly devised assessment of the sexual double-standard
indicated that approximately half of all the males held such a standard (one allowing
greater sexual freedom for men), particularly when the woman in question was a sister or
potential spouse” (398). Additionally, their research indicated that standards in terms of
virginity upheld the double standard in that it was more important for a woman to have
her virginity than for a man to have his. Furthermore, Carpenter (2005) elaborates on the
types of sexual behaviors that are deemed appropriate under certain circumstances.
Carpenter states “…casual sex was deemed acceptable for men but women were expected
to make sex-thus virginity loss- contingent on love or at least strong affection, and
preferably the title of girlfriend” (2005: 39). Despite the sexual revolution women were
expected to wait until they were in a committed relationship or in love in order to view
intercourse as appropriate while the same was not expected of men. Therefore, despite
the idea of equality in terms of sexual behaviors among men and women there was still a
double standard being held that allowed men more sexual freedom than women.
However, women reflected a stronger belief in the double standard than men did. The
sexual revolution during the 1960’s brought forth a decline, however did not eliminate,
the double standard.

It is important to note that the sexual revolution was not all positive in regards to
gender equality. Women seeking sexual and personal freedom found that men were not
kind towards excessive sexual freedom. Schwartz and Rutter indicate that, “women
wanted sexual liberation to signify equality in relationships, but men often took it as an
opening for sexual opportunism” (1998: 81). So there was a sexual double standard
present where women wanted freedom but were met with negative reactions from men
who had been socialized to have traditional ideas about women’s chastity (Schwartz and Rutter: 1998). Turner emphasizes that the double standard indicates that “sexual promiscuity, particularly premarital sexual relations, is acceptable for men but not for women” (2003: 29). So despite the sexual revolution and ideals of sexual freedom women encounter prejudice as a result of sexual norms that men uphold.

As indicated previously, the sexual revolution brought forth a new era of change in regards to ideas of equality between men and women. Fugère, Escoto, Cousins, Riggs, & Haerich (2008) indicate that

“The effects of the sexual revolution have impacted the media and sexual education. The spread of HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, and an increase in teen pregnancy have been attributed to changes in social mores. Despite these cultural changes, some research continues to support the existence of a double standard or that sexuality is acceptable for men but not for women” (174). Various researchers have reached different conclusions regarding the sexual double standard. Crawford & Popp (2003) indicate that “despite the claims that double standards are progressively fading, they may exist in contemporary forms that influence the behavior of both women and men” (14). The double standard’s looming presence or questioned lack thereof after the sexual revolution is additionally supported by Fugère et al. (2008). Fugère et al. further support Crawford & Popp (2003) by stating “although some behaviors are viewed as equally acceptable for men and women, other behaviors, such as casual sex or having many sex partners, are still seen as more acceptable for men than women” (2008: 174). Fugère et al. provide the example that for men it is acceptable to have a larger number of sexual partners and be more promiscuous while for women these behaviors would have consequences (2008). While a few early, yet methodological flawed studies have indicated the demise of the double standard since the sexual
revolution, most research up until today is still indicating that there is a double standard present in regards to sexual behavior of men and women.

Despite the presence of the double standard it is important to acknowledge that its weight has lifted some over the decades. Hatfield & Rapson (1996) noted that even with the gender differences in regards to acceptable sexual behaviors prior to marriage present the strength of the differences had decreased over the decades. Oliver and Hyde’s research indicate, “almost all of the significant effects showed gender differences becoming smaller over time, especially in regard to attitudes toward premarital sex when the couple was engaged, attitudes toward homosexuality, number of sexual partners, frequency of intercourse, and incidence of masturbation” (1993: 45). Despite the claim of double standards diminishing they are still present within society. The double standard is not dead it has only decreased slightly over the decades in its influence over sexual behaviors between men and women. However, the meaning of the double standard has evolved.

Today the double standard still maintains that men are more tolerant to any sexual behaviors than women. However, despite men’s tolerance to women partaking in more sexual behaviors, when it comes time to select a mate or potential spouse they are less inclined to go for women who had participated in casual sex. Townsend (1998) found that men view women participating in sexual intercourse casually as acceptable as long as they are not interested in starting a relationship with that woman. Maccoby (1998) further illustrates that men who have multiple casual sex partners expect their future wives to be virgins or only have had one sexual partner, being himself, prior to marriage.
Additionally, Crawford & Popp (2003) reported that “men in particular may judge women’s sexual behavior in more restrictive ways when they are asked to view the target as a potential marriage partner versus a dating or casual sex partner” (23). Under the contemporary double standard that permits men to judge women in this way, women who are more open to casual sex might be seen as potential dating partners but it is the women who say no to casual sex that are considered appropriate for potential long-term relationships (Crawford & Popp: 2003). This puts women at a disadvantage and further reduces their ability to express their sexual freedom. The double standard that men uphold today put women in a position where if they want to find a spouse in the future they have to limit their causal sexual behavior and find a more acceptable route to express their sexual urges, through relationships.

Bogle (2007) further supports this notion within the hook up culture on college campuses. Bogle (2007) indicates that

“For women who are active participants, the hook up system is fraught with pitfalls that can lead to them being labeled a ‘slut.’ For example, women were negatively labeled if they: hooked up too often, went too far during an initial hook up, hooked up with guys that were friends or fraternity brothers during the same semester, or conducted themselves in an overtly sexual manner (in terms of their style of dress, etc.) at social gatherings where hooking up was possible. The sexual double standard leads to an environment where women need relationships in order to protect their reputations” (9).

Bogle’s depiction of how women are labeled sluts for sexual behavior indicates that men still uphold a double standard in regards to women participating excessively in hooking up. Men indicate that it’s morally acceptable for women to have sex prior to marriage, however, are not interested in dating the women who have done so excessively.

Furthermore, women’s knowledge that participating in hooking up too frequently leads to
negative labels has impacted their approach to hooking up. According to Bogle “this sexual double standard may explain why women were more interested than men in hooking up leading to a relationship. While in a relationship, women could be shielded from peer scrutiny and condemnation for sexual behavior” (2007: 15). Bogle indicates that one way for women to express their sexual urges frequently without negative stigma is through relationships. In the struggle for sexual equality women have to alter their behavior in order to avoid negative labels from men and in order to find a potential spouse. Women have to learn to walk the line of appearing experienced but not excessively so. According to Maccoby (1998)

“A girl does not want to be, or appear to be, a prude. At the same time, she does not want to be known as someone who is ‘easy.’ If she too openly acknowledges enjoying sex, she risks being labeled excessively sexual (a nympho) and allowing males to think she will accept casual, uncommitted sex. She wants to maintain a reputation as someone who is able to keep restraints on sexual behavior and is selective where her male companionship is concerned” (206).

Therefore women are held to the double standard of controlling their sexual behaviors while men are allowed to participate in as much casual sex as they please without social repercussions. Forcing women to suppress their sexual urges and follow standards that are not equal to men will impact the way they perceive themselves and their behavior.

**Impact of Dating and Hooking Up on Self Perception**

With the presence of a double standard that holds women to different sexual expectations than men it can lead to having an impact on women’s self perceptions if they believe in the double standard. The extent of literature regarding the impact of dating and hooking up on college women’s self esteem is limited. Examining the self is an important element to understanding how women perceive themselves after executing
various behaviors in dating and hooking up. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2002) the self has been critically analyzed over the last century and has been concluded to be present in our everyday lives. Holstein and Gubrium state, “The self now materializes in myriad nooks and crannies of everyday life, reflecting one sense of who we are in one site, turning a second option for personal definition in another one” (2000: 215).

Therefore, since the self is a mechanism by which people evaluate and perceive themselves, it is important to understand how women’s sense of self is affected by dating and hooking up. Since the literature is limited in this context it is important to understand how the double standard and sexual behaviors have affected women’s sense of self.

However, through the lens of the sexual double standard that negatively impacts women who are more sexually permissive there is an indication of how it affects women’s self perception. According to Crawford & Popp (2003) the presence of the double standard and women’s knowledge of it can lead them to internalize its ideals and use it as a way to evaluate their sexual behavior. Crawford & Popp indicate that “women often believe that they should conform to societal-based standards of morality by resisting their own sexual urges” (2003: 24). In order to conform to the double standard and uphold the social expectations it thus limits women in regards to their freedom of sexual expression. Furthermore, Crawford & Popp state that

“sexuality and the desire to be attractive as a dating partner present conflicting ideals for women. Girls learn to look sexy but say no, to be feminine but not sexual, and to attract boys’ desire but not to satisfy their own. They experience dissonance when they are depicted as sexual objects yet defined in terms of sluts and whores when they express their sexuality” (2003: 24).
The conflicting demands and expectations held by society impact the way in which women can express their sexual freedom and therefore can cause them to develop a negative view on their sexual behaviors. However, when women do choose to express their sexual desires through hooking up, it can lead to negative outcomes.

According to research conducted by Eshbaugh & Gute (2008) college women participating in hooking up can lead to sexual regret under certain circumstances. Eshbaugh & Gute (2008) define regret as “a negative emotion accompanied by self-blame” (77). In hooking up men and women who experience regret tend to experience it in different ways. According to Eshbaugh & Gute studies that show how genders experience regret indicate that “men are more likely to experience regrets of inaction (i.e., wishing that they had engaged in a sexual behavior), whereas women are more likely to experience regrets of action (i.e., wishing they had no engaged in a sexual behavior)” (2008: 77). Therefore, women are more likely to experience negative emotions after having followed through with a sexual act later while men are disappointed for not having achieved any sexual behavior when the opportunity was present. In a study conducted by Eshbaugh & Gute (2008), women who hooked up and had intercourse were most likely to experience strong feelings of regret. This research indicated that women’s participation in hooking up during college can lead to negative consequences on their self perception. Women are expected to uphold the social morals through the double standard that is present and as a result when they break those expectation women are met with regret. Women’s desire for equality comes with the price of regret for sexual expression outside of a relationship.
Furthermore, Paul and Hayes (2002) found that among their participant’s responses to best and worst hook up experiences, there was a combination of both positive and negative emotions used to describe one hookup experience. Paul and Hayes state that, “although some women may have experienced positive emotions during the sexual encounter (i.e., feeling chosen, noticed, attractive), they are more likely to feel ashamed and regretful afterwards” (2002: 658). Their research indicates that at the time of the experience some women perceive the experience positively but looking back on the hook up it was negative. Therefore, despite initial positive experiences for women in hooking up in the limited research it appears that women reflect negatively and experience regret when looking back on their hooking up experiences.

Overall, the literature shows that dating practices are a reflection of the larger social changes that occur. Furthermore, the literature suggests that there has been a shift away from traditional dating to hooking up as the social norm for men’s and women’s interactions on campus. With the social changes brought forth from the sexual revolution women have gained equal access to participating in premarital sex. However, according to the literature, despite equality in theory, women are still met with consequences for participating too actively in hooking up; therefore indicating a sexual double standard is still in place. Additionally, the literature is limited on how hooking up and traditional dating affect women’s self perceptions. This study will contribute to the gap the literature on what dating and hooking up mean to women on campus and how they affect women’s self perceptions. Furthermore, given that much of the research on hooking up has occurred on the East Coast, this research will contribute to the literature by evaluating
hooking up and dating at a midwestern university. The current study aims to discover the most common form of intimate interaction between men and women, how dating and hooking up affect women’s perceptions of self and whether these interactions have a positive or negative impact on women’s self esteem.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research was to evaluate the current dating trends on a Midwest public university campus and determine whether dating trends are evolving. Specifically, are the trends in dating that have been discovered at East coast university campuses occurring at the Midwest university campus as well. Additionally, this research is intended to not only explore the current dating trend, but also to gain a better understanding of how the dating culture affects women and their perceptions of self. Additionally, hooking up will also be explored. To gather detailed data on the aforementioned topics, these specific research questions will be addressed: (1) What is the most frequent form of intimate interaction between men and women on campus? (2) How has the transition from dating to hooking up as a campus norm affected women’s perceptions of self? (3) Do dating and hooking up positively or negatively affect college women’s self esteem? This research has been designed to gain a more in-depth look at the intimate interaction between men and women on campus from the perspective of women.

