

# Dimensions of the Prototype of Hooking Up

Sal Meyers, Simpson College

## Introduction

College students no longer go on dates, they "hook up" (Bogle, 2008). Hooking up has been defined as by researchers "a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances. Some physical interaction is typical, but may or may not include sexual intercourse" (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). How do college students view hooking up? To answer this question, a prototype study was conducted and the results were factor analyzed.

## Study 1

66 features of hooking up generated by at least 3 members of a previous sample Meyers (2010) were presented in random order to 41 men and 72 women who rated the centrality of each feature to the participant's view of hooking up.

## Factors of Hooking Up

Stereotype of Hooking Up

- drinking, random, no commitment
- 21 features,  $\alpha = .92$

Making Out

- kissing, touching, making out
- 6 features,  $\alpha = .83$

Sexual Contact

- fingering, oral sex, messing around
- 8 features,  $\alpha = .86$

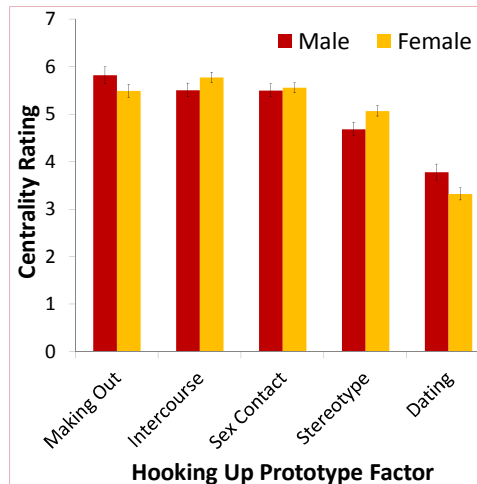
Intercourse

- casual sex, getting some, sexual intercourse
- 9 features,  $\alpha = .88$

Dating

- dating, cuddling, connection
- 11 features,  $\alpha = .87$

## Centrality of Factors



The factors differ in their average centrality ratings. Although no overall gender difference was found, gender did interact with the factors.

Except for stereotype, the other factors could be part of the prototype of romantic love (see Regan, Kocan, & Whitlock, 1998). Study 2 examines whether the factors influence perceptions of the features as hookups versus committed relationships.

## Study 2

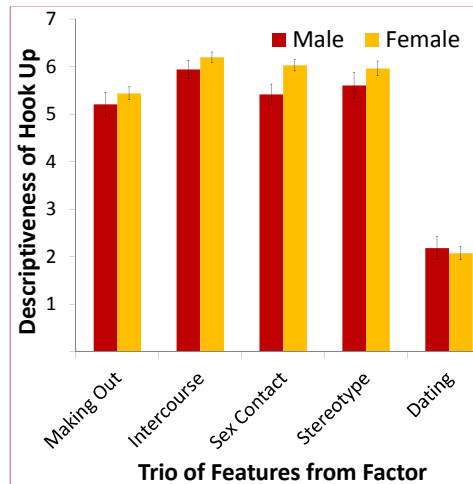
Participants were presented with trios of features from each of the 5 factors. The specific features are shown at the left. Instead of rating each feature individually, participants rated the set of 3 as a whole.

1 (strongly disagree)–7 (strongly agree)

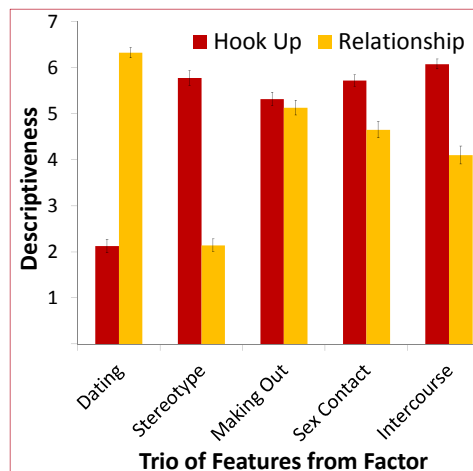
- Features describe a hookup
- Features describe a committed relationship

40 men, 129 women completed the study

## Ratings of Sets of Features



The factors differ in their average ratings. Gender had no effect nor did it interact with the responses to the factors; however, women made a greater distinction between hook ups and relationships than men did.



The dating and stereotype factors showed the greatest discrepancy between hooking up and a committed relationship.

## Discussion

College students' understand hooking up along 5 dimensions.

In accord with Paul et al.'s (2000) definition, students see hooking up consistently with the stereotype:

- Alcohol, drunk, drinking, party, drugs
- Stranger, acquaintance, do not know each other, no relationship, no emotion
- Random, unplanned, no commitment, one time, no strings attached, casual
- Quick, late-night, awkward, lust, dangerous

Also consistent with Paul et al., students see hooking up as anything from making out to sexual intercourse. Interestingly, making out, sexual contact, and sexual intercourse formed three separate factors rather than one factor.

The dating and stereotype factors distinguished most between hooking up and a committed romantic relationship.

Interestingly, the greater the sexual behavior (e.g., intercourse rather than making out), the more likely people are to view the encounter as a hookup instead of a committed relationship.

## References

- Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.
- Meyers, S. (2010, February) A Prototype Analysis of Hooking Up. Poster presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Las Vegas, NV.
- Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). "Hookups": Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37, 76-88.
- Regan, P. C., Kocan, E. R., & Whitlock, T. (1998). Ain't love grand! A prototype analysis of the concept of romantic love. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 15, 411-421.