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Boys Just Want to Have Fun? Sexual Behaviors and Romantic Intentions of Gay and Straight Men in College Hookup Culture

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BOYS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN? SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND ROMANTIC INTENTIONS OF GAY AND
STRAIGHT MEN IN COLLEGE HOOKUP CULTURE

A Thesis Presented

by

RANDY JOSEPH BARRIOS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

BOYS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN? SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND ROMANTIC INTENTIONS OF GAY AND STRAIGHT MEN IN COLLEGE HOOKUP CULTURE

MAY 2016

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Scholars studying college student sexual culture in the United States largely frame men as being detached from emotions, unconcerned with relationships, and in pursuit of sexual conquests.

Through an examination of college sexual culture, an environment often associated with meaningless sexual encounters, this paper tests those stereotypes in both gay and straight men. By analyzing sexual behaviors, social opportunity structures, and romantic attitudes of gay and straight males in college, this paper finds evidence that both supports and contradicts existing literature on masculine stereotypes for both groups of men.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The traditional road to heterosexual marriage in the United States is typically envisioned as a classic boy-meets-girl story. The couple goes through a period of dating and courtship, learning about each other in a monogamous relationship, and then participates in the marriage ritual. Heteronormative dating patterns, however, have consistently changed over time in the United States (Bailey 1988; Bogle 2008; Waller 1937). Bogle (2008) traces dominant trends in heterosexual dating as progressing from the calling era, to the casual dating era, to 'going steady' in a committed coupling, and, finally, to the current era of the hookup. Though the definition of the hookup has slightly different meanings from author to author, scholars contend that the hookup has replaced the date as the dominant pattern of sexual and romantic socializing for heterosexuals in colleges across the US (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008; Glen and Marquardt 2001).

We do not know, however, if hookups are also the dominant pattern of sexual and romantic socialization for homosexuals in colleges across the US. While scholars have called for the study of hookup behaviors of LGBTQ college students, most research leaves this population unanalyzed (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008). This article aims to correct that oversight in the literature and answer this question: Do young, homosexual and heterosexual males in college settings exhibit similar sexual and romantic patterns of socialization? Using the College Social Life Study, sexual behaviors and romantic intentions of heterosexual and homosexual males in colleges across the US in the years 2005-2009 are examined.

In the analyses that follow, the attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of gay and straight males who have participated in the college hookup are analyzed. Simple bivariate analyses comparing the two groups show that gay male sexual and relationship behavior can be grouped into three categories: 1) stereotypical sexual behaviors; 2) alternate opportunity structures; and 3)

counter-stereotypical attitudes and behaviors. With the help of descriptive analyses, these trends are discussed, illustrating some of the particularly noteworthy bivariate relationships with figures. The results focus on statistically significant results determined by group means comparison tests between the two populations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

What, then, does the heteronormative, college hookup look like today? Both scholars and individual college students have different definitions for this social phenomenon. A synthesis of these ideas defines the hookup script, or the “where, when, why, and how sexually intimate interaction can occur” (Bogle 2008:8), as an interaction between at least two, opposite-sex partners who meet up during a social situation such as a party; usually, this pair has already identified or casually interacted with their potential partner at a previous moment around campus, perhaps through the aid of a friend or acquaintance. These two consume alcohol, often to a point of intoxication, go to an agreed upon location, and participate in a range of behaviors from cuddling to intercourse with men receiving more sexual gratification than women. The hookup, itself, is normally considered no-strings attached (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008; Glen and Marquardt 2001; Grello, Welsh, and Harper 2006; Lambert, Kahn, and Apple 2003; Lewis et al. 2007; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). The academic framing of this process generally follows two schools of thought: risk or romantic intimacy. While some articles focus on aspects of both paradigms, such as Paul and Hayes’ (2002) qualitative exploration of best and worst hookups, scholars generally frame hookups as either risky behavior or as legitimate intimate relations between college students. In both cases, however, the focus is almost exclusively on heterosexual relations.

Viewed through the risk paradigm lens, hookups are associated with dangerous sexual behavior that results in negative mental and/or physical health ramifications, and described as the consequence of substance use (Flack Jr. et al. 2007; Lewis et al. 2007; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). Paul, McManus, and Hayes, for example, define the hookup as “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances” (2000, 76). They go on to define characteristics of hookups as “risky behavior”

(2000, 76), “spontaneous (i.e. something that just happens)” (2000, 76), and “anonymous in that the partners...rarely continue to build a relationship, let alone see each other again” (2000, 76). The risk paradigm likens the hookup to the one-night stand and frames hookup studies as important to risk prevention and health promotion (Paul and Hayes 2002). Through this research, scholars postulate that alcohol often influences the hookup (Flack Jr. et al. 2007; Grello, Welsh, and Harper 2006; Lewis, Lee, and Patrick 2007; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000), that condom use varies between studies (Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000;), that hookup partners are often anonymous and that a majority of college students have participated in what they define as a hookup (Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). Scholars have also found that college students typically overestimate the amount of hookup-related sexual behaviors in which their peers are engaging (Lambert, Kahn, and Apple 2003; Lewis et al. 2007).

Alternatively, scholarship within the romantic intimacy paradigm frames the heterosexual hookup in a slightly different way. These articles also find that the majority of college students have hooked up (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008) and that alcohol is sometimes involved (Bogle 2007, 2008), but this orientation focuses on hooking up as a means for exploring sexual and romantic skills in young men and women (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008; Manning, Giordano, and Longmore 2006). Manning, Giordano, and Longmore (2006), for example, note that the hookup can be just as significant as relationships for building romantic skills among adolescents. Additionally, they contest the anonymous characteristic of the hookup. In their 2006 study, Manning, Giordano, and Longmore found that adolescents who are having non-relationship sex “often report involvement with friends or ex-girlfriends or boyfriends. It seems that most teenage sexual experiences are among boys and girls who know one another and have known one another for some time” (477). Bogle (2008) echoes this analysis by noting that even when hookups seem anonymous, college students often meet their sexual partner through a network of friends and acquaintances. Armstrong, England, and Fogarty

(2009) also find that repeat hookups are common in heterosexual hookup culture. Despite this, Bogle (2008) notes that there is a sexual double standard in play for women who hook up. If a woman hooks up too much, she is considered promiscuous; if she does not hook up at all, she may be considered a prude. Heterosexual men, on the other hand, may hook up as frequently as they choose without fear of a stigmatized sexual identity (Bogle 2008; Mutchler 2000). Armstrong, England, and Fogarty (2009) and England and Thomas (2007) have also documented the sexual double standard in college hookup behaviors. They note that even though hookup partners may have repeat encounters, men receive more oral sex than women. Additionally, heterosexual men report higher rates of orgasm in hookup and relationship settings than heterosexual women (England and Thomas, 2007).

This gendered inequality, however, may characterize hookups more so than longer-term relationships. Evidence from pre-college age adolescents in relationships has cast doubt on the assumption that boys are always the more powerful actors. This emerging research has shown that girls and boys are equally emotionally invested in their relationships, and that, contrary to findings on hook ups, girls have more confidence and greater influence in negotiating the terms of the relationship (Giordano, Longmore, and Manning, 2006). To the extent that heterosexual college relationships are often initiated by a hook up (England and Thomas 2007), a fruitful area for future research would be to investigate whether hookups that transition into romantic relationships are qualitatively different from those that don't and/or to identify at what point in the romantic relationship trajectory that gender roles begin to converge and reverse.

While these studies have proven useful in illustrating heterosexual hookups, scholars still don't know much about the gay college hookup. What researchers do know about the behaviors of young, homosexual males, however, is largely structured around risk paradigms. Much of this research focuses on issues of deviance, such as suicide (Almeida et al. 2009; Li Kitts 2005; Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter 2005; Saewyc 2007; Savin-Williams and Ream 2003; Silenzio et al. 2007;

Walls, Potter, and Leeuwen 2009), STIs/HIV/AIDS (Garafalo et al. 2007; Harper 2007; Rhodes et al. 2007; Saewyc et al. 2006a), substance abuse (Easton et al. 2008; Eisenberg and Wechsler 2003; Kipke et al. 2007; Koblin et al. 2007; Marshal et al. 2009; Parsons, Halkitis, and Bimbi 2006; Rhodes et al. 2007; Ziyadeh et al. 2007), and physical and emotional victimization (Chesir-Teran and Hughes 2009; Saewyc et al. 2006; Saewyc, Pettingell, and Skay 2006; Williams et al. 2005). Within the literature, there is a general lack of academic focus around the processes leading up to romantic relationships and their maintenance for sexual minority youth (Diamond 2003; Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Eyre et al. 2007; Savin-Williams 2003; Smith, Guthrie, and Oakley 2005). Savin-Williams posits, "Same-sex relationships have been stigmatized or ignored by social scientists, perhaps because they violate the cultural imperative to procreate and because they depart from sex-role expectations" (2003, 325). Due to stigma associated with alternative sexualities and a generalized notion that sexuality is a matter that only adults understand (Álvarez 2006; Savin-Williams 1996), the information scholars have about the ways that young gay males construct their dating and sexual lives comes from a limited amount of research (Eyre et al. 2007). "Additionally, most studies focusing on the dynamics of homosexual relationships have relied on adult populations rather than adolescents" (Smith, Guthrie, and Oakley 2005, 367).