Design

In order to gain the rich data needed to fully examine the research questions for the current project, face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with women enrolled at a university. The goal of semi-structured interviews was to shed light upon how women defined dating and hooking up, their own personal involvement within the college dating culture as well as how their interactions with men affected their self perceptions in general and their self esteem in particular. The semi-structured interview format allowed for follow up questions and probes about the individual
experiences in order to gather the most in-depth data possible. According to Berg (2007), probes are used within qualitative interviews to gain a more complete account of an event from the participant. Berg indicates that the main purpose of a probe is to “elicit more information about whatever the respondent has already said in response to a question” (2007: 101). In the current research follow up questions and probes allowed for a detailed understanding of the way women’s participation, or lack thereof, in the dating and hooking up culture have impacted their self perception.

Prior to conducting the interview, women were asked to sign an informed consent form. The completed informed consent forms were stored in a locked file cabinet in order to protect the women’s identities. The interview consisted of 5 basic demographic questions to provide information about the age, academic class rank, residential location of dorms or off campus housing, academic major, and race/ethnicity of the women. Following the demographic questions were about 51 questions (See Appendix C) aimed at gaining an understanding of how women define dating and hooking up, their experiences as well as their friend’s experiences in both, and how dating and hooking up affect their self-perception. The scripted questions only served as a guideline for the interview in that additional questions and probes were implemented throughout based on the women’s individual experiences.

The open-ended questions were designed to gain a general understanding of how women defined a date, dating, and hooking up. Questions were also intended to gain insight about how participating in dating and hooking up impacted their self perception. Furthermore, some of the open-ended questions were designed to determine how women
viewed their friends who participated in dating or hooking up. The interviews varied in length from thirty-seven minutes to just over two hours.

**Recruitment/Sampling**

The women for this research were recruited through a variety of approaches. Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, recruitment fliers (See Appendix B) were posted in a variety of public buildings across campus in order to recruit a more diverse sample of women. Additionally, after receiving the professors’ permission to recruit participants in their classes, a presentation was given to eight different undergraduate classes asking female heterosexual students who were interested in participating in the project to contact the researcher. Furthermore, the proposed research was presented to a sorority house to recruit additional women. Lastly, at the time of the interview snowball sampling was implemented to recruit additional women. Through posting fliers and presenting to classes and a sorority house, women were recruited from a variety of academic majors and various class ranks.

Potential participants in all three venues were given the criteria that needed to be met in order to participate as well as the personal contact information, e-mail and cell phone number of the researcher. The sampling criterion for the study was 1) between the ages of 18-24, 2) heterosexual, 3) an undergraduate at the university, and 4) completed at least one academic year. This sampling frame was designed to ensure that students were of legal age and had been at the university long enough to have had at least some experience with the dating culture in college.
After each interview snowball sampling was implemented to further expand the sample size. In order to carry out snowball sampling, the researcher gave her contact information to the participant and asked her to pass it along to anyone else interested in participating. Overall, through fliers, classroom presentations, a sorority house, and snowball sampling 15 women met the research criteria, consented to, and participated in, interviews.

**Participants**

Originally, there were 20 women who consented to participate in the research, however only 15 women were used in the final analysis.¹ The women ranged from ages 19-24 with the average age being 21. All of the women were currently enrolled at the university and either living on campus in university residence halls, off-campus housing, or commuting from outside of the city where the university is located. The sample consisted of 12 women who identified as Caucasian and 3 women who identified as African American. Given that the university is over 90% Caucasian, the racial make-up of the sample is consistent with that of the university. Eight of the women were in relationships at the time of their interview. Two of the eight women in relationships defined their situation as “complicated.” The remaining seven women identified themselves as single, or not in a committed relationship. The women came from a variety of academic class ranks: three of the women were sophomores, two were juniors, and ten were seniors. Additionally, the women came from an array of academic majors such as psychology, journalism, sociology, criminology, spanish, and international business.

¹ During the course of the interview it was discovered that some of the women identified as bisexual or were graduate students. While the interviews were completed, these women were removed from the analysis because they did not meet the sampling criteria.
With the diversity of relationship statuses, academic class ranks, and ages the women in this sample provided rich detailed experiences about the dating/hook up culture on campus and how it impacted their self-perceptions.

**Interview Procedure**

The face-to-face, in-depth interviews took place between mid-October and the end of November 2009. In order to ensure confidentiality and privacy for the women so they could speak openly, honestly, and without the concern of being overheard, all interviews were conducted behind closed doors in an office, a conference room, or a small research lab. Women were given the option of choosing a different location in order to ensure they would be most comfortable in the interview setting; however no one chose a different location. The researcher began by introducing herself to the women and making conversation about the weather or a variety of other topics to help break the ice. According to Berg (2007) an interview can be completed through a dramaturgical approach. Berg (2007) indicates that the interview should be viewed like a conversation in which the researcher is having a conversation with the participant about their life, experiences, and personal perceptions. However, Berg indicated that “the ideal situation would be to assist the subject in conveying almost a monologue on the research topic” (2007: 117). Through understanding the dramaturgical approach to interviewing, this format was implemented in the interviews. The aim of this approach was to create a comfortable environment where the women could tell the researcher about their experiences and “stories.”
Once the participant was comfortable in the interview setting she was given an informed consent form (See Appendix A) to read over as the researcher gave a brief introduction through an “interview script”. The interview script consisted of thanking the woman for her time and participation in the interview as well as giving a basic introduction of what the project was about and any risks involved with participation. Additionally, women were informed that their participation was completely voluntary, that they could discontinue the interview at any time, and that if they were uncomfortable with a question they did not have to answer. Furthermore, the women were asked if they were alright with the interview being audio recorded while assuring them that the researcher would be the only person with access to the tapes and tapes would be destroyed upon completion of transcription. After participants had read the consent form they were asked to sign the form giving consent to continue the interview. Once the women signed the informed consent form they were given a copy to take with them.

Before the interview began the women were reminded again not to use their own name or names of their friends in order to protect confidentiality. The tape recorder was turned on and the researcher proceeded to ask women on record if they consented to participating in the interview. Upon consent the researcher began by asking them basic demographic questions and then continued on to the open-ended questions (See Appendix C) about their experiences and perceptions on dating, hooking up, and their self-perception in regards to both topics.
Interview Analysis

Upon completing the interviews, the data was transferred to a computer file and assigned a number that was password protected. From the audio files on the computer, all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and each woman was given a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality and protect her identity. Any field notes taken after the interview were labeled with the participant’s number and then with their pseudonym and kept locked in a separate file. After completing the transcriptions the actual audio files were deleted to ensure confidentiality. All the files pertaining to the research, including transcripts, remain password protected on the researcher’s computer.

To begin the process of analyzing the data, the coding system of Strauss (1987) was implemented. According to Strauss, in order to be successful in coding, a coding paradigm consisting of open coding, axial coding and selective coding should be implemented. Strauss states, “while coding involves the discovery and naming of categories, it must also tell the researcher much more than that” (1987: 27). Open coding is a process in which all the data including transcripts and field notes are to be looked at carefully to observe any concepts that emerge from the data.

As indicated by Strauss (1987) there are four open coding guidelines. The four guidelines are to first ask what the data is saying in regards to the research questions, followed by analyzing the data very closely so as to not miss any important themes, continually interrupt coding to write notes about the data, and lastly “the analyst should not assume the analytic relevance of any ‘face sheet’ or traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, race, until it emerges as relevant” (1987: 32). Following the coding
paradigm proposed by Strauss an initial pass through the data was carried out to look for common themes that were present within the data. During this stage a coding system was created where general categories were identified.

The second stage of analyzing the data is axial coding, in which each of the categories is analyzed separately in order to gain more knowledge about any relationships within that specific category as well as how the data relates to the other categories (1987: 32). During axial coding categories were closely analyzed to gain a more in-depth understanding of the themes as well as note any subthemes that emerged during this process. Upon completing axial coding the final phase of coding, labeled as selective coding, was implemented. Strauss states “selective coding pertains to coding systematically and concertedly for the core category” (1987: 33). During this stage the focus is to look at only the codes that relate to the core codes in a significant way and concepts for further research. The focus in the final stage was on how themes and subthemes related to the core theme as indentified in the earlier stage of coding.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter is an analysis of fifteen women’s college experiences with dating and hooking up and the impacts that these interactions with men had on the women’s self perceptions. The women’s narratives shed light upon how they interacted with men, how their relationships developed, what they believed a date and hooking up were, as well as how their experiences affected their self perceptions and self esteem. This chapter will address how college women define what dating and hooking up are and how their participation in them impacts their self perception.

Overall, three general themes emerged from the data. The first theme that emerged was the perception of dating or common understanding of what a date is and how a date and dating are two similar, but different entities. The second major theme that emerged was the replacement of the dating norm with hooking up. The third theme was male and female interactions impact upon women’s self perception. The subsequent sections will be devoted to exploring these three themes along with their subthemes based upon the findings from the data.

*Perceptions of Dating*

Though dating is a concept that has evolved throughout history, it is still in existence today as was found in this research. The first theme to emerge from the data was how women perceived what a date is at the university. Through the women’s explanations of what a date is to how women began a relationship it was evident that women had a common understanding of what dating meant in college. Throughout the discussion of how dating was defined, women indicated that dating was a process that was used as a springboard towards a committed relationship. Women’s personal
experiences and accounts reflected the preference towards traditional gender roles of men making the initiative and covering the costs of the date, however, women indicated that this traditional date was not common at the university. According to Benokraitis (2002) traditional dating has clearly defined gendered practices where the male is expected to invite the woman out, plan the activity, pick her up, pay for the date and return her home on time. The findings indicate that the women described the same traditional gender roles suggested by Benokraitis (2002) when discussing going on a date. Furthermore, women unveiled a shifting of the gender roles in terms of date initiation by stating that women today are now taking the initiative of asking men out if they are interested in pursuing something.

**The Meaning of a Date and Dating**

At the beginning of the interview process, women were asked what they thought when they heard the word date and how they would define it. Women indicated that a date was a time to get to know another person of interest. Rachel, a single senior, suggests that a purpose of a date is to get to know the other person better and see if there is potential for a relationship with that person. As Rachel stated,

> “Um I think of two people like a male or a female… going out and going to dinner, or a movie, or doing something together, along those lines… They’re interested in each other and getting to know each other and starting a relationship, romantic relationship.”

Additionally, many of the women articulated that dating involves going out in public as suggested by Kelly, a junior in a relationship,

> “I think for it to definitely be a date, you’re going out somewhere… You know so two people… going out somewhere together, and I guess it’s
assumed that they have some sort of attraction to each other for it to be a date, so you know. There’s some sort of romantic thingy or flirtation…”

Therefore a date is an activity between two people with some kind of attraction between them with the intention of getting to know one another better. Annie, a single senior further supports the element of attraction involved in a date by stating that

“Um I suppose a date is when two people that are in some way romantically or sexually interested in each other, go out and spend time together in some way. Not necessarily out in public but do something together”.

The women in the study indicate that going on a date is where one can learn more about the person of interest and have the opportunity to learn whether this person would be a potential partner for a future relationship. Overall, the majority of the women indicated that going on a date consisted of going out and actually leaving the house.

