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Self-Esteem, Emotions And Relationships

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SELF-ESTEEM, EMOTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

by

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Bachelor of Science, Honors, Brandon University, 2012

A Thesis

Submitted to Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

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This thesis, submitted by Kristyn Smith in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor Committee under whom work has been done and hereby approved.

Sarah Edwards, Committee Chair

Cindy Juntunen, Committee Member

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This thesis is submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

Wayne Swisher, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Date

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Title