From the limited research that has been done on young gay males and sexual/romantic interactions, there are a few things that scientists do know. First and foremost, young gay males do pursue physical and emotional contact with same-sex partners. Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé (1999) note that sexual minority youth exhibit a variety of relationship patterns including sexual relationships, dating relationships, romantic relationships, and passionate friendships. Mutchler (2000) echoes this analysis, identifying that the dominant sexual scripts in his study of young gay males focused on romantic love. He asserts that the scripts of young gay males are often similar to the dominant sexual scripts for heterosexual males in that "the most striking pattern among these [young gay] men is their tendency to sow their oats and then decide they want serious

relationships” (Mutchler 2000, 23).

Stigma attached to early homosexual relationships and the general difficulty in finding a same-sex partner, however, keep young gay males from being able to experience as many romantic and dating relationships as their straight peers (Bogle 2008; Diamond 2003; Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Remafedi 1990; Savin-Williams 1996). For many of these men, an alternate path to pursuing same-sex coupling relationships is in sexual, dating, or romantic relationships with the opposite sex (Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Savin-Williams 1999, 1996). Due to the dangers of being public with their sexuality, “many sexual-minority youths feel that [this is] the only safe, acceptable option” (Savin-Williams 1996, 174).

Competing norms between the heterosexual and homosexual dating worlds also contribute to the range of experiences for gay youth. Eyre et al. (2007) observed that young gay males in San Francisco tried to include a strict policy of monogamy into their own relationships, creating conflict between ideas of “prestige sex” with multiple partners and heteronormative conceptualizations of coupling; this trend, for gay youth differs greatly from the normative non-monogamous but committed relationships of older generations of gay men (Eyre et al 2007, Sullivan 2003). Eyre et al. concluded that gay youth can have successful relationships but “may have a problem engaging in romantic experiences that are too similar to those of [monogamous] heterosexual adolescents, and not conducive to successful [homosexual] romantic relationships” (Eyre et al. 2007, 22). Mutchler (2000) supports Eyre’s claims of competing romantic and sexual tensions in gay youth. Most of Mutchler’s interviewees demonstrated scripts ranging from a strong desire for monogamous, romantic commitments to participating in a range of non-committal sexual behaviors. In the end, however, conflicting ideas between the cultural assumption of an active male sex drive and the pursuit of heteronormative relationships provided a combination that left “many young gay men feel[ing] frustrated by their attempts to find romantic love” (2000, 36). None of these studies, however, focus specifically on young, gay males in college.

One exception is a brief mention of focus group interviews with one bisexual and two gay students in Bogle's 2008 study of college hookups. In this, Bogle's interviewees paint a picture of a hookup culture that does not include gays and lesbians on campus and, therefore, limits the romantic and sexual possibilities for same-sex students. Another exception, a study by Rhodes et al. (2001), compares behaviors between homosexual and heterosexual male college students. Although the hookup is not specifically referenced, uncommitted sexual liaisons are a focus of the research. As with most articles referencing this population, this investigation utilizes risk paradigms to explore sexual and substance-related behaviors. Through a sample of forty-three gay men and nine hundred seventy-one straight men from ten universities, Rhodes et al. (2001) document that homosexuals report more infrequent condom use and more hookup partners over a thirty-day period than their male, heterosexual peers. Although the homosexual sample size is small, their findings suggest multiple partner norms similar to Eyre et al.'s (2007) discussion of prestige sex among young, gay males in San Francisco. Rhodes et al. (2001), however, explain this increased promiscuity through theories of masculinity. They align themselves with other scholars who posit that gay men, in not meeting heteronormative gender expectations, may reaffirm their masculinity through promiscuity, lesser romantic desires, and risky sexual behaviors with partners.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODS

The data were collected via an online survey called the College Social Life Study that originated in 2005 at Stanford University and has since been distributed across 20 additional U.S. universities and colleges, collected between 2005 and 2009, for a total sample size of 17,900 respondents. The sample size is restricted to undergraduate men who self-identify as either heterosexual or gay for a sample size of 5,106 and 274 respondents respectively. Although the data are not necessarily nationally representative of gay college men in the United States (probability sampling methods were not employed in the construction of this dataset), the advantage of having a larger gay male college-aged population than other studies (Eyre et al. 2007; Rhodes et al. 2007), allows for more robust estimates. This data provide rarely-available, detailed information about sexual interactions both in relationships, as well as in more casual contexts, such as dating and in hook ups.

Respondents were recruited through classes and through campus listserves to answer fixed-response questions about their backgrounds, beliefs, and their social and sexual experiences. It is one of the largest U.S. datasets to provide a perspective on the current college hook up culture.

Gay men represent about 5% of the men in the survey data. It is notable that the sample's representation of gay men is slightly higher than the few existing national estimates (about 3%) of the gay population (Black et al. 2000). However, given that social acceptance of sexual diversity is more widespread in younger generations and on college campuses (Hinrichs and Rosenberg 2002), this is not surprising.

Tables 1 through 4 compare the demographic profile of gay men to straight men in the sample. Statistically significant differences between subpopulations have been denoted with symbols next to the variable names, where *** is $p < .005$, ** is $p < .01$, * is $p < .05$, and Ω is $p < .10$. When applicable, the ways in which gay male demographics correspond to previous data collected in other studies has been noted; however, as mentioned earlier, very little information exists about

the gay college-aged population. In Table 1 and 2, a picture emerges showing a more ethnically diverse group of gay respondents with a slightly higher percentage born outside of the United States.

The majority of straight men (68%) who answered this survey are white. By contrast, almost twice as many gay men as straight men are Latino, and four percent more are Asian. The higher number of non-whites among gay men is also supported in the nationally representative Add Health data (Easton et al. 2008). Gay men in this sample are more likely to be immigrants than straight men. Overall, both groups are about the same age, twenty years old, although gay men are a few months older on average.

	Gay Men n=274	Straight Men n=5,106
Age Ω	20.3 years	20.1 years
Race		
White***	55%	68%
Black	7%	7%
Latino***	14%	8%
Asian*	18%	14%
Native American	0.4%	0.3%
Other	6%	4%
Foreign born Ω	16%	12%

Table 1: Age, Race, and National Status Characteristics

Family background characteristics show that gay men in this data set have less educated parents, with twice as many with mothers who did not graduate from high school. This difference has been supported elsewhere in nationally representative data comparing gay and straight adolescents (Easton et al. 2008). This dynamic is interesting given that educational attainment and household income estimates for gay adult men themselves tends to be higher on average than for straight men (Gates 2008; Black et al., 2000). Gay men in the sample are also less likely than straight men to have parents who are still partnered or married. There are few differences between gay and straight men as to the types of towns and regions where they grew up, with the exception that slightly more gay respondents are from the southwest.

	Gay Men	Straight Men
	n=274	n=5,106
Maternal Education		
No High School Degree***	11%	5%
High school degree or some college	42%	41%
Bachelor's degree or higher*	47%	53%
Parents still partnered***	66%	75%
<i>Regional Background</i>		
From rural area or small town	27%	26%
Region of high school		
Northeast	31%	34%
Southeast*	9%	6%
Southwest	7%	5%
Midwest	19%	21%
West coast	36%	34%

Table 2: Family and Regional Background Characteristics

Table 3 indicates that even though both groups of men are about the same age, they are distributed through different life stages of the college experience. More straight men are in their first year than gay men, while more gay men are in their third year of college. It may be that more gay men than straight men go directly on from high school to college. It is also likely that gay men feel more comfortable coming out later in college than in their initial years, and so are more likely to identify as gay when they are further along in school. Indeed, another study comparing gay men to straight men in college also found higher proportions of gays among upperclassmen (Rhodes et al. 2007). About equal numbers of both groups live on campus in dorms, which contrasts the results of a previous study finding that more gay men live off campus than straight men (Rhodes et al. 2007). More straight men live in fraternity houses, while more gay men are living in other forms of campus housing. Three times as many straight men as gay men are athletes and 18% fewer straight men report a GPA above a 3.5 cumulative grade point average.