In many instances, women differentiated between a date and dating. While the majority of women found a date to be going somewhere with a person of interest to get to know them better many discussed their understanding of dating as being in a relationship or the stages before a relationship. About half of the women who talked about dating used the term to describe being in a relationship. While Nicole, a senior in a relationship, explained that going on date could be with anyone and that dating meant something more consistent like being in a relationship. She states,

“I think in college terms it’s the same thing cause if you’re willing to put that much into something like, as a college student, dating would be a relationship.”

Paris, a single senior further supports that going on a date means participating in an activity while dating indicates a relationship when she says,
And if we’re dating, me and a guy are together… to me I think you are in a relationship, talking is the stage before a relationship.”

About half of the women who used the term dating indicated that it could mean being in a relationship or used it to describe their own relationship or a friend’s relationship. For example, Renee said her friend Lisa went on a date with her boyfriend to the movies and then states

“…And they’ve been dating for about (pause) I don’t know, almost a year.”

While half of the women used the term dating to describe their relationships, the other half of the women indicated that dating was more informal, that it didn’t have to mean you were in a relationship or used it interchangeably to describe a relationship. The use of dating and relationships interchangeably was displayed when Heather a sophomore in a relationship first described how she met her boyfriend and explained that “we’ve been dating since”. Then Heather defined a date as:

“I don’t know if there’s a difference between dating and going on a date. To me like, yeah dating is like pre… or the beginning of it …”

In a similar manner of using dating interchangeably Taylor, a single junior, further supports what Heather suggests when she says,

“Dating someone um you’re together with someone. I think there’s different levels of dating… I think you can be casually dating someone… um but it’s nothing serious… I think you can also be dating someone like, I’m dating them like I’m in a relationship with them…I think the word in a relationship and dating someone can kind of be interchangeable.”

Taylor supports that the term dating someone could be interchangeable with the term relationship depending on how the woman perceives the situation and the level of commitment. So while a majority of the women used the term dating to describe their
relationships, Molly a senior in a relationship, supports the notion of dating being informal and in levels when she states,

“I think dating is a lot more informal… Um if you were to say I’m dating around you know… not committed…”

Through women defining what a date was and how a date differentiated from dating it became evident that the term dating was used interchangeably to describe informally getting to know someone or being in a relationship. Overall, women defined a date as going out and doing something together with a person with whom there is some interest or attraction. Dating however was perceived as being in a relationship or perhaps something more casual that was a precursor to a committed relationship. It appears though that dating is a process. The next section will address this process as women who had been in relationships explained how they met their boyfriends and how they came to being in a relationship.

*Process toward a Relationship/Dating*

As indicated in the literature review, women in college have an understanding that a date means to go out somewhere and do something with a person of romantic interest. However there is still some ambiguity in its definition. The process of going on multiple dates or spending time with the same person is a way to get to know one another better and could lead toward a potential relationship or dating. Findings suggest that women did not just meet a man and end up in a relationship right away; there was a process that leads to the development of a relationship. Amy, a senior, met her current boyfriend at a house party and through a process of interaction came to establish a relationship with him. Amy explains:
“Well I actually went to meet his friend there and um his friend was too drunk to really speak to anyone and we ended up talking the rest of the day and hanging out and um we exchanged numbers and we just started talking and he helped me move in. And after that we realized that we liked each other so. Yeah.”

Similarly, the process of meeting a man, getting to know him, and recognizing the connection present was supported by Nicole when she explains how she met her current boyfriend and how they came to be in a relationship.

“Um well basically I met him that night and it was kind of just random… and um just kind of hit it off that night… and um, I gave him my phone number… and so he called on Thursday, from there we just kind of were talking and would meet up on the weekend and then it just kind of turned into something a little more serious towards the end of the quarter… at the beginning of the next fall quarter, we’re like alright this is something serious, lets you know be more serious about it.”

Furthermore, many women indicated relationships developed over time. As stated by Veronica, one of the women who also used the term dating to describe her relationship,

“He was in a bad situation and so like just in the process of being friends and like hanging out all the time and trying to like give him courage to get out of something he wasn’t happy in, he fell for me and then I started falling for him and then he and his girlfriend broke up and then we kind of didn’t date for a week because we were like, we don’t want people to judge us and it was an uncomfortable situation. But then I just decided that like screw what people think, like I want to be with him and he wants to be with me so then we were dating.”

Overall, through the process of getting to know each other some of the women ended up in relationships through the process of talking with men first and then going on dates. The findings indicate that relationships do not just happen out of the blue, but are a process of getting to know each other and developing that connection into an official commitment to one another. Interestingly, despite half the women being in relationships at the time of
their interview, a majority of the women indicated that being asked out on a date, outside of a relationship or context of dating, was rare in their experiences.

**Being Asked on a Traditional Date, Not the Norm**

As stated above, the women in the study indicated that their relationships developed as the result of a process. However, when women were asked how many dates they had been on outside of a relationship, they had only been on a few or none at all. This finding would suggest that the traditional date consisting of a man inviting them to go out, paying for a date, and providing transportation was barely existent. That being said, women who were involved in relationships expressed that they went out on dates with their boyfriends frequently. Women in relationships indicated they went on dates quite often with their boyfriends. Heather supports date frequency within in relationship by stating

“… just this quarter... Um uh probably like every other weekend maybe.”

Similarly, Molly indicated that she went out on dates frequently with her boyfriend, especially since they are currently in a long distance relationship.

“Pretty much every weekend. Yeah we try to cram in everything we can in one weekend and that pretty much always consists of a dinner or a movie or um like a concert or an event of some sort.”

Therefore, women in relationships indicated that they went on dates relatively often. However, in many instances when the women were asked how many dates they had been on in college outside of a relationship the majority of the women indicated that the number of dates ranged from zero to five. The findings suggest that women are not being
asked out on a traditional date often unless it is within a relationship. Amy, the senior in a relationship states,

“Um in college in general I haven’t really been on many dates up until I met Bob.”

Rachel also supports that women are not asked out on dates frequently outside of relationships. Rachel who is a single senior states that while in college,

“It would probably be like 4 or 5…. I feel like people who are in relationships might go on more dates than people who are single.”

Women in relationships going on dates more often than women who are single is a notion that is further supported by Taylor.

“Actually physically going out on dates. I feel like is less common if you’re single than someone who is in a serious relationship where they go out on dates to restaurants, to movies, that kind of thing more often.”

Overall, the findings indicate that outside of relationships women are not frequently being asked out on a date, which they defined as going somewhere and a way of discovering if there is potential for a relationship. Furthermore, as indicated in the process section, women are meeting men through friends or at social gatherings and through talking and interacting they begin a relationship. Despite women understanding what a date is, it becomes apparent that not very many women are being asked on traditional dates during college. As will be discussed in the next section, when the women were asked whether they thought traditional dating is more or less common on campus, the majority of the women indicated that this trend was less common for a handful of reasons, such as environmental factors as well as gender roles changing. Additionally,
there were some women who were unsure as to whether traditional dating was still the norm.

**Traditional Dating Declining**

Traditional dating where a man asks a woman out is on the decline according to the women in this study. Two thirds of the women indicated that traditional dating was less common than hooking up, which will be discussed in a later section, or being in a relationship on campus. Women indicated that traditional dating was less common for a number of reasons, a prominent one being that men were not making the effort anymore. Women indicated that men were not taking the initiative which is indicated by Natalie.

“No I don’t really think that’s common. I don’t really think that guys, or in my experiences guys here at the university necessarily take the responsibility of feeling that you know, they need to ask the girl out and like, especially in the way that they go about it.”

In a similar manner Rachel further attributes the decline of traditional dates to men not taking initiative because they are not interested in dating as much as participating in other activities.

“I feel like it’s less common but I feel like especially the boys here, they’re concerned about partying and doing that kind of stuff instead of actually getting to take the time to know people and being, I don’t know gentlemanly about it. And I feel like they don’t have the money too, that’s a big factor…”

The idea of being gentlemen about the process of getting to know women in terms of going on traditional dates was supported by Heather, as was the idea of men not showing an interest in traditional dating. As suggested by Heather in her comments about traditional dating,
“I think just cause nowadays men aren’t the way they used to be. Like they aren’t as um chivalrous (short laugh). I mean especially at this age, it’s not looking for marriage, it’s looking for just a good time so.”

In almost all cases, women suggested that traditional dating is less common than hooking up and being in relationships on campus. A majority of the women attributed this to men no longer taking the initiative. As a result of this change it was suggested that women are now defying the traditional gender roles of date initiation.

**Shifting Gender Roles**

Traditionally men have been the pursuers within dating. However, as women have gained power and more economic equality, there has been a shift in gender roles within dating. Despite the ideal of the traditional dating standard, the majority of the women said that it was not the norm anymore. Many of the women suggested that shifting gender roles had occurred whereby women are now asking men out on dates.

**Women as Initiators in Dating**

Throughout the course of this research it became evident that women didn’t believe that the traditional dating trend was still the norm on the college campus. As stated above, some of the women reported that men were less chivalrous and less interested in dating. That being said, women also suggested that it is now acceptable for women to initiate dates. Hillary supports the notion of men not making the move therefore women are stepping up.

“There are times where girls ask guys out. Um I don’t know what’s going on with the guys; I guess they’re not being so confident or something. But I feel like girls are starting to initiate stuff more… It’s just really hard to find a decent guy these days. Um (pause) and I think that’s probably why girls are starting to initiate more because um of the fact that there are not so many guys out there, so I feel like girls feel like they have to put their
step for... you know put their foot forward and let them know that you know, um like I’m attracted to you and I wanna be like in a serious type thing instead of having them come and like making it. I don’t know, seems like it’s like a just the one time hit and run type thing.”

In a similar manner, Andrea suggests that there are fewer good men around campus and women now have to take action if they want a good man to date.

“I mean I guess it’s more acceptable for girls to ask guys out now... I just feel there’s something at the university that just corrupts all the guys here. Like I just feel like there’s no good ones at the university. Like I don’t know what it is. No one is relationship material. (Laughs)... I just feel like a lot of, a lot of guys aren’t genuine. I feel, like, they’re just, I mean they’re in college, they’re just trying to have fun like no one I guess looking for a relationship so they’re just like I guess seeing what all is out there. So like no one is trying to be in a relationship.”

The women indicate that there are a limited number of quality men on campus and if a woman wants a relationship she might have to step up and pursue a man of interest.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that women now perceive it as more acceptable to ask men out. The idea of women making the first move is supported by Taylor.

“I’ve tried to be more aggressive when asking out guys or if I want to kiss someone I’ll say like you know, I want to kiss you, or I’ll kind of make the move, to see where it goes or if it happens. But that’s because I kind of feel like a lot of women are... I think a lot of women are told they can’t express themselves sexually and if they do they’re slutty, you know, they’re whores. Um so I kind of don’t care about that stuff anymore. It’s not to say I do it all the time, but if there’s somebody I want to pursue and I wanna you know, kiss them or go out on a date with them then it’s kind of like, I’m never going to find out if I don’t ask or if I don’t do something about it, cause chances are a lot of guys wouldn’t do anything about it.”

Taylor expresses the shift in gender roles with women taking the initiative because there is nothing to lose if you don’t try. The idea of women going after what they want was further maintained by Paris when discussing how she has never asked a guy out but her single friends have.
“I mean some of my friends who aren’t in a relationship do ask people on dates… I guess it’s changing a little bit… I guess people see what they want and just go for it. Girls aren’t just gonna, well he’s not gonna ask, so I might as well ask him type of thing.”

Overall, the women are suggesting that traditional dating is not occurring often on campus. Despite half the women being in relationships two thirds of the women indicated that they did not believe that the traditional date was the most common occurrence on campus anymore. When women were asked what the most common intimate interaction between men and women on campus was, dating and relationships were rarely mentioned but a different form of interaction was: hooking up.