	Gay Men	Straight Men
	n=274	n=5,106
Year in School		
First year**	26%	34%
Second year	23%	25%
Third year*	24%	20%
Fourth year	21%	17%
Current residence		
Dorm	50%	48%
Fraternity***	1%	5%
Other on-campus housing**	13%	4%
Off campus apartment	27%	31%
With parents	10%	11%
Other	0%	1%
High GPA (>3.5)***	39%	21%
Athlete***	4%	12%
Institution		
Stanford**	18%	10%
Indiana	5%	6%
Arizona	4%	6%
Stonybrooke*	0%	4%
Ithaca*	8%	3%
Evergreen College	2%	0%
U. California, Santa Barbara	9%	12%
U. of Massachusetts***	13%	21%
Ohio State U.	4%	7%
Whitman	3%	4%
Foothill*	3%	7%
Harvard**	4%	1%
UI Chicago	6%	7%
Framingham	4%	3%
Radford	1%	1%
Beloit	2%	1%
U. California, Riverside	3%	2%
U. Pennsylvania	2%	2%
U. Washington Ω	6%	3%
U. California, Merced	3%	1%

Table 3: Year in School, Residence, GPA, Athlete-Status, and Institutional Affiliation

Table 3 additionally lists the many colleges and universities at which these surveys were conducted. Of the twenty schools, 40% are located in the West, 30% are located in the Northeast, and 20% are located in the Midwest. There is only one Southeastern school and one school located in the Southwest in the data set. These schools represent a wide spectrum of selective private liberal arts schools, large state universities, and Ivy League institutions. At these schools, gay men

who filled out the survey are overrepresented at Stanford, Harvard, Ithaca, the University of California at Merced and the University of Washington. Gay men are underrepresented at Foothill, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and at Stonybrooke.

	Gay Men	Straight Men
	n=274	n=5,106
Political Orientation		
Very liberal***	48%	30%
Somewhat liberal	31%	25%
Middle of the road**	16%	35%
Somewhat conservative**	3%	14%
Very conservative	2%	3%
Self-rating of attractiveness (1-10)**	6.9	7.2
No religious service attendance**	43%	36%

Table 4: Political Orientation, Self-Rated Attractiveness, and Religious Attendance

There are also notable differences in political orientation, self-rated attractiveness, and religious attendance between gay and straight undergraduate men in the sample, presented in Table 4. In terms of political orientation, most gay men report themselves to be “very liberal,” while most straight men report themselves to be “middle of the road,” and the smallest percentage of both groups self-reporting as “very conservative.” When asked to rate themselves in terms of physical attractiveness, on a scale from one to ten (with one being the lowest attractiveness and ten being the highest), gay men rate their physical attractiveness lower than straight men. This may be indicative of differences in modesty, self-esteem, heightened standards of attractiveness for gay populations, or a combination of all three. Gay men also appear to be slightly less religious than straight men, with about 7% more gay men reporting that they had not attended any religious service over the past year. This finding has been supported by past nationally representative research, which documents declining religiosity among gay males in the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Rostosky et al. 2008).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Stereotypical Sexual Expectations

Within heteronormative sexuality, men occupy a place of privilege, although that position is not as monolithic as originally thought (Giordano, Manning, and Longmore 2006). Nevertheless, heterosexual men who are sexually active rarely bear the label of “slut” and are, often times, admired for their sexual prowess (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Attwood 2007; Bogle 2008; Mutchler 2000). Conversely, males who decide to maintain a monogamous relationship are fulfilling the heteronormative expectations of their friends and family. This does not differ in the college hookup script. Heterosexual men who hook up on college campuses are stereotyped as wanting to sow their wild oats before settling down in relationships. They are expected to participate in hookups more than relationships, drink heavily, experience more sexual gratification than their partners, and, if they so desire, pursue relationships on their own terms. “In the hookup culture, [heterosexual] men are free to choose whether to have a very active sex life or to ‘settle down’ and maintain an exclusive relationship” (Bogle 2008: 103). In other words, heterosexual men can freely pursue hookups or relationships without fear of lasting social stigma.

Stereotypes for gay males, on the other hand, frame them as more promiscuous and less relationship-oriented than their heterosexual peers, engaging in sexual exploits that warrant the attention of scholars out of the risk paradigm perspective. “The assumption of the male sex drive, however culturally constructed, is so ingrained in Western culture that it has become a cliché frequently used to...perpetuate the myth of gay male promiscuity” (Mutchler 2000, 35). These depictions place an emphasis on the quest for anonymous, unattached sex with a complete lack of romantic intentions. Gay males, in this view, are in the pursuit of hyper-masculine “prestige sex” and seek to bolster their reputation by having frequent sex with attractive hookup partners (Eyre et. al 2007).

In terms of relationship pursuits, these stereotypes for both gay and straight males are well-represented within Figure 1. Although a little less than half of the heterosexual males in the sample have ever had a six-month relationship while in college, 65% have hooked up. In this, we see college-educated, heterosexual males who participate in a dominant hookup culture with strong ties to monogamous coupling. For gay males in college the trend toward monogamous coupling is less represented in the data. As Figure 1 illustrates, while 75% of gay males report participation in a hookup, less than one third report being in a six-month relationship since starting college.

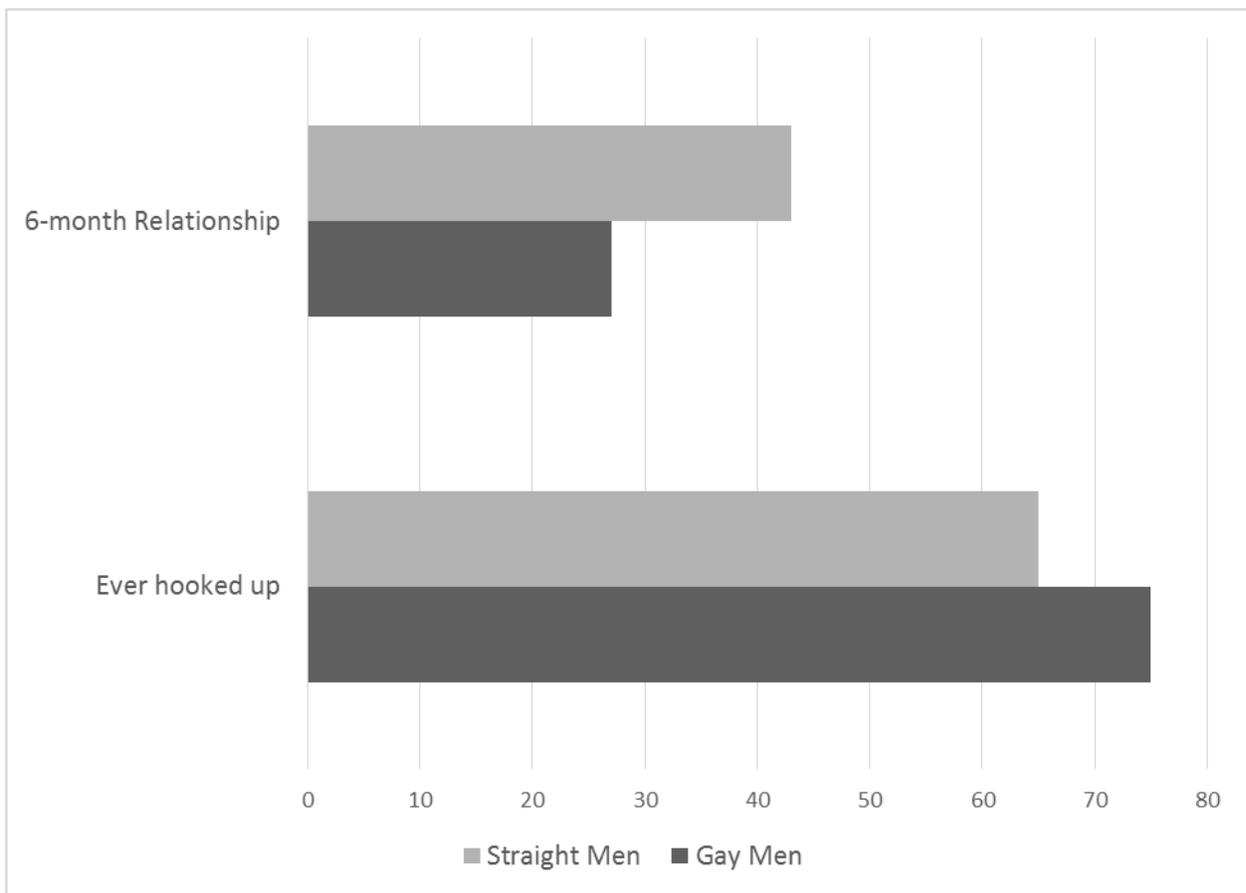


Figure 1: Hookups and Six-Month Relationships for Gay and Straight Men

Additionally, gay males in the sample who have hooked up are significantly less likely than straight males to have known their partner prior to hooking up, at a rate of 26% versus 15% respectively ($p < .001$). Gay males who have hooked up also exhibited significantly fewer repeat

hookups than their straight male peers, an average of 1.50 and 2.42 respectively ($p < .001$). Measurements of the anonymous hookup in Figure 2 show another statistically significant difference between groups. While straight males report an average of 3.36 anonymous partners over the course of their hookup experiences, gay males report an average of 4.75 ($p < .001$). This, combined with the above results, echoes prior research showing that gay males in college had more sexual partners than their straight male peers (Rhodes et al. 2007). Yet, it is important to note that the number of partners with whom men have had vaginal/anal intercourse, there is no difference between gay men and straight men. Despite evidence suggesting that gay males are more promiscuous, Figure 2 shows only qualified support for this. While gay men have had more anonymous hook up partners than straight men, it is noteworthy that when it comes to intercourse, they have had no more sexual partners than straight men.

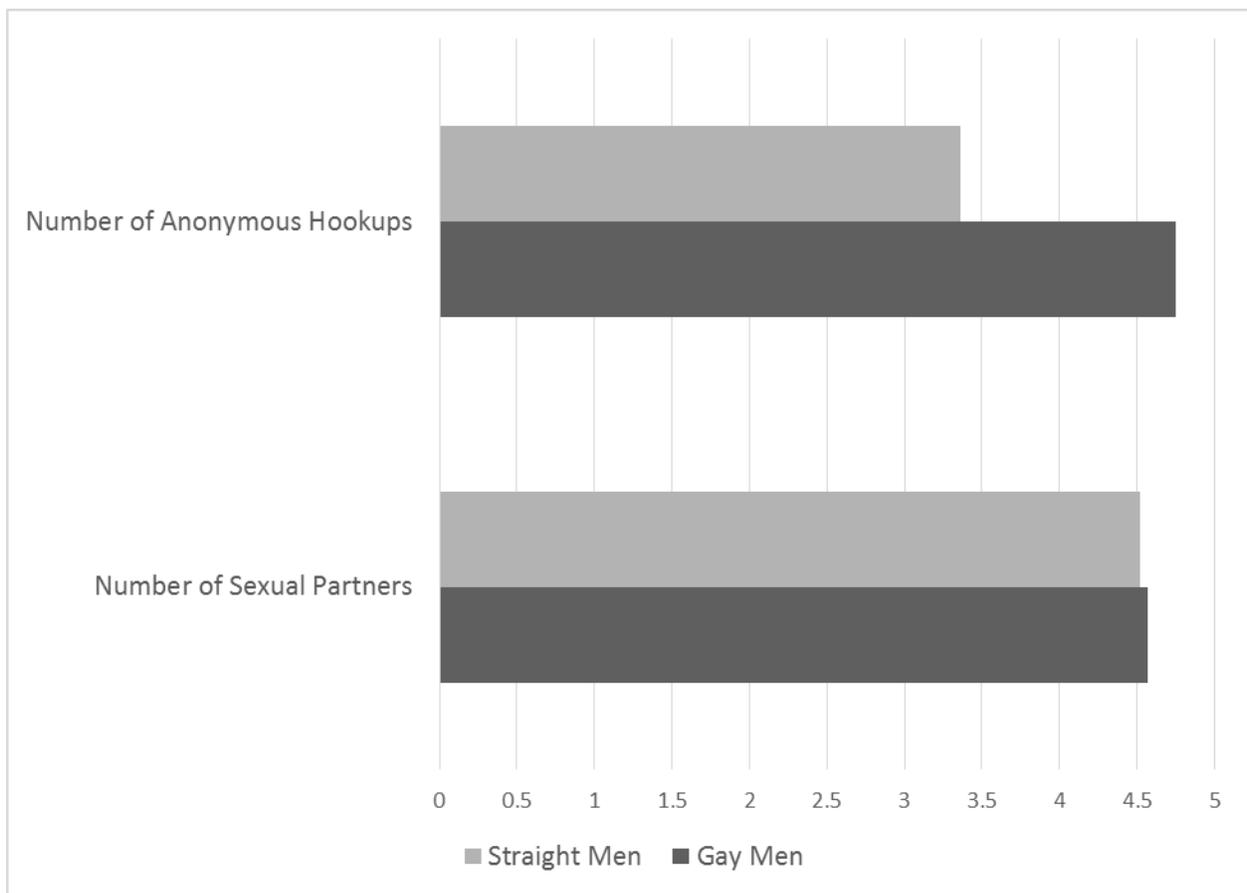


Figure 2: Anonymous Hookups and Sexual (Intercourse) Partners for Gay and Straight Men

Some of the differences in sexual behaviors of straight and gay males in college could be explained by demographic characteristics of the two populations shown in Table 1. On average, gay males in the sample are slightly older and further along in school than their straight male peers. This difference could account for the increased number of hookup partners for gay males but, by the same logic, should also result in an increased number of sexual partners for gay males; their number of sexual partners, however, is no different from straight men. Additionally, with more years gone by, one would expect gay males to have pursued a similar number of relationships as their straight male peers. Straight males are also more likely than gay males to attend religious services. This connection to religiosity could account for some of the differences in hookup rates for gay and straight males. Zaleski and Schiaffino (2000), however, note that religiosity may potentially decrease sexual activity in adolescence but fails to prevent risky sexual behaviors in adolescents who have already become sexually active. Since the promiscuity measures are utilizing straight and gay college males who are already active in hookup culture, this connection to religiosity fails to adequately capture the differences.

Thus, the data tentatively concludes that straight males involved in the college hookup do, in fact, mirror some of the stereotypes attributed to them. Gay males in college, on the other hand, minimally reinforce gay sexual stereotypes through behavior that categorizes them as more sexually promiscuous than their straight male peers. This raises an important question in the investigation of hookup attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of gay and straight males: If both sets of respondents report a strikingly similar number of past intercourse partners, why does the data represent gay males in college as more promiscuous and less likely to be in monogamous relationships? Some scholars have noted that it is difficult for adolescent gay males to find same-sex relationship partners (Bogle 2008; Diamond 2003; Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Remafedi 1990; Savin-Williams 1999), but does the proposed difficulty influence sexual and romantic behavior? The next set of bivariate tabulations investigates the extent to which gay men

report access to the dominant partner selection markets on college campuses and alternative ways of pursuing their own hookups.

Opportunity Structures for Hooking Up

Heterosexual males in pursuit of a college education are part of a larger structure of sexual and romantic opportunities. “Instead of socializing in dating pairs...[straight] college students tend to ‘hang out’ in groups at dorms, parties, or bars” (Bogle 2008: 29). These group scenarios provide social and chemical lubricants for heterosexual hookups to occur and they may also provide opportunities for romantic relationships to develop (Bogle, 2007, 2008; Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009). As previously mentioned, a consistent element of the typical hook up script identified by these studies is that these interactions typically occur after potential hookup partners have already identified and flirted with members of the opposite sex around campus. This often involves a prior friendly relationship between hookup partners or the aid of an introduction by a previously known party.

The sheer difference in population size between gay and straight males speaks to distinctions in partner selection markets for college students. Figure 3, which displays where respondents initially met their hookup partner, illustrates the variations in respective markets for males in the sample. Heterosexual males in college were more than three times more likely than gay males to meet their potential hookup partner through their place of employment ($p < .05$). Additionally, while gay male respondents reported meeting their hookup partners in class 7% of the time, straight males met their partners in this same setting 19% of the time ($p < .001$). Clearly, straight males have more opportunities to meet potential opposite-sex partners during everyday interactions, which reduces the potential for anonymous sexual encounters.