Replacement of the Dating Norm: Hooking Up

When women were asked what the most common form of intimate interaction between men and women was on campus the majority, of the women indicated that it was hooking up. In order to understand how women perceived the presence of hooking up it is important to determine how hooking up was defined.

When women were asked to explain what hooking up was it became evident that all of the women, whether they had participated in hooking up or not, knew what it meant. However, definitions of what sexual behaviors were included in hooking up varied slightly among the women. Furthermore, the exact parameters of hooking up were not clearly defined among all the women.

Definition & Ambiguity of Hooking Up

All of the women in the study were able to explain what the term hooking up meant and the majority of the women stated that hooking up involved some form of sexual behavior between two people. In terms of pinpointing what would be classified as
hooking up there were slight differences among women. The majority of the women reported that hooking up in the early stages was physical contact such as making out or touching but does not always include sex. Molly explained what hooking up is.

“Uh like going home together at the end of the night or um (pause) basically like oh, she’s not my girlfriend, we just hook up. Like they just mess around, they have sex or anything but they don’t call each other anything more than just we’re hooking up… it could be like anything from (short pause) making out or to sex I guess…. It’s all considered hooking up.”

In a similar manner, Alisha further supports this notion when she states,

“Anything sexual with a guy… I would define hooking up as also just making out and stuff.”

While the majority of the women stated that making out was the starting point of hooking up some women indicated hooking up had to be something more than making out. Additionally, the women indicated that hooking up could range from making out up to sex. This is evident when Rachel, a single senior states,

“I feel like hooking up is further than making out, maybe just spend the night but like doing stuff, like maybe giving oral or having sex.”

The concept of hooking up being past making out is further supported by Kelly, who states,

“Hooking up is meeting a stranger or like brief acquaintance, like someone you might of, you know met a couple times at a party, and um having some sort of sexual interaction with them like um, like anything beyond making out I think. I think uh I guess if you want to use the baseball terms anything past second base, probably call that a hook up.”

Kelly’s response sheds light on an additional level of ambiguity within hooking up. Women were unclear on whether hooking up was only strangers or acquaintances, a onetime occurrence or multiple times. These elements varied among the diverse
definitions as suggested by Kelly’s definition. Amy further suggests it could be someone you just met or someone you already knew. Amy states,

“I don’t know if you just meet someone randomly that night and end up at their place or yours or wherever and basically have sex and then that’s it...”

Therefore, the starting point of what was considered a hook up carried a level of ambiguity amongst the women. The majority of the women indicated it started at making out while all but one woman stated that hooking up involved some form of physical and sexual interaction. As the findings suggest there is a level of ambiguity in what hooking up actually consists of and what the relationship between the man and woman are that are participating in the activity. Through further discussion of what hooking up meant it became evident that women perceived both genders participating almost equally.

**Perception of Gendered Participation**

When the women were asked whether they thought women or men were hooking up more on campus, a majority of the women indicated that it is about equal. Only four women indicated that it was strictly men participating more. Equality is supported when Taylor, a single junior elaborates,

“I don’t know because I know some girls that like (pause) I could see where it’s equal. From friends of mine, that I know, a lot of them hook up with guys all the time, so it’s kind of like from my personal experience, a lot of people I’m friends with do that a lot. So I would say that it’s equal.”

Similarly Andrea further supports that there is equal participation. After a slight hesitation she says,

“Um (pause) I really think it’s even.”
In addition, when women responded to this question most of them indicated that it was about even in participation, yet, some initially indicated men and shifted their answer to even. Natalie suggests that the social impact of stereotypes is an important factor when she states,

“Hmm. I would that hmm (pause). I think there’s uh, a, stereotype with that. So it’s hard to overlook that. That would say that men do…. I would say that it’s equal. Umm yeah and I’d say its equal.”

Overall the majority of women believed that both men and women participated equally in hooking up. Despite the consensus of equal participation, the majority of the women believed that men were the initiators and sexual aggressors when it came to hooking up.

When the women were asked who was the initiator and pursuer of hooking up the majority of the women indicated that men were the ones to make the first move and pursue a woman. While some of the women indicated that within their personal hook up experiences it was mutual and just happened, the majority indicated that they felt they were pursued by the guy. The male as the sexual pursuer was clearly stated when Alisha, a sophomore in a relationship responded,

“The guy always. Well I mean, I, I guess, I take that back. Girls, my friends at least they say they are going to and they’re like yeah, I’m gonna make out with a bunch of guys and umm but they wouldn’t pursue it, they would wait for another guy. Guys are just more forward, I mean when you’re drunk especially. Guys are more forward so they just wait for a guy.”

Despite the understanding that both genders equally participate in hooking up, women uphold the traditional roles in that men are the aggressors in initiating the hook up.

Natalie, a single senior further supports this finding when she emphasizes that,

“I think definitely the male is pursuing the female. Um, especially because any guy I’ve ‘hooked up’ (stated quote unquote) with has been more
physically aggressive than I have. Um has shown more of an urge than I have...”

Natalie’s response shows that despite the move towards equal participation in hooking up, men are still viewed as the pursuers. Therefore, it is up to the woman to accept or decline the man’s initiative. Women elaborating on how men are the pursuers of the hook up align with the belief that men should be initiators within traditional dating roles as well. The expectation of men being pursuers in hooking up reflects the earlier cultural understanding of men extending the invitation within dating. Nicole, a senior in a relationship sheds light on how gender behaviors in dating can be perceived within hooking up as well. Nicole states

“…but like there’s so much of a culture where like, alright if you meet someone and you hookup… it’s not really like, you don’t have to necessarily go on a date to do that… And I feel like there’s not as many guys willing to put that time and effort into taking a girl on a date when they know they can go to bar and pick someone up and, and can lead to whatever they want it to lead to.”

Nicole shows that men are less likely to initiate a date since they have the option of hooking up which doesn’t require a commitment and can take less effort than planning an actual date. Nicole also hints at possible gender preferences for certain behaviors in college such as men picking up women at the bars and doing what they want. As indicated previously, the women’s responses about dating reflected a preference towards men making the first move. Women however have begun to extend the invitation towards men in college since men are no longer asking women out on dates as frequently. With the traditional gender role expectations of dating being reflected within the hook up
culture as well it’s important to evaluate how the women in the study perceived men and women who participated in hooking up.

**Double Standard Still Present But to a Lesser Degree**

As part of the interview women were asked how they perceived women, as well as men, who hooked up. Furthermore, it was broken down into how the women personally viewed each gender’s participation in hooking up as well as how the women thought each gender’s participation in hooking up was viewed by others in a more general sense. When women reflected on how men and women were generally perceived for hooking up their initial reactions displayed the traditional double standard in regards to sexual behavior. The traditional double standard upholds that when men and women participate in the same sexual behaviors it is viewed as acceptable for men and looked down upon for women. Research has debated whether the sexual double standard is still in place and as Moore and Rosenthal point out “the more things change, the more they stay the same…we still see evidence for the double standard in sexual matters” (1993: 202). This research indicated that the majority of women understood the social impact of the traditional double standard but felt that it was not as prevalent in application at the university. All of the women were able to explain what the double standard was and a few still upheld the beliefs of the double standard. Typically, the women personally wanted hooking up to be equally acceptable for both genders. As will be discussed in the next section, when the women referred to each gender in terms of hooking up they viewed hooking up as more unacceptable and negative for both genders when they participated in it frequently.
When the women were asked how it appeared for each gender to hook up in general, the double standard emerged. All of the women in the study indicated that they had an understanding of what the double standard was and indicated that it made hooking up acceptable for men but women who hooked up were looked down upon. This is evident within Paris’s explanation,

“Umm. Yeah there is a double standard. Guys are “allowed” to hookup as much as they want and girls kinda have to watch themselves… Cause I feel like a guy’s reputation is (pause) a little more durable than a girl’s is (laughs). Like if you [a girl] do something crazy freshman year then it’s gonna stick but if a guy does something freshman year you’ll probably forget about it by like the next quarter.”

In a similar manner, Hillary further supports that the double standard indicates that hooking up is more acceptable for men while for women it is looked down upon.

“…when girls do it, it’s just like oh I’m so ashamed of you, you shouldn’t do it. So I feel like it’s more acceptable for guys to act out like that… yeah like you a hoe… like guys aren’t looked at as a, it’s really rare for a guy to be called a man whore. But for a girl it’s so common, even if a girl do it to two guys, oh you a hoe like…mm hmm. Straight up. Um (laugh) she’s not a classy woman.”

Heather further supports the understanding of a sexual double standard when she states,

“…like women who go out and just sleep with guys you know, they’re kind of, you know, it’s just that stereotypical things that like guys who sleep with girls are like cool and girls who sleep with a lot of guys are slutty.”

Additionally, many of the women while discussing if they believed there was a double standard suggested that the double standard is a result of socialization of men and women. Some of the women indicated that society’s norms and ideals impacted their perception of the double standard meant. As stated by Hillary in her explanation of the double standard,
“Cause when you grow up, girls are taught to be (pause) sweet, gentle, sensual, you know romantic and guys are like big, bulky, guys who get dirty and don’t give a fuck, you know, that’s how I, they don’t care, like that’s how guys are portrayed. That they don’t care and when a guy do show his emotions he’s looked at as a sissy. So to be macho you have to lift the most weights, get the cutest girls, do it to the cutest girls, that’s how I feel.”

Similarly, Heather expanded on the social ideals that are present within society for women and how that impacts the double standard.

“Just cause like in ideals like women are supposed to be like looking for the one guy, they’re supposed to be more you know, decent I guess. And more innocent like…”

Taylor furthered the impact of being socialized into understanding sexual expectations and norms for both men and women and what was deemed appropriate.

“I think a lot of it you know society tells that women shouldn’t express their sexuality. They shouldn’t talk about sex, they (short pause) you know, shouldn’t share their views on sex, that kind of thing. I think society makes it more acceptable for men to hookup and have sex with women, but if a woman does it a lot of negative labels come with it.”

Overall, it became evident that all of the women understood what the sexual double standard meant and how it impacted the way people perceive hooking up. Furthermore, women suggested that, when people looked at both genders hooking up, men were viewed in a more favorable light than women. However, the findings suggest that the women in the study are trying to work towards personally not upholding and reinforcing the double standard. As will be shown in the next section, despite the presence of the double standard the theme of the women personally believing in equality in hooking up emerged from the data.
General versus Personal Views: Struggle for Equality

A number of women who did not look highly upon hooking up since they had abstained from it, acknowledged the double standard’s presence. However, they believed it is a personal choice and that individuals should do what they want to do regardless of gender. For the women who had participated in hooking up their perspective advocated wanting equality and trying not to uphold the double standard. The majority of the women who had indicated they understood the presence of the double standard struggled with wanting equality for women who chose to participate in hooking up. The women who had hooked up all understood what the double standard was and indicated that it is hard to ignore. Taylor, a single junior, indicates the struggle for wanting equality for women in terms of sexual behaviors but with the impact of the double standard in society it poses a difficult challenge. When Taylor was asked if she thinks it’s more acceptable for one gender to hook up over the other her response was:

“I’m trying to have my views say no... I want girls to be able to do what they want without being judged but it’s kind of engrained you know in our society that if you hookup with someone you’re not dating… you know, you’re not in a relationship with, you know you’re viewed as a slut.”

In a similar manner Heather reflects on the presence of the societal double standard but suggests that men and women should not be judged differently for the same behaviors. Heather articulates that,

“I think the overall stereotype of men being alright and women being sluts is like a general thing, I mean I guess that impacts it definitely. But yeah personally, my belief is just I guess it’s your body, it’s what you want to do with it I guess.”