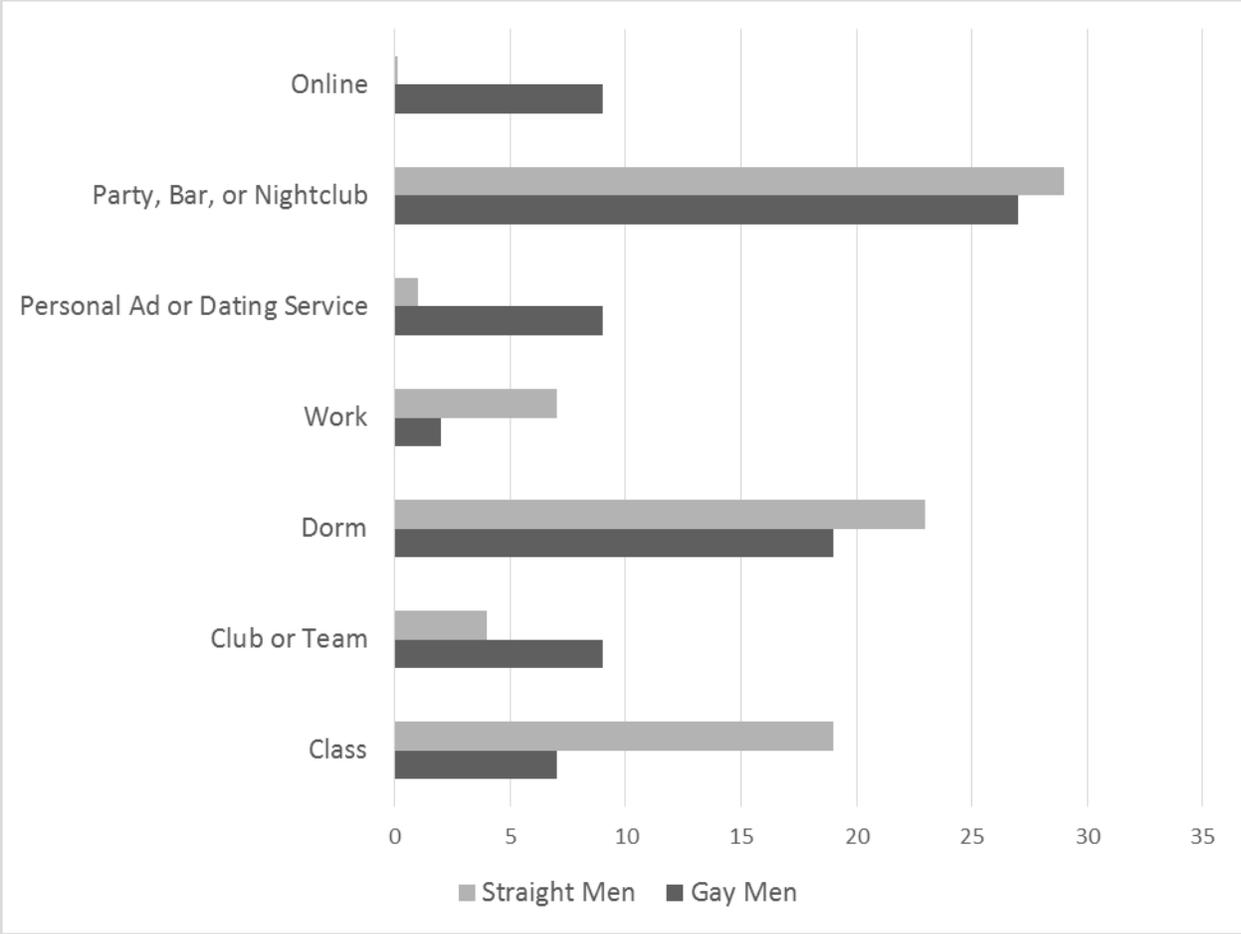


Figure 3: Where Respondents Met Their Hookup Partners

Gay adolescent males, as a much smaller population within heteronormative systems, do not have the same ease of access as straight adolescent males to dominant partner selection markets on college campuses. Bogle (2008) observed that the few gay and bisexual students she talked to expressed difficulty in finding relationships or hookups on campus. Although there are some similarities in the ways that homosexual and heterosexual male respondents meet potential hookups, gay males in college settings also engage in distinctly different ways of connecting with same-sex partners. Figure 3 shows that homosexual males are meeting their hookup partners in ways that they must pursue outside of everyday interactions on campus. Gay males in the sample were nine times more likely than straight males to meet their hookup partner through a personal

ad or dating service ($p < .001$). Gay males also exhibited higher percentages of utilizing clubs or teams to meet hookup partners than straight males, at 9% and 4% respectively ($p < .001$). Furthermore, homosexual males were significantly more likely to report employing “other” means of meeting their hookup partners ($p < .001$). Of these other ways to meet, substantially more gay males reported meeting their hookup partner online, while less than 1% of straight males reported similar use of Internet technology ($p < .001$).

In these situations, gay male respondents exhibit a concerted effort to increase the chances of meeting like-minded, same-sex hookup partners outside of everyday interactions on college campuses. By utilizing personals, the Internet, and interest-focused clubs and teams, gay males demonstrate an alternative path to the hookups of their heterosexual peers. This suggests that the dominant partner selection market in college is largely heteronormative, catering mainly to heterosexual students. While these findings offer support for Bogle’s assertion that gays experience a constrained potential for meeting relationship partners on campus, this conclusion can be taken one step further. Gay males in the sample, limited as they may be by dominant partner selection markets on campus, appear to have access to opportunity structures not strictly limited to the campus locale. By utilizing methods of partner selection that are not constrained by campus ties, gay males tap into local networks of peers who share their sexual orientation.

Additional demonstrations of differences in romantic and sexual opportunity structures for gay and straight males are evident in the variety of locations where students meet just before the hookup occurs. Although the data in Figure 4 clearly supports prior research documenting the hookup’s association with parties, bars, and dorm life (Bogle 2007, 2008; Flack Jr. et al. 2007; Grello, Welsh, and Harper 2006; Paul and Hayes 2002), there are, again, striking differences between straight and gay respondents. For example, 56% of heterosexual male respondents reported being at some kind of party right before hooking up while only 30% of gay male respondents reported a similar association ($p < .05$).

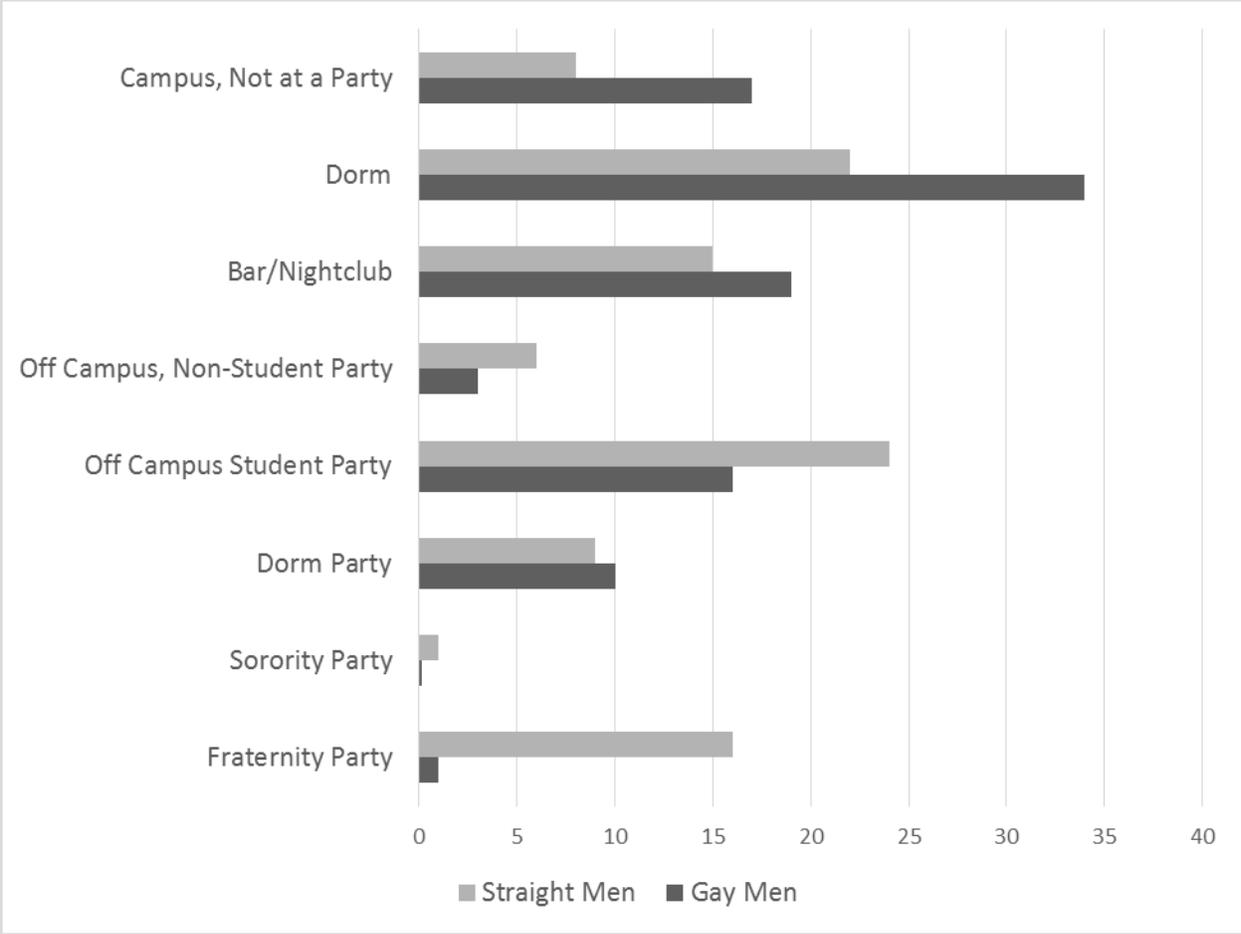


Figure 4: Location of Respondent Before Last Hookup Occurred

Higher percentages of heterosexual male respondents are represented in almost every party-related category of Figure 4. The most notable party contrast for gay and straight males is found in the fraternity party, with 16 times more heterosexual respondents reporting being with their partner at such events prior to hooking up ($p < .001$). Off campus student parties also represent a noticeable difference for gay and straight male respondents and their hookup partners. While 24% of straight males report being with their partners at these events prior to the hookup, only 16% of gay males report attendance with their hookup partners at this same kind of event ($p < .05$).

Based on past research connecting the hookup to the consumption of alcohol, these findings for the heterosexual hookup are not surprising (Bogle 2007, 2008; Flack Jr. et al. 2007; Grello,

Welsh, and Harper 2006; Paul and Hayes 2002). Bogle asserts “without alcohol as a social lubricant, it is unlikely that college students would be able to signal interest in a hookup and deal with the potential for rejection inherent to this script” (2007: 777). Parties, as social events formally structured to promote social interaction, clearly aid in the initiation of the heterosexual hookup. What is surprising, however, is the smaller influence of alcohol and alcohol-related establishments on the hookup script of homosexual males. While 19% of gay males were with their partner at a bar prior to the hookup, more than half of homosexual male respondents were in locations not typically associated with the unrestricted consumption of alcoholic beverages. As an example of this, Figure 4 illustrates that 34% of gay males, compared to 22% of straight males, reported being with their partner in a non-party, dormitory atmosphere prior to the hookup ($p < .001$).

At first glance, this may appear to take the possibility of alcohol consumption outside of party atmospheres for granted. Partaking in alcoholic beverages could hypothetically occur at any location and at any time. When respondents reported alcoholic intake in association with their hookup, however, heterosexual males in the sample reported an average of six drinks, while homosexual males reported half as many drinks at an average of three ($p < .001$). While this supports prior scholarly claims of the alcohol-fueled hookup for straight males, it calls into question whether such a norm can be assumed for gay hookups. If neither alcohol nor parties are as instrumental in facilitating hookups for gay males in the sample, these conclusions continue to suggest the normative hookup script and opportunity structures for heterosexual and homosexual males in college may differ.

Further evidence of this difference in partner selection markets and hookup scripts for homosexual and heterosexual males in college is evident in the number of student-to-student hookups for gay and straight males in the sample. When selecting a hookup partner, 63% of straight males report hooking up with a student from the same school, compared to 56% of gay males ($p < .05$). Although the majority of males in the sample still hook up with fellow students at their

respective colleges, more gay males than straight males find partners outside of their respective schools. This difference, again, could be the result of smaller pools of potential partners for gay men in college environments or the result of gay partner selection markets that extend beyond college campuses. A higher prevalence of tactics for meeting partners outside of campus networks broadens the net homosexual male students are casting and increases the likelihood of meeting non-students for hookup encounters.

The combined influence of concerted efforts to pursue partners outside of the dominant sexual and romantic system on campuses and a general exclusion from the heteronormative partner selection market, however, could be driving the increased anonymity of the gay college hookup. The anonymous variable comes from a question in the College Social Life Study that asks respondents, "How many people have you hooked up with whom you didn't know before that night?" Heterosexual males in college, simply by operating within a system of ample opportunities for meeting opposite-sex, heterosexual females in everyday interactions, have many possibilities to obtain first-hand or second-hand information about their potential hookup partners (Bogle 2008). In effect, this posits that increased probability of meeting like-minded females through everyday interactions improves the chances that straight males will have at least some prior knowledge of individuals within their partner selection markets. Gay males on college campuses, by this same logic, would have to make additional effort to access their alternative networks for peer-to-peer information on hookup partners; those not actively engaged in these social networks may find themselves at a disadvantage for antecedent knowledge.

Scholars of adolescent sexuality have documented that differences in the visibility of straight and gay youth also inhibit romantic and sexual partner selection markets for the latter (Bogle 2008; Diamond 2003; Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Savin-Williams 1996). In this, possible stigma attached to being openly gay in high school limits sexual and romantic relationship opportunities for homosexual students and includes a risk-assessment protocol for

sexual and romantic encounters that differs from those of their heterosexual peers. “The repercussions for an adolescent who expresses romantic or sexual interest in a heterosexual peer of the same sex might involve inadvertent disclosure of his or her sexual orientation... Because of these risks, few sexual-minority adolescents attempt to meet potential dating partners in traditional school or extracurricular settings” (Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999, 187). By proxy, the possibility of being outed by a budding hookup pursuit could potentially decrease prior first-hand knowledge of male peers as prospective hookup partners. Utilizing the same logic, being out in a university setting could have ramifications on partner selection markets. If one is not “out” on campus, antecedent knowledge of hookup partners through a network of peers is less likely; if an openly gay student hooks up with a peer who is not “out”, it is similarly conceivable that the out student will not have access to information about his partner through everyday interactions before the encounter. On the other hand, this does not take into account the experiences of gay students who are part of an increasingly public network of like-minded peers once entering college.

Prior investigations of adolescents in high school, though informative on the limited partner selection markets for younger gays, do not necessarily mirror the hookup experiences of gay males in college. To paint a more accurate picture of the gay hookup on campuses across the US, one must take into account the alternative partner selection markets that gay males in college appear to be tapping into. Although adolescents in high school may find difficulty in accessing alternative networks for sexual and romantic socialization, the sheer number of gay hookups in college speak to a vibrant network for same-sex hookup encounters; the market for relationships, however, does not seem to match. With seventy-five percent of gay males reporting access to hookups, it would be erroneous to assume that gay males are not part of peer networks that inform their hookups in and around US colleges and universities. Indeed, gay males in college are not merely displaced and lonely seekers of sex/relationships in a heterosexual world. They must simply work harder to access networks of like-minded partners outside of everyday interactions. It is, perhaps, the

broadness of these networks outside of the college environment that influences the slightly higher anonymity of the gay hookup.

Though the data points to more hookups, fewer romantic relationships, and reduced access to the same opportunity structures as heterosexual students for romantic and sexual socialization on campus, it also raises another question: what do gay males make of their partner selection markets? Would having more opportunities to meet same-sex romantic partners through everyday interactions around campus alter the results in Figures 1 and 2? In reviewing the data and literature so far, it is evident that the opportunity structures present on college campuses appear to aid the majority of heterosexual males not only in obtaining hookups, but also in choosing comparatively more partners who are at least somewhat known to them through everyday interactions or networks of peers. By assisting heterosexual males and females in obtaining first-hand and second-hand information about one another, straight partner selection markets also look as if they support heterosexual males in the pursuit of relationships. England and Thomas (2007), in studying where relationships on college campuses originated, found that a little less than half of respondents who experienced a six-month or longer relationship had hooked up with their partner at least once before transitioning into dating. Whether or not the push for relationships is a product of these markets, however, is another story. The heteronormative path, eventually leading to the pursuit of marriage, could very well be a structural factor leading to an increase of pursued relationships for heterosexual males.

Young gay males, by being largely restricted from the institution of marriage, do not necessarily face the same heteronormative community pressure to marry and pursue family life with another homosexual partner. Additionally, the partner selection markets of homosexual males in college, while useful in obtaining hookups, do not seem to be as useful as those of heterosexual males in college in producing lasting relationships. Scholars have noted that when a same-sex relationship does occur for young, gay males the norms of heterosexual relationships often compete

with “prevalent community attitudes”(Eyre et al. 2007:21) around sexuality and the makeup of relationships. In this, Eyre et al. (2000) and Mutchler (2007) note that the majority of relationships pursued by adolescent gay males were often fleeting. “Even a couple of months is considered a long time for a relationship to last by gay-bisexual adolescents” (Eyre et al. 2000, 21). By this logic, one might expect that gay males with increased access to dominant partner selection markets around campuses would experience more hookups with fellow students but experience little increase in relationships lasting more than six months.

What is missing from this discussion, however, is the desire for romantic opportunities documented by scholars (Bogle 2008; Diamond, Savin-Williams, and Dubé 1999; Mutchler 2007). In this literature, it is evident that the partner selection markets for young, gay males may differ, but the desire to pursue amorous relationships is strong. Even in Eyre et al’s (2000) discussion of conflicting sexual behaviors and community relationship ideologies in San Francisco, the pursuit of love and monogamous relationships is present. Will gay males in the sample echo these romantic aspirations?

Counter-Stereotypical Attitudes

Whereas previous comparisons focused on behaviors, these final bivariate tabulations focus on attitudes and desires. Figures 5 and 6 display results from the College Social Life Study examining romantic and sexual attitudes. These questions asked respondents to evaluate statements about relationships and hookups based on a 4-point scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The first statement, “I do not want a relationship so I can hookup,” presents answers from gay males that contradict some of the displayed behaviors in Figure 1. Although the data has shown that 75% of gay males in the sample participate in hookups, a little less than one third of gay respondents who have hooked up agree that they are intentionally avoiding relationships for hookup encounters. Straight male respondents, on the other hand, despite hooking up less frequently than gay males agree with this statement about avoiding relationships 41% of the time.

Equally notable is the strongly disagree category for this question. While 16% of straight males in the sample strongly disagree with the prompt, 24% of gay males respond in the same way ($p < .001$). Overall, these results show gay males reporting more frequent overall responses of opposition and less frequent responses of approval to this statement of relationship avoidance than their straight male peers.