Despite the presence of the societal double standard, women are trying to perceive hooking up as equally acceptable. A majority of the women explained that despite the
double standard they think it should be equal. Similar to Taylor, Nicole indicates that the views are “shifting” away from the traditional double standard.

“Typically it’s been men but I think it’s kind of shifting in that it’s more like, more acceptable for women as well. It’s kind of balancing out. And you know, like if a girl, if any of my friends came home and said ‘oh I hooked up with this person’ I wouldn’t think of her any differently because you know, even if she was hooking up with someone each, like someone new each weekend, I wouldn’t necessarily think any less of her just, just as different, not something I would do.”

Nicole’s statement shows the progression toward redefining the double standard despite its ominous presence over the last couple decades. Amy, a senior in a relationship further supports Nicole when she describes the hooking up scene today as an even playing field for both genders.

“Um (pause) I’d say they’re even on the playing field… Um I know generally they’re [women] more stigmatized than the other but for me personally I would say it’s even on the playing field.”

Similar to Amy, Renee, a single sophomore further supports the notion of wanting equality for women in regards to sexual behaviors, particularly hook ups.

“I mean when guys do it, it’s ok. So personally, I think it should be ok if girls do it too.”

Overall, the findings suggest that the double standard was understood by all the women and the majority indicated that its presence is hard to ignore. The findings also indicate that women are trying to implement their personal perspectives and opinions over the general beliefs that are present about sexual behaviors for men and women. However, as will be discussed in the next section, when the women were asked to explain how they perceived each gender on the spectrum of hooking up frequently to infrequently a single standard appeared to materialize within the data.
Situational Context: Frequency Matters for Both Men and Women

Frequency… it matters. The women in the study who discussed how women and men appeared to them when hooking up focused on frequency. Although none of the women articulated a number in regards to frequency, the women suggested that frequently was every weekend or with a lot of different people while infrequently hinted at only hooking up with a few people or not very often. For a majority of the women, men and women were viewed negatively if they hooked up a great deal or with a lot of people. Therefore, a single standard appeared to emerge in regards to how the women personally felt about individuals who hooked up on a regular basis versus infrequently.

When Taylor, was asked her perceptions of men and women who hooked up her response was:

“Um well it depends how often I hear about, even like if it’s a friend of mine, if I constantly am hearing about, “oh I hooked up with this person, and this person, and this person, all in the same weekend, I’ll sometimes be like wow, you really got out there… Um I guess it kind of depends on how many people…” In reference to men… “I guess it depends on the guy cause some guys I’m just like ugh, you’re so dirty, when I hear about they’ve had sex with you know 30, 40, 50 girls, I’m just like ugh that’s sick… But I guess it all, it depends on the context of when, where, who, how often those kind of things…”

In a similar manner when comparing men and women’s sexual behavior based on frequency Nicole further supported Taylor’s beliefs. Nicole elaborates on how frequency for both men and women alters the way she perceives them when hooking up. When asked how she viewed women and men who hooked up regularly her response further supported the single standard of viewing them negatively.

“For me personally um I think hooking up to the point of having sex too much makes women seem really easy and cheap… I would say like a
different person every weekend would be a little excessive. And for men... Ok for me personally if a man was hooking up with a different woman each weekend, I would not be attracted to that man at all. Um I would kind of see it the same way as if a woman were doing it.”

Paris further supports the single standard based upon frequency of hooking up for both men and women that both Taylor and Nicole suggest. When Paris was asked how she perceived women and men who hooked up frequently her response was,

“I mean I don’t really think she’s a hoe or anything cause I mean it seems like everyone does it so. Not really normal either (laughs) I mean she not, cause that’s not normal but. I don’t know. It’s kind of a little fast.” And for men… “Umm if they do it often I guess they’re kind of… (Long pause) hmm kinda fast too I guess...”

When frequency was discussed it was evident that when hooking up a lot neither men nor women were viewed in a positive manner.

Overall, all the women in the sample reported that both men and women who hooked up often and with a lot of people were looked down upon. While the men and women who did not hook up very often or only hooked up with a few people were seen as normal or participating in normal sexual behaviors among college peers. When Nicole was asked how she perceived the women and men, who did not hookup very often or only with a few people she stated,

“I would think that’s pretty normal…” For men “I’d think of that as more normal, more respectful.”

Paris further supports this assertion when she stated,

“Um probably just drunk that night [referring to women]… If they don’t do it very often then they’re nice guys [in regards to men].”

Throughout the data there was the presence of a general, traditional double standard, opinions of equality, and a single standard that viewed both men and women
who hooked up on a regular basis negatively. Additionally, the women indicated that women’s intentions and goals within the participation of hooking up were not aligned with what they perceived that men wanted from hooking up.

**Goals at Odds: Hooking Up Prerogatives Differ Between the Genders**

As the women discussed their hooking up experiences as well as their perceptions of why women hook up it became evident that sometimes men and women’s goals were at odds. The data spoke to the confusion between men and women in terms of what hooking up would lead to. When the women were asked why they hook up or why they think other women hook up the responses varied, but there was an overarching theme amongst them. Overall, the women’s responses suggested that they hooked up to feel desired and with the hope for something more or something intimate. These reactions were present within Rachel’s response as to why she hooks up.

“I guess to make myself feel better too… um I feel more desired…”

The element of feeling desired displayed in Rachel’s statement was further supported when Taylor responded as to why she hooks up.

“… it feels good, um it’s exciting, it um (long pause) I don’t, I mean it’s nice to feel wanted in that way… it’s fun, its um (pause) I don’t know. It’s nice to feel that, like you and this person have a connection to where when you kiss it’s, you know so passionate or you know it’s such a good kiss and I guess you know feeling like you have that connection with someone.”

Furthermore, when Nicole was explaining what she believed women were looking for when they hooked up she expands on Taylor’s desire to establish a connection with someone,
“I think in the short term they’re just looking for someone to hook up with. And maybe I mean they might not necessarily say this but they’re probably looking for something long-term too and they might not necessarily admit it but something, some kind of companionship or like a long-term something. I think every woman is doing that whether they say it or not.”

In addition, to hooking up to feel desired and connected to someone, when questioned about hooking up with the same man multiple times it became evident that some of the women were hoping for something more in the long-term. Therefore, not only were women seeking a connection with a man but the data also suggested that the women had the hope for something more to develop than just a hook up. A majority of the women suggested that women who hooked up with the same guy multiple times, were possibly hoping for a relationship to evolve.

When Rachel is discussing hooking up she highlights gender differences in motives behind hooking up.

“I feel like here it’s so easy to find someone else, like you could hook up one night and find someone else a different night and I think that’s what guys want more often, whereas a girl wants a relationship... I feel like women are seeking a relationship... I feel like the girl looking to hook up with one guy multiple times whereas a guy may be looking for multiple hook ups... because hooking up on a repetitive basis is more like, its closer to being in a relationship than just hooking up once...I think deep down I want it to turn into a relationship but at the same time I don’t...”

Taylor supports Rachel’s assertion that women are more likely than men to hope that a relationship develops from a hook up.

“I think women are more often wanting a relationship to come out of it than men.”

Furthermore, when Molly was discussing why she thinks her friends hook up with the same guy multiple times she states,
“I would say they’re seeking a relationship but most of them know that’s not going to happen…”

Overall, based on respondent’s perceptions the findings suggest that women hope for a relationship to develop from someone they are regularly hooking up with.

In addition to hoping for a relationship, of the nine women that had participated in hooking up, especially with one man for an extended period of time, the majority of them believed that their hookup was exclusive or assumed that they were developing a relationship or were dating the man and came to find out that was not the case. Natalie indicated that she thought it was a relationship and later discovered it wasn’t.

“I seem to think that we are in a relationship if we’re hooking up on a regular basis. You know, if it’s frequent or if I’m frequently seeing them in whatever circumstance… However, I’ve found out that, umm I think that guys look at it quite differently… Whereas some of the guys I’ve ‘hooked up’ with or dated, like I’ll think we’re dating and then I’ll come to find out that, they don’t think that at all.”

Similar to Natalie’s experience, Amy realized that the man she was hooking up with, and thought she was dating did not perceive their interaction the same way. Amy was explaining a situation where a girl consistently has sex with one guy and admits she has also been in this situation.

“… where you think it’s like you’re dating or you’re together but really all you really do when you get together is you’ll sit and talk for awhile (pause) sure enough that’s all you do [in reference to just end up having sex]”

Amy later expands on her situation of thinking it was exclusive with a guy by saying,

“Um at first I did. Um and then we talked about it and realized we had slightly different views… Like in the beginning I wanted to make something more of it then just hooking up, more than just you know going, like more than just dating. But he didn’t, he said that he wasn’t
ready for that. Um so then we just kept hanging out and seeing what would happen and it didn’t go anywhere so.”

Andrea expands on the assertion that one can’t assume that just because a hook up occurs often with one guy that there is an exclusive hook up relationship. In addition, as with a number of other women, she suggests there needs to be open communication between men and women.

“Um from my experience not necessarily. (laughs). Um I don’t think for me, I would think so but it’s really, you have to I guess have a conversation with that person and figure that out, like you can’t just assume things is what I’ve learned.”

Overall, the findings suggest that women hoped for a relationship to develop from a hook up. In addition, the women who were hooking up regularly with one guy either believed that men were exclusively hooking up with them or that they were dating, when in reality that was not how the men perceived the situation. The women who hooked up indicated that they learned quickly that they had to communicate with their regular hook up partner to clarify whether it was exclusive. Furthermore, in discussing the assumption of exclusivity and the expectation of a relationship developing, it became evident that the women who hooked up struggled with the emotional element of having sex with someone. As will be discussed in the next section, there are emotional risks that women face when participating in hooking up.

**Emotional Risks for Women**

Through talking about their experiences as well as perceived risks, it became evident that women realized there was a risk of being emotionally hurt when hooking up. Overall, the majority of women interviewed, whether they currently participated in
hooking up or not, addressed that there were emotional risks involved in having sex with men outside of a relationship. Renee indicates the emotional risks of hooking by stating

“Um just like emotional dangers like you can’t really help who you get attached to and stuff.”

Rachel further supports Renee’s comment about the emotional risks involved in hooking up because of the possibility of developing feelings for the man.

“There’s like emotional risks and dangers… you could end up really liking the person and then have your heart broken and get really upset about it.”

In addition, Nicole further acknowledges that there are emotional risks like getting attached. However, she suggests that there could be other emotional damages such as rejection that would affect women. As stated by Nicole,

“Like even just being emotionally hurt… I think maybe just like rejection like if you hooked up with someone and never talked to them again, I would see that as like something like you were reject… like it wasn’t, you didn’t do a good enough job or I would take it personally… I mean I guess when you’re too like, you have attachment to him, could like turn into something else and so that’s a risk too…”

Taylor further supports the notion of emotional risks from hooking up beyond simply developing an attachment for the man that is not reciprocated. Taylor proposes,

“Just like being hurt emotionally, you know self confidence going down, um feeling guilty, those kind of like psychological.”

Overall, the findings suggest women recognize that there are emotional risks when it comes to participating in hooking up. Furthermore, for the women it is not just the risk of getting attached but also the risk of being rejected and made to feel worse about oneself. It is evident that the women, whether they hook up or not, realize that having sex carries a level of emotions with it that could lead to disappointment if the women were hoping
for something to develop from the hook up. For this reason, it is important to further address how dating as well as hooking up impacts women’s self perceptions.