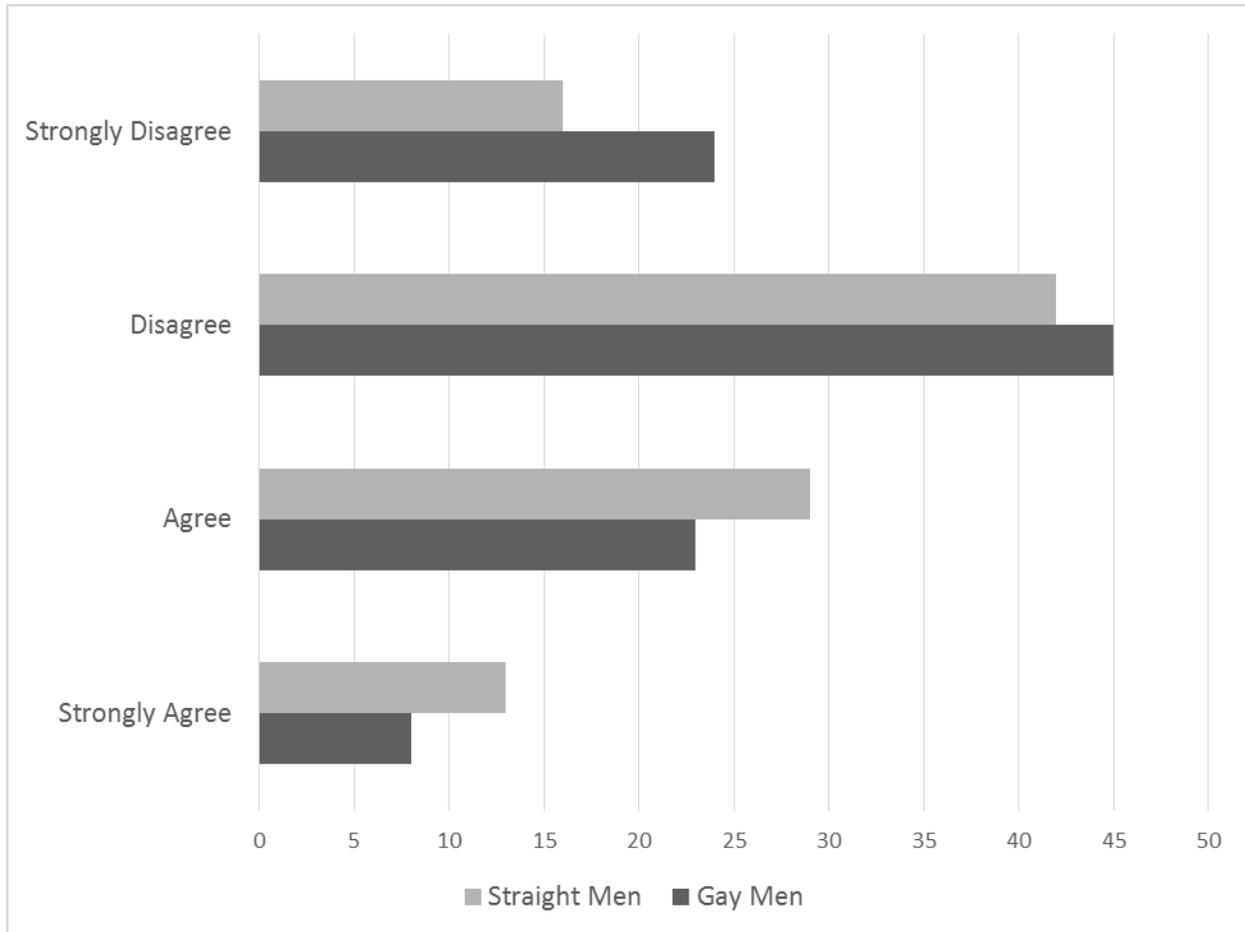


Figure 5: Respondent answers for "I do not want a relationship so I can hook up."

The next question, displayed in Figure 6, asked respondents to evaluate the statement, "I wish there were more relationship opportunities." In assessing this remark, gay males, again, displayed measurably stronger desires for increased romantic possibilities than did their straight male peers. While the majority of straight and gay male respondents agree with the statement in

some sense, a total of 75% and 89% respectively, more gay males long for increased relationship opportunities. This distinction in intensity is particularly evident for both heterosexual and homosexual males in the category “strongly agree”. The results of this question, presented in Figure 6, show that while 30% of straight males strongly agree they long for more relationship opportunities, over half of gay males answer the same way ($p < .001$). This is an important difference, one that might also speak to inequalities in the partner selection markets of homosexual males on college campuses.

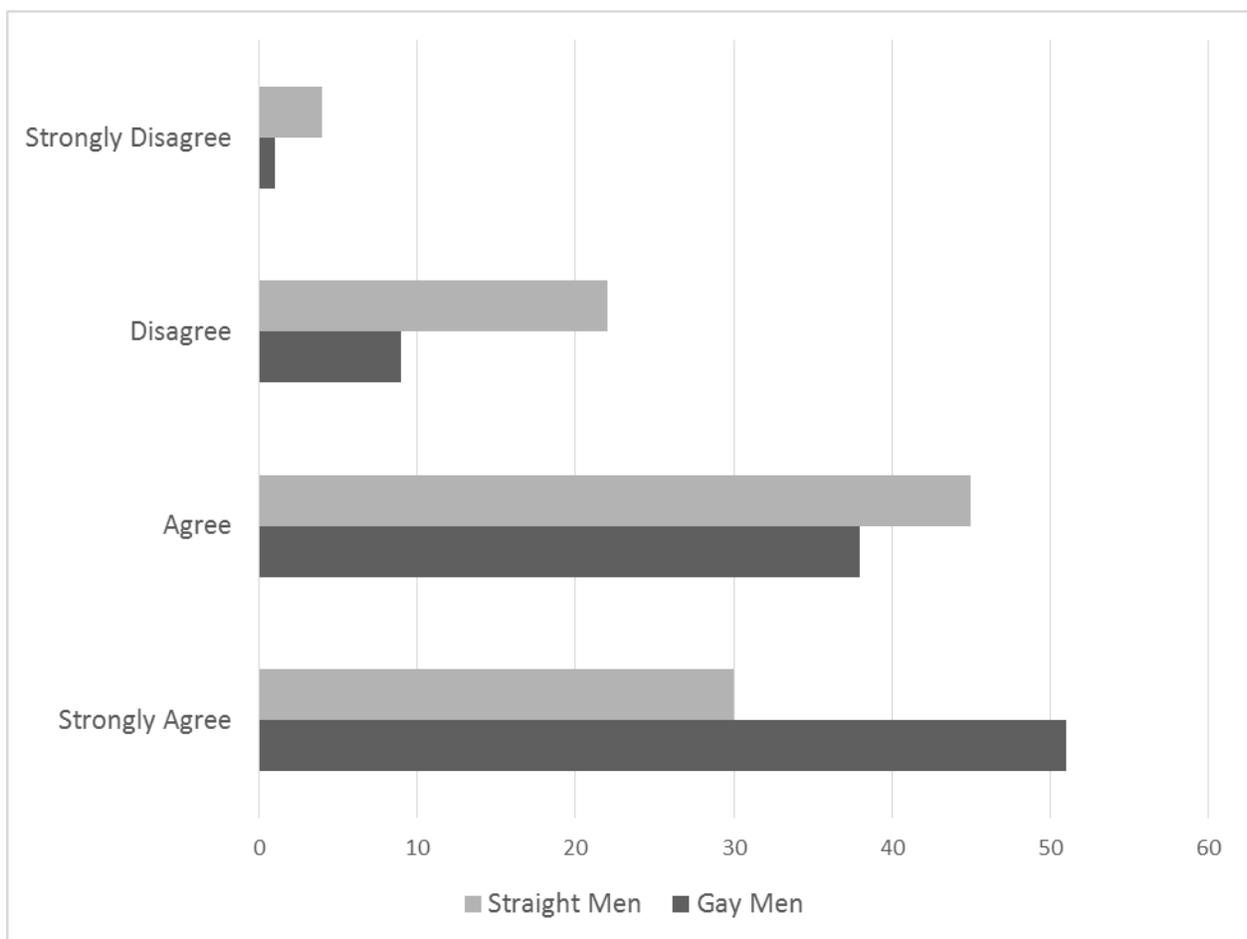


Figure 6: Respondent answers for “I wish there were more relationship opportunities.”

Overall, these results begin to tell a story that calls into question commonly believed stereotypes about homosexual males in colleges and universities. Although the sexual behaviors of

young, homosexual males in college displayed in Figure 1 and 2 would lead one to believe otherwise, it appears that relationships are coveted by most gay males in the sample. Indeed, Figure 7 shows that gay respondents place intrinsic value on relationships as structures of dependability. In Figure 7, respondents evaluated the statement, “An advantage of relationships is emotional support.” Homosexual males in college strongly agree with the statement at a rate of 70%, surpassing the 55% rate of heterosexual male students ($p < .001$).

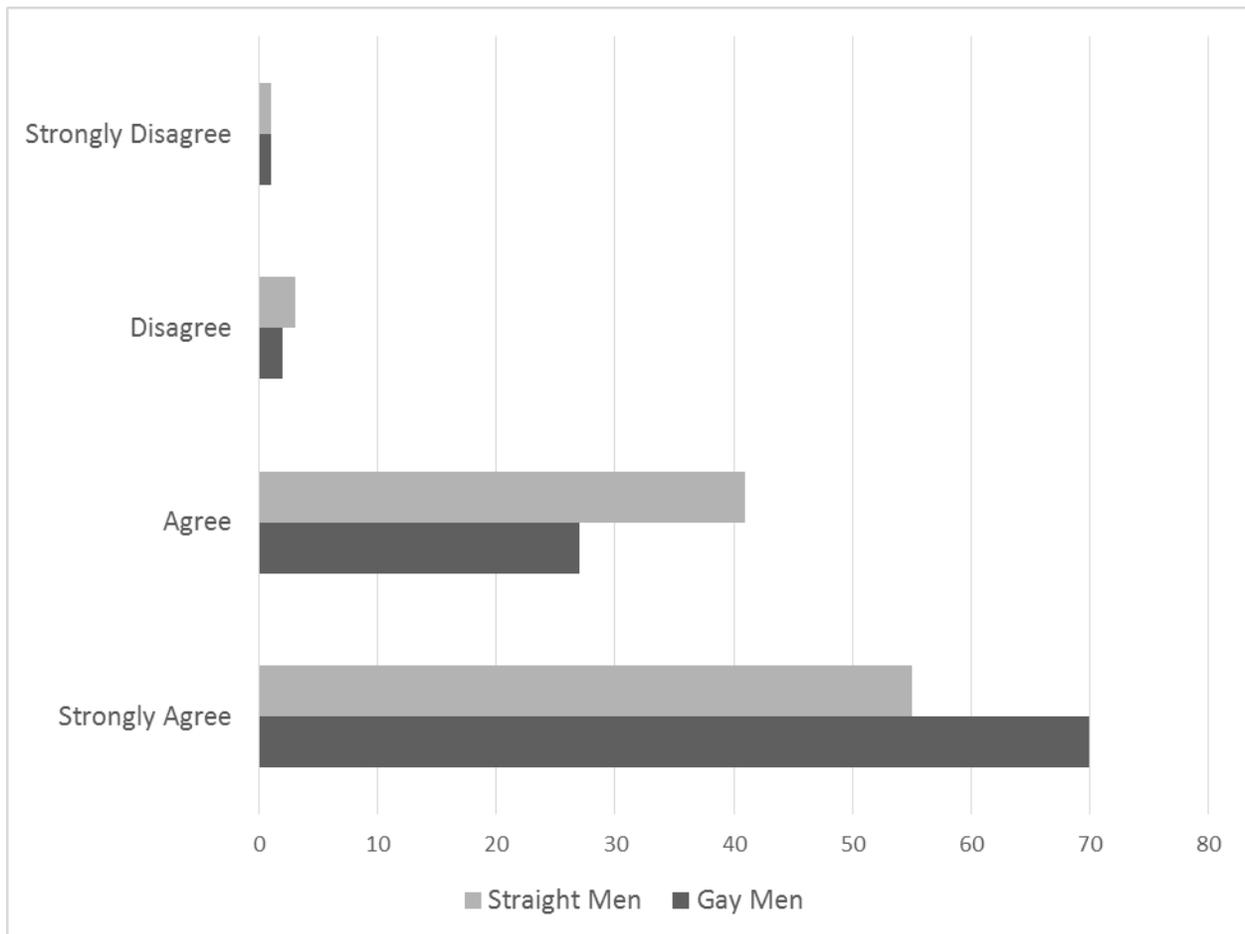


Figure 7: Respondent answers for, “An advantage of relationships is emotional support.”

Increased desires to cultivate relationships and greater interest in emotional support by gay males, however, should not be interpreted simply as a higher desire for relationships among gay men than straight men. Instead, these results must be viewed within the context of differential

partner selection markets for gay men and straight men. Straight males, in having more opportunities to meet their partners through everyday interactions, have a more expansive structure in place to pursue potential relationships on college campuses. Heterosexual males and females, with the dating and sexual structure as is, are more likely to meet and have knowledge of their potential partners through personal interactions in class, work, or around campus; they also have a well-documented structure of peer-to-peer information (Bogle 2007). This, in turn, could leave heterosexual respondents feeling more satisfied than their gay peers with their current sexual and romantic environment and lead to comparatively fewer strong responses to questions about changing the available structures. By this logic, gay males, in finding less romantic success in both dominant and alternative partner selection markets, would demonstrate stronger responses for obtaining more relationship opportunities in campus settings. That being said, it is interesting to note the sheer number of even heterosexual males who wish for more romantic prospects on campus, which would seem to support research showing that males are as invested in romantic relationships as females (Giordano et al. 2006). Even though the partner selection markets for straight males are comparatively more successful than those of their gay peers in producing longer relationships, the romantic possibilities for heterosexual males on campus also appear to be limited by the dominant hookup culture.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the College Social Life Study on the sexual and romantic behaviors and attitudes of college males both supports and contradicts existing research around adolescent male sexuality. In terms of heterosexuals, it was found that the majority of straight males in the sample have, indeed, hooked up. Hookups were around twenty percent more prevalent than relationships, keeping with scholarly assertions that the hookup script is the dominant form of sexual socialization on college campuses (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2009; Bogle 2007, 2008; Glen and Marquardt 2001; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). The data also demonstrate that the majority of straight men in the sample met their hookup partners through everyday interactions around college campuses.

In this, heterosexual males in college reported higher instances of meeting a hookup partner through class, work, dormitories, and parties than their gay peers, with more than four-fifths of straight respondents knowing their partners in some way before the time of the hookup. These estimates support recent scholarship noting that heterosexual hookup partners often meet through their networks of friends and acquaintances in everyday interactions around campus (Bogle 2008). Though some hookups are, indeed, anonymous, these results call into question the assertions of risk paradigm scholars who would define the hookup as an anonymous experience (Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). The data also bolsters the research suggesting a linkage between the heterosexual hookup script, campus parties, and the consumption of alcohol (Bogle 2007, 2008; Flack et al. 2007; Grello, Welsh, and Harper 2006; Lewis, Lee, and Patrick 2007; Paul and Hayes 2002; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000).

Although little prior research has examined the LGBTQ college hookup, the results point to a dominant hookup culture for gay males in colleges and universities. In keeping with the findings of Rhodes et al. (2007), homosexual male students in the sample participated in more hookups than

their heterosexual peers and were ten percent less likely to know their partner the day before. This is similar to the observations of Eyre et al. (2002) in San Francisco's Castro District, where relationships were fleeting and prestige sex was abundant. Due to conflicting community values and heteronormative models of relationships, gay males in Eyre et al's (2002) study were faced with a restrictive opportunity structure and encountered difficulty pursuing romantic relationships. Similarly, the majority of gay males in the sample are active in hooking up, but are less likely to report a lasting relationship since entering college. These observations of the gay hookup script, however, differs from the discussions of Eyre et al. (2002) and Rhodes et al. (2007), in the ways that homosexual men in college meet their partners.

In comparison to their straight peers, gay students exhibit less success in finding hookup or relationship partners through everyday interactions around campus. Instead, homosexual males increasingly resort to methods of accessing partner selection markets that they must promote or pursue themselves, including personal ads, dating services, the Internet, and student clubs or teams. Gay youth appear to access a separate network of like-minded peers that connects to an extended community. These results are analogous to prior research documenting the limited social structures that gay youth have to pursue romantic in early adolescence (Diamond 2003; Diamond, Savin-Williams and Dubé 1999; Remafedi 1990; Savin-Williams 1996) but are different in that they point toward a differently scripted hookup process for gay males entering early adulthood; these results also contradict those of Bogle (2008), who asserts that gay students do not have access to hookup culture on campus. With 75% hookup rate and slightly more than half of those hookups occurring with a fellow student, evidence from the College Life Social Survey points to a strong hookup culture for gay men that exists outside of the dominant heterosexual hookup markets. To put it simply, gay students are hooking up; they merely meet their partners through different avenues than their straight peers.

Furthermore, gay students in the sample consumed alcohol comparatively less than their

straight peers in association with the hookup, calling into question literature that cites drinking as a major influence of the hookup for all populations. In addition to this, I hypothesize that the alternative methods gay males pursue to meet partners and the smaller overall success rate within dominant college partner selection markets may be driving the increased anonymity of the gay hookup script as well as the smaller amount of lasting relationships. Gay males are not, as stereotypes might suggest, only seeking meaningless sex. Indeed, these results point to a large majority of gay males who are not only limited in the opportunity structure for the pursuit of relationships, but who deeply desire more opportunities for intimate relationships at their respective campuses.

Although this study has started to explore a portion of the LGBTQ hookup script, there is still more work to be done. I call upon scholars engaged in the collection and analysis of data to expand their examinations of romantic and sexual behaviors of college students to populations outside of straight, white, middle-class males and females. Indeed, this study is also limited in this way. Due to small sample sizes and limitations of the College Social Life Study, it was not possible to include bisexual, transgendered, and queer students in this paper. Examining the comparison between gay and straight males, however, though not necessarily representative of the larger US population, is an important step toward better understanding gay sexuality among young adults in college. It is essential that future scholarship remains vigilant in attempts to include sexual minority youth in the larger literature around sexuality, as sexuality is not something that exists only for adults, nor is it something that only adults can understand. Without the inclusion of LGBTQ youth in sexuality studies, scholarly understandings of sexuality are incomplete.

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