**Male and Female Interactions: Impact on Women’s Self Perception**

Self perception is how one thinks and feels about him/her self. According to Holstein and Gubrium, “we haven’t always looked upon each other in the familiar terms of individual subjectivity, in terms of a self that each and every one of us treats as the logical and emotional center of our life, as socially mutable as that is” (2000: 11). Therefore examining how women perceive themselves in regards to dating and hooking up is imperative since it affects their self, especially since the self is the logical and emotional center of our lives as Holstein and Gubrium advocate. Overall, the findings suggest that for the women in the study it appeared that self perception and self esteem were largely dependent upon situational factors. Some of the situational factors consisted of healthy and unhealthy relationships, being cheated on, losing a hook up partner because he started a relationship with another woman, and good or bad hook up situations. Therefore, the way women reflected upon the self was dependent upon the social context and the life experiences that were occurring at the time.

**The Self and Dating/Relationships**

Overall, in terms of being in a relationship in college, the women who were in healthy positive relationships discussed how it made them feel better about themselves knowing that they had someone to talk to and someone that cared about them. Many of the women articulated that being in a good relationship either didn’t affect their self
esteem or made them reflect more positively about themselves. When describing how she thinks being in relationships affects the self esteem of her friends, Andrea suggests,

“Um (pause) I think it’s positive just because I mean when you have like, when it’s a good relationship anyway, you have that person who like you know they really care about you like for who you are. So it like I guess just reaffirms your sense of self cause like you know that they like you for you. So I would say it’s positive.”

In a similar manner, Heather further articulates how being in a relationship makes her feel better about herself knowing that she has someone who cares about her.

“It feels good; definitely comforting to have someone always you know that’s like there, that you know wants to be with you so… I mean I guess I was more confident I guess…I feel confident, like yeah I feel good cause I cause that someone that I’ve been with and who knows me really well…”

However, while the women in the study who were in relationships that were complicated or had negative incidents, such as their boyfriend cheating on them or abuse, indicated that sometimes it made them wonder about themselves and what might be wrong with them. This questioning of the self was reflected by Nicole when she is talking about why her relationship is complicated by saying,

“Um there’s definitely been some low points. Um I kind of question myself and like why do I put up with stupid things that he does? And why do I keep going back to him? And that’s kind of how I begin to like, well I still like love him and I care about him, but he does stupid things so why do I, why do I put up with that? And that’s been like really hard on my self-esteem…”

Hillary further supports how her complicated relationship has changed the way she perceives herself. Hillary explained that her boyfriend had cheated and they are working through it. While reflecting back on how it impacted her Hillary states,

“I don’t, it’s kind of made me kinda stronger and kinda made me vulnerable to things, I’m more anxious now…Um but I don’t see myself differently… I still see myself as a strong person… well when you asked
do I, have my perceptions changed about myself and I said no and then I just thought about it, like it does. Cause I feel like he doesn’t like me anymore, that he doesn’t want to spend time with me because he doesn’t make time… and I’m like ok, that makes me feel really bad.”

In a similar manner Amy also reflects on how being cheated on made her reflect negatively about herself when she states,

“Um so like I was devastated but then again like it was really hard on me cause it was one of my like more serious relationships…like I felt really stupid. Like I felt that I was, well I was completely used and that I felt dumb because I didn’t realize it sooner.”

The findings suggest that women often blamed themselves or had negative perceptions of themselves when things didn’t go well in relationships.

Overall, the majority of the women who discussed previous relationships as well as current relationships indicated that being in a relationship made them reflect either positively or negatively upon themselves based on the circumstances of their relationships. The women in healthy relationships reflected more positively on their self esteem because they had someone to talk to, care about them, and be there for them. Almost all of the women who talked about current relationships and positive previous relationships implied it made them feel good about themselves and felt positive that they had that person to turn to for support. However, the women who had negative relationship experiences suggested that the experience made them feel worse about themselves. For example, the women felt stupid for not knowing that he was cheating on her or tolerating the lack of attention from their boyfriends. The majority of the women indicated that the status of their relationship influenced whether they felt positive or negative about themselves.
In addition, the majority of the women who were either single or talked about their experiences being single indicated that being single did not necessarily decrease their self esteem. Overall, they perceived themselves in a positive manner but at times wonder why they were single in comparison to their friends in relationships. Rachel has an overall positive self image with regards to her relationships status but states, “I mean I like being single but I guess sometimes you feel less desired than like other people.”

Natalie further supports Rachel’s implication of being confident and comfortable with being single but feeling a little left out when around everyone who is in relationships. “I think I’m a pretty confident girl…I enjoy it because I can do what I want, when I want, where I want but umm at the same time like it can be difficult when you’re surrounded by people who are in relationships. I think that um it can kinda make you feel like you’re excluded from that group in a sense.”

Furthermore, some of the single women indicated that at times they felt lonely but overall didn’t have negative self images. Additionally, Rachel indicated that there can be positive situational factors that will boost women’s self esteem as well. Rachel states, “Um I mean interactions with guys I feel like has an effect on your self esteem in general if say a guy will come up to them at the bar and talks to them, makes you feel good about yourself, makes them feel good about themselves…if you’re in a relationship you know that person likes you and has to kind of have like some kind of physical attraction to you but then also if you’re single and boys come up to you all the time then you know that those guys like you and have a physical attraction to you too. So I feel like you can find the same um boosters, like ego-boosters being single too.”

Rachel indicates that being single does not always mean that women will have negative self images because there are times when interactions with men will result in women feeling better about themselves.
A lot of the women, both single and in a relationship, who said that they had been out on dates indicated that was an event that made them feel better about themselves. Paris further supported Rachel’s idea of how certain interactions can boost women’s self esteem when she describes how being asked out on a date made her feel.

“Special… warm and fuzzy, wanted, desired…”

Therefore, women’s perceptions of self and self esteem, whether in relationships or single, fluctuated depending on situational circumstances. Overall, the findings indicated that dating and being in relationships impacted women’s self perceptions based on situational factors. Women in positive relationships felt that it improved their self esteem because they had a person who was interested in them and was also there for them. Additionally, the women who did not have positive relationships indicated that it reflected negatively on their self perceptions making them feel stupid or not worthwhile. Furthermore, the single women indicated overall, they felt good about themselves while occasionally being lonely. Nonetheless, they were still able to get positive self perception evaluations through different interactions with men such as being asked on a date or being approached in a bar. When looking at how the women felt about themselves when participating in hooking up a theme of mixed emotions and contextual situations also emerged.

**The Self and Hooking Up**

As stated previously, hooking up is a situation that comes with a lot of unknowns and risks for women. There is no prescribed standard that is set within hooking up as indicated by the women’s definitions of a hook up. The starting point is debated as well
as the specifics of how it works. Furthermore, almost all of the women indicated that
hooking up occurred after being at parties or the bars and that alcohol played a big role in
facilitating a hook up. Although the impact of alcohol lies outside the parameters of the
main research questions for this study, it is important to address that all the women
suggested it was typically present when hook ups were occurring. Paris suggests the role
of alcohol and whether people are generally drunk when they hook up by stating,

“A lot (laughs)… everyone looks a lot cuter and a lot nicer when you’re
drunk. So that’s probably why… more times than not.”

Similar to Paris, Molly proposes that alcohol plays a major role in hooking up.

“Um it’s definitely an initiator. And I think it’s very crucial to most
hookups like I don’t think most hook ups occur without alcohol… no it
doesn’t have to be but majority of the time, yeah its present.”

Overall, the women indicated that alcohol does play a role in the hook up process but also
address, as indicated by Molly, that it does not always have to be present but the majority
of the time it is.

In addition, some women experienced a one-night hook up while the majority of
the women’s experiences were cases in which they had been with the man more than one
night or had a hooking up relationship over an extended period of time. A lot of the
women indicated that hooking up initially made them feel good about themselves or
didn’t have an impact. However, looking back on the hook up later made them feel regret
or view themselves in a negative light. This is reflected in Amy’s experience when she
describes how hooking up impacted her self esteem,

“I mean me personally; I would think that I would feel less about myself.
Um not only because I’m doing, but I feel less about myself so I think that
if I can hook up then I might boost my self-esteem, but really it doesn’t...
But (pause) I don’t know, I just, I didn’t have (pause) like in one of those situations that it made me feel better about myself at the time being but then later I realized it was a bad decision so.”

Similar to Amy’s experiences, Molly indicates that her friends who have hooked up follow the pattern of at the time it makes them feel better but later on does not.

“Um attention or to feel better at the time it feels better, makes them feel better about themselves but later on it probably doesn’t…I think some girls it’s a positive and for some it’s a negative because they get mad at themselves for hooking up while they’re drunk.”

As indicated previously, Molly again supports that hooking up can lead to a negative impact, especially when alcohol is involved. Natalie further supports the notion of realizing later that hooking up was overall, a negative experience and had a negative impact on her self perception.

“Um I think a lot of the time when they would leave, I did always kind of sense a feeling of like, it’s awful to say, but kind of ashamed a little bit… I think that goes with the whole like how it affects your self perception because it kind of makes you feel a little devalued and that just sucks.”

Overall, whether discussing their own personal experiences with hooking up or that of their friends, the final outcome was negative perceptions of self. Typically, the women who hooked up made comments like the one Paris made the morning following a hook up

“Um like what was the point of that? Like nothing’s going to happen of it… What was the point?”

Amy further supports Paris in wondering what she was thinking and suggests how it made her feel worse.

“What was I thinking? I don’t even remember what I was thinking, why it was a good idea, cause it wasn’t but… I felt bad about myself because I should have had more control over myself and the situation.”
In a similar manner, Andrea reflects the same emotions as Amy when thinking about one of her hook up encounters.

“I was like why did I just do that? Um yeah, I felt kind of upset I guess. Like why I decided to do that and I don’t know…. I guess maybe lowered it a bit just because I don’t, I guess I kind of like think of my decisions as maybe I shouldn’t have done it, like I feel kind of bad about myself sometimes.”

It becomes evident in the findings that when the women who hooked up reflected back on their experiences they questioned their behavior and as a result felt bad about themselves.

Furthermore, a third of the women who were regularly hooking up with just one man later discovered that he was hooking up with other women or that he suddenly stopped talking to them because he started a relationship with someone else. In these experiences the impact on the women’s self esteem was even more negative than that found for women involved in regular hook-ups. Rachel indicates how she felt,

“Uh I hated it. It made me feel horrible. Because I felt like he moved onto something like better something that I wasn’t doing made him happier, like I wasn’t pretty enough, I don’t know, that I wasn’t good enough for him… it made me feel bad. Uh it made my self-esteem go down a little bit.”

In a similar experience Andrea reflects on how she negatively perceived herself when she found out the man she was hooking up with had been dating her roommate.

“And then when he stopped talking to me it was because they had made it official. And so I was just like feeling really terrible about myself I guess…”

Overall, for the third of the women who encountered this experience, the impacts on their self esteem were strongly negative since the person whom they were having sex with ended up choosing to have a relationship with someone else. Additionally it is important
to note that these women perceive themselves in a negative light when regular hook up’s
do not result in anything more than just sex.

Despite all the negative situations in which the majority of the women described
on how hooking up led to them viewing themselves negatively there were a few
circumstances that left women feeling positive about themselves. Taylor, when talking
about how her friends think about themselves after hooking up, responded,

“Well usually it’s like oh my god, I was so drunk and I hooked up with
this guy... like I would say probably 50% of the time they feel bad about
it. They’re like eh I probably shouldn’t have done that, but then other
times you know my friends are like, oh my god he was so hot, I’m so glad
I hooked up with him.”

In a similar fashion walking away from a hook up with positive self esteem was also
depicted by Renee when she was asked how she felt about herself the next morning after
hooking up.

“...I guess, like it was a good feeling. I mean that’s what I was looking for
that night, was just a hook up so I got what I wanted... I don’t know, like
the guy was really cute so I was kind of proud.”

It is important to note that despite a few women developing more positive self esteem
from their hook up experiences, this was not the norm. The few women who indicated a
more positive self image related it to hooking up with good looking men or receiving
more attention.

Therefore while women are trying to participate equally in hooking up and not be
stigmatized for it, they still take a critical approach to how they perceive their behavior
after the fact. While hooking up for a few women was seen as positive for their
perceptions of self and self esteem it typically resulted in feeling badly about themselves after the fact because the situation did not evolve into anything of meaning.

The themes that emerged from the data indicate that times are changing and women are struggling against the double standard in regards to how they are perceived for participating in hooking up. It becomes clear that the women understand what a date is in that it is a way to get to know someone to determine if a relationship can evolve as well as a way of spending time together. Additionally, the term dating was used interchangeably to describe the process of getting to know someone of romantic interest as well as a way to describe a current relationship. Despite the understanding of what a date is, it becomes evident that women believe the most common interaction between them and men on campus is hooking up, which is not as clearly defined as dating.

Women understand that hooking up involves a sexual encounter that can start with making out to having sex but does not necessarily mean sex, with someone with whom they are not in a relationship with. However, as the themes indicate women struggle with trying not to let the societal impact of the double standard affect the way they perceive themselves as well as other women for participating in hooking up. Women are expressing their opinions and hope for equal participation without negative judgment. However, they are still influenced by what society has deemed morally acceptable and appropriate in terms of sexual behavior for women. Therefore, women are going against the social grain when they participating in hooking up, at least on a regular basis. The struggle for not letting society impact the way women think has affected their personal self perceptions.
Women typically viewed hook ups that resulted into nothing as negative experiences that left them not feeling good about themselves. While women who thought they had an exclusive hook up partner were later disappointed in themselves when they realized that they were not the only woman the man was having sex with. Overall, this research indicates that women are participating in a social situation that has the rules stacked against them. They struggle against the double standard and try to deny traditional societal expectations that hold them back from participating in what they choose to do, especially with regard to their own sexual experiences.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Through using a micro-level sociological approach, in-depth interviews with fifteen undergraduate, heterosexual women were conducted that provided rich detailed data regarding dating, hooking up, and how dating and hooking up impacted women’s self-perceptions. An important piece of research on hooking up has been conducted on the East Coast therefore, this study aimed to explore if college women at a midwestern university are experiencing similar situations. The aim of the study was to examine what women perceived to be the most frequent form of intimate interaction between men and women, which results from the current research indicated it was hooking up. Furthermore, the study focused on how dating and hooking up affect women’s perceptions of self and whether these interactions have a positive or negative impact on women’s self esteem. In conclusion, this research aimed to contribute to the limited research on the impact of dating and hooking up on women’s perceptions of self and self esteem. Through the process of coding proposed by Strauss (1987) three themes emerged from the data; perceptions of dating, the replacement of the dating norm with hooking up, and the impact of male/female interactions on women’s self perceptions.

Previous literature indicates that dating and the process of dating have changed historically. Ever since the 1920’s American women have experienced more personal freedoms with each progressing decade. Furthermore, research has suggested that changes in the dating norms of American youth have evolved with major societal changes. Recent literature exploring dating and hooking up on an East Coast college campus conducted by Bogle (2008) suggests that there has been a shift away from
traditional dating and now hooking up has become the social norm in regards to male and female intimate interaction. As discussed in the literature, historically dating has changed over time. Currently it appears that the emergence of hooking up represents a new trend in dating.

The present study suggests that the women all had an understanding of what a date is and what dating means. However, when discussing dating women appeared to use the term interchangeably to describe the process of getting to know a man further in a romantic way as well as to describe the relationship with their boyfriend. This notion of dating being used interchangeably somewhat reflects Glenn and Marquardt’s national study that suggested that college women used the term dating to describe circumstances of highly committed relationships as well as what they referred to as “hanging out,” which implied spending time together without necessarily stating the interest for one another (2001: 5) In addition, the women in the current study indicate that outside of dating and committed relationships, they had been on very few traditional dates, where the man asks the woman out, picks her up, and pays for an activity in order to explore the potential of a romantic relationship. This finding is consistent with that of Bogle’s (2005) research in which she indicates that women know what dating is but in rarely actually go on dates unless it is for an event that requires a date, such as a sorority dance, or within a committed relationship. Bogle’s (2005) research however suggests that many of the women had never been on dates. However, the findings indicated that the majority of the women in the current study had all been on at least one date during college, which differs
from Bogle’s (2005) results. Overall, the findings indicated that the majority of the women no longer believe that dating in the traditional sense was the social norm.

Through the interviews with the women it became evident that women now perceive hooking up as a frequent form of male and female intimate interaction on campus. These findings further support the research conducted by Paul and Hayes (2002) as well as Bogle (2008). Paul and Hayes’s (2002) research indicated that the majority of the college students were hooking up and that the men and women had a shared cultural understanding of what a typical hook up was. Within the present study there was mixed responses in regards to the exact starting point of a hook up but all of the women indicated that it was some form of sexual interaction between a man and a woman. Furthermore, the present study also reflects the findings present within Bogle’s (2008/2007) research that was conducted on the East Coast. Bogle (2007) suggests that hooking up and dating, have clearly distinct meanings and in the majority of cases are not used interchangeably. This was reflected in the current study since the majority of the women defined hooking up and dating as two different behaviors. The majority of the women in the sample did not define hooking up as having a sexual experience with your boyfriend. However, some of the women thought they were dating the person they were hooking up with and discovered that the man did not perceive the situation in the same manner. In Bogle’s research she states that, “another possible outcome of hooking up is a variation of hooking up repeatedly, known as ‘seeing each other.’… Some interviewees referred to this as ‘talking,’ or less often as ‘dating’” (2008: 41). The women in the current study that experienced this confusion most often labeled it as dating or in a
relationship with the man unlike Bogle’s participants that labeled it as seeing each other.

Between the current sample and Bogle’s research, the behaviors are the same for both but the difference is how the women use different terms and vocabulary to describe the situation.

When women in the sample were asked to reflect on how each gender was perceived in hooking up interesting results emerged. Previous research has suggested that mixed results have emerged regarding whether there is still a double standard present whereby men participating in sexual behaviors are seen in a favorable light while the same behaviors for women are looked down upon. The findings from the fifteen women at the Midwestern University support the research conducted by Marks and Fraley (2007) as well as Crawford and Popp (2003). The current findings also support Bogle’s research when she states, “in the hookup culture, men and women are permitted to (and do) engage in sexual encounters that are, by definition, outside of the context of a committed relationship. However, there are prejudices against women who are seen as being too active in the hookup scene” (2008: 104). Bogle (2007) further suggests that this double standard might be an explanation for women seeking hooking up leading to a relationship more often than men. Therefore, the current research is similar to Bogle’s in that in both studies the women acknowledge that there is still a double standard present in regards to sexual behavior.

When the women were asked about their general perceptions of each gender in hooking up versus how they personally perceived participation, results indicated that the majority of the women suggested the traditional double standard existed in general for
hooking up. However, personally they perceived men and women equally. This is somewhat reflective of the study conducted by Marks and Fraley (2007) in that their results suggested there was no double standard present when participants individually evaluated situations but the double standard emerged when people evaluated situations in small groups. When the women in the current study were asked to think about how the general public would perceive men and women who hooked up, they believed that society still maintained the double standard while individually the women spoke to men and women being equal. These findings are also similar to Crawford and Popp’s (2007) results in that they suggest double standards are influenced by situational and interpersonal factors. The women in the current study indicated that when either men or women hooked up frequently and with a lot of people, both genders were looked down upon. The women portrayed a reflection of situational factors in which the double standard was not present. That is, frequent participation was viewed as unacceptable, while infrequent or consistent hook up partners were believed to be normal by the majority of the women. Therefore, situational factors and frequency for the women in this study impacted how they perceived a double standard.

The majority of the women, who had hooked up in the study, indicated that hooking up carried a high level of emotional risk. Results of the research suggest that, hooking up meant there was an increased opportunity for having your heart broken if a woman developed feelings or already had feelings for the man they were regularly hooking up with. Furthermore, the women suggested hooking up also carries the emotional risk of psychological harm from either rejection or reducing women’s self-
esteem as a result of a negative experience. A study conducted by Paul and Hayes (2002) further supports this notion of women recognizing the emotional risk that comes with hooking up. Paul and Hayes (2002) results suggested that the primary risk was STD’s while the secondary risk was labeled as psychological and social risks. Specifically, Paul and Hayes (2002) suggest the emotional aftermath of a hook up from being intoxicated as well as “possible social risk of embarrassment, and potential psychological risk of feeling out of control, unaware of what happened, ashamed, and regretful” (2002: 657). The women in the current study suggested embarrassment, shame, and questioning their motivations, when reflecting back upon their hook up experiences. Bogle’s (2008) research focused on what happens after a hook up and indicated that a majority of men and women said nothing while some had hope for a relationship to develop. Overall, women in the current study indicated that hooking up carried emotional risk.

However, many suggested that after a hook up experience they questioned themselves as to why they did it and what they were thinking but typically did not label that experience with the term regret. Interestingly, this is similar to a study conducted by Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) that found that regret was highly correlated with two situations for women, having sex with a person only once or having had sex with a person that they had known for less than 24 hours. Therefore, it would be informative to further explore whether women specifically regret their hook up experiences. The women in the current study may not have used the term regret explicitly but questioning their behaviors afterwards and reflecting negatively on their hook ups later could be an implication of regret.
Furthermore, some of the women in the study suggested that the socialization experience influences how hooking up and the sexual double standard are perceived. The women who addressed this issue suggested that women are socialized differently than men in regards to sexual behaviors. Women are socialized to be more emotional and less physically aggressive. The impact of socialization on sexual behavior and acceptability of it is present within Lottes and Kuriloff’s study that showed that “compared to women, men continue to experiences a more permissive sexual socialization from both parents and peers” (1994: 203). The results of the current study further support the findings of Lottes and Kuriloff’s (1994) study on how perceptions of gendered participation in hooking up could be related to women’s versus men’s socialization experiences. It is evident that men and women are socialized into gender differently however, it is important to further explore how women’s self perception is affected by their experiences in dating and hooking up which to date is relatively limited within the current body of literature.

The majority of the women in this research indicated that their self-perceptions were contextually based within their personal experiences. For women who described how their relationship affected their self perception, it became evident that women in positive, healthy relationships felt better about themselves while describing themselves as confident and secure, in knowing that they had someone who cared about them and that would be there for them. However, for the women who had been in relationships in which they were cheated on or not put as a priority by their boyfriend, suggested that it negatively impacted their self perceptions because they felt that they we not good
enough. This theme also emerged with women who were hooking up with men consistently and had it abruptly end because they had started relationships with other women. In regards to hooking up and its impact on women’s self-perception, the majority of the women also indicated that it was contextually based. A majority of the women indicated at the time of the hook up it was positive because it made them feel desired and wanted but afterwards, looking back on the experience, they implied negativity since they knew there would be nothing evolving from the situation. The women who described hooking up as negatively impacting their self perception suggested that it made them feel devalued, used, or bad about themselves because they questioned why they hooked up with that guy. Additionally, the women suggested that a regular hook up that ended for negative reasons made them feel worse about themselves or not good enough for the man when they discovered he started dating someone else.

Overall, the current research from the Midwest campus further supported the research that was mainly conducted on the East Coast (Bogle: 2008) on how women perceive dating and hooking up in college. Specifically, this study contributes to the limited body of research about how dating and hooking up affect women’s self-perception. Furthermore, through examining women’s self-perception it advances literature about how the self in contemporary society is still present. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) elaborate on the importance of recognizing that the self “is still located in experience- a socially shaped, interpersonally responsive, yet constant agent of everyday life” (2000: 56). This is reflected in how women perceive themselves in regards to participating in behaviors that would be deemed socially positive or negative by
society. We are constantly interacting with other people and formulating our self, based on the interactions and interpretations of how others perceive our behavior and as a result, this would also impact the way women perceive themselves in dating and hooking up. The women in this sample provided rich data towards how their self-perceptions were contextually based in their positive and negative experiences with men.

In conclusion, this research found that the women defined dating and hooking up as two different forms of interaction between men and women on campus. The majority of the women indicated that outside of a relationship they had rarely been asked out on a traditional date. Additionally, the majority of the women indicated that hooking up was more predominant than dating and had become the campus norm. Furthermore, the current study indicated that both dating and hooking up affected women’s self perceptions based on the situational circumstances of the experience being positive or negative. However, women typically thought they would feel better about themselves when they hooked up, but later looked back upon the experience as negative. The reflection on hooking up negatively impacted women’s self perceptions because they suggested that they felt they should have had more control over themselves and not hooked up since they knew it wasn’t going to go anywhere. Despite the rich data that was brought forward, limitations within the research were present.

**Limitations**

This study contributed to the literature on dating and hooking up in college and how these experiences impact women’s self perception. However, it presents a number of limitations. Primarily, despite the rich details that emerged through in-depth semi-
structured interviews about the women’s college experiences the data cannot be
generalized to all women’s college experiences. A larger sample size would have allowed
a more robust understanding of dating and hooking up in this geographic location.
Additionally, only women were interviewed thus providing only one perspective on
college dating and hooking up and their impact on self-perception.

Furthermore, the sample consisted predominantly of Caucasian undergraduate
women, which were representative of the university population. However, the current
study is lacking depth and understanding of what the most common interactions of men
and women from various races and ethnicities are as well as the impact on their self-
perception. Through having a sample that represents primarily the Caucasian college
experiences, it doesn’t represent the diversity of other races that are present on campus.

In addition, the sample consists of only undergraduate college students. Although
it was outside the parameters of this research, there are limitations in advancing the
knowledge base of whether hooking up is occurring for the general population within this
age group. Also since the current study’s sample only included heterosexual women, it is
only contributing to the literature on heterosexual male and female interactions.

**Future Directions**

Despite the rich data that emerged from this study, future research could
tremendously expand the literature on dating, hooking up, and self-perception. Primarily,
in the future in-depth semi-structured interviews should be conducted with men to
evaluate whether they hold similar beliefs to those of women about the interactions
between them and women on campus. Furthermore, with limited research on how
hooking up and dating are affecting college students self-perceptions, evaluating the male’s self-perception as well as their perceptions of women who hook up would fill a large gap in the current body of literature.

Additionally, the literature on dating as well as hooking up is largely supported by samples consisting of predominantly Caucasian men and women. Therefore, for future research conducting the study on a more diverse campus to discover whether these interactions are occurring across races/ethnicities would help fill the gap in the literature. Exploring differences in regards to whether there is the same use of terminology to describe sexual behaviors and male and female dating interactions should be explored across racial and ethnic lines as well.

Furthermore, additional research should be conducted on whether dating and hooking up are occurring in the same fashion outside of the college campus and within the general population. With the decline of traditional dating and the normative behavior of hooking up prevalent on the campus setting, would these interactions be reflected in the same age bracket or within the work-environment of non-college educated men and women?

Also, further research should be conducted on whether dating and hooking up are defined and occur the same way outside of heterosexual relationships. Research exploring how women and men in non-heterosexual relationships interact in terms of dating and hooking up needs to be carried out.

In conclusion additional research needs to be conducted focusing on the impact of alcohol in the hookup and how it directly affects women’s and men’s self perceptions and
self esteem as well as evaluations of hooking up. Further evaluation is also needed in regards to the role of alcohol within hooking up and the impact that it has upon the reflexive self. Are there dramatic differences in how women and men reflect upon themselves when they hook up sober, under the influence, or intoxicated to the point of not actually remembering what had transpired? Furthermore, are men experiencing as many positive and negative hook ups as women? Do these hook up experiences impact men’s self-perception to the extent that it impacts women’s? These questions should all be investigated in more detail in order to contribute to, and enrich, the current body of literature.

**Conclusion**

The current study further contributes to the literature on dating and hooking up during the twenty first century. This research indicates that hooking up has become the campus social norm on the midwestern university campus that was studied just as it has on the East Coast campuses studied by Bogle. Furthermore, the current study further supports the looming presence of the sexual double standard that some researchers have argued is no longer present. Bogle’s research suggested that despite women knowing that a relationship is unlikely to develop from a hook up, the majority of the women hope for something to develop. The current study further supports the hope for something to develop from a hook up but further explores the impact of dating and hooking up on women’s self perceptions and self esteem which are not clearly addressed within Bogle’s research. The majority of the women in the present study indicate that their perceptions of self and self esteem are contextually based on whether the relationship or hook up was
positive or negative. Furthermore, the majority of the women who hooked up propose that initially the hook up made them feel positive but after looking back on the experience it made them feel less about themselves because nothing came of it or they felt bad about themselves. The women who hooked up regularly with someone and had it end because he had begun a relationship with another woman were left feeling terrible about themselves and questioning their self worth. Overall, the present study contributes to the limited research on how dating and hooking up impact women’s self perception. With the self being a central element of our logical and emotional lives (Holstein and Gubrium: 2000) it is imperative to further contribute to the literature on how women’s self perceptions are affected by the campus norm of participating in hooking up. In conclusion, the findings of the current study support previous research thus building the body of knowledge on hooking up. Additionally, the present study further indicates that hooking up as a campus social norm is not specifically geographically bound but is occurring in other locations outside of the East Coast, such as the campus studied in the Midwest.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: The Changing Dating Trends Among College Women: An Analysis of the Self Perceptions of Women in the Present Dating Culture

Researchers: Sarah Skrobot

You are being asked to participate in research that is a part of my Master's Thesis. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to give verbal consent before the interview begins. You signify consent by beginning the recording of the interview. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

EXPLANATION OF STUDY

The aim of this research is to explore how dating is changing for women on our campus. In addition to discovering what the dating culture is like here at Ohio University, the study aims to discover how this dating culture specifically affects women's perceptions about themselves. The project will consist of one-on-one, in-depth interviews that will take 30-45 minutes to complete.

Risks and Discomforts

I don’t anticipate any discomfort for participating in this research but please remember that participation is complete voluntary. Some dating behaviors could be viewed as damaging to your social reputation. However, your names will not be linked to your data in any way in order to protect your confidentiality. If by chance I ask a question you are uncomfortable with, you can choose not to answer. Additionally, you can stop the interview at any time if you choose to do so without penalty.

Benefits

As a participant you will have the opportunity to express your ideas as well as reflect on your personal life experiences. This research benefits the scientific community by contributing to research on current dating trends and how they impact women's perceptions of themselves.


**Confidentiality and Records**

The interview will be audiotaped and your name will not be recorded or tied to the data in any way in order to ensure your confidentiality. You will be assigned a pseudonym within the research process and your identity and participation will remain undisclosed. Please do not reveal any names during the interview process. If you do state name a person, then that name will not be transcribed in the data. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet and the researcher will be the only person that has access to them. The tapes will be transcribed by me only and they will be destroyed upon the completion of transcription, approximately 4 months after the interview.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Sarah Skrobot, ss338004@ohio.edu, (937) XXX-XXXX or Dr. Christine Mattley, mattley@ohio.edu, (740) 593-1370

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, and (740) 593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions
- known risks to you have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no policy or plan to pay for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this research protocol
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is given voluntarily
- you may change your mind and stop participation at any time without penalty

Signature_________________________________________ Date________________

Printed Name_________________________________________
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLIER

Is Dating Dead in College?!?

Are you...
...age 18-24...
...a heterosexual female...
...undergraduate student at Ohio University...
...who has been here for at least one academic year?
If so,
What are your thoughts and experiences about the dating scene in college?
Please contact Sarah Skrobot to provide your insights towards my current thesis research project on dating in college.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Bentley Annex 143
740-597-2760 (office)

ss338004@ohio.edu
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions, such as the following will guide my interviews. Good interviewing always involves the possibility of follow up questions and probes in order to gather the most complete data possible.

**Interview Questions**

*Basic Demographics:*
- How old are you?
- What is your academic class rank here at Ohio University?
- Do you live in the dorms or off campus housing?
- What is your major?
- What is your race and ethnicity?

*Content Questions:*
- Are you currently single or in a relationship?
  - If in a relationship, how long have you been with your boyfriend?
  - If in a relationship, is your boyfriend here on campus? If not, where is he?
  - How does being in a relationship make you feel about yourself?
- When you hear the word date, what do you think it means or how would you define it?
- Do you date?
  - If in a relationship, did you date before being in a relationship?
  - What was your dating experience like? How did dates make you feel about yourself?
*In any of the following questions about your girl friends and your thoughts about them, do not state any of their names please in order to protect their confidentiality.*
- Do you girl friends date?
- Out of all your girl friends, do very many of them go on dates?
  - If so, how often do they go on dates?
  - How does going on dates make your girl friends feel about themselves?
- How frequently do you go on dates since you have been in college?
- Tell me about the dating experiences you have had during your time here at the university?
- Tell me about the LAST date you went on?
- Tell me about the dating experiences your girl friends have encountered here at the university?
- Do you think that traditional dating, where the guy asks the girl out, is less common on college campuses? If so, why?
- For you personally, what has been the most effective way to meet men?
  - If you are interested in a relationship how do you go about meeting men?
- How do your friends interact with men and find men they want to date?
- Is it easy to find a relationship here at the university?
- Do you think dating and being in a relationship is essential during your college career?
  If so, why?
- If dating is not occurring often, then what is the most common?
- Something I have heard a lot about is ‘hooking up’. Is this a term you are familiar with?
  If so, define hooking up?
- Are girls or guys hooking up more?
  How do you think hooking up makes women appear? “…” men appear?
  Is there a double standard? Is it more acceptable for one gender to hook up often?
- If so, which gender?
- How often do you (your friends) hook up?
- In your opinion, who is pursuing who?
  Are the women/men persistently pursuing the same women/men?
- Is hooking up just as common when you (your friends) are in your (their) hometown? If not, then why?
- How does hooking up work?
  Where do you meet the guys you hookup with?
  Describe the process.
- What role does alcohol play in the hookup?
  Are people generally drunk when they hookup?
- What happens after the hookup?
- Do you call the guy or does he call you?
*In the following questions, interchange you, for your girl friends or girls you know
- So if you are hooking up with the same guy a lot, does that make you two exclusive?
- What are girls looking for when they hook up? Relationship? Sex?
  Do you think women and men are seeking a relationship from a regular hookup partner?
- How often do your friends hookup? Is this something they do every weekend?
- If you hooked up, do you know how many people you’ve hooked up with since you have been here?
- Why do you hookup?
- If she hooks up, tell me about the last time you hooked up? Walk me through what happened?
  What is your first thought after you hooked up? What do you think the next morning?
- Why do you think your girl friends hook-up?
  What do you friends say about how they feel right after they hooked up and the next day?
- How do you feel about yourself directly after hooking up? How do you feel about yourself a few months later?
  In what ways has it affected your self-esteem?
- How does hooking up make your girl friends feel right after it happens? How does it make them feel a few months later?
  In what ways has it affected your friend’s self-esteem?
- Do you think there are risks to hooking up?
  If so, what precautions do you take?
  If so, do you lookout for your friends?
Is there anything else you would like to talk about that I didn’t ask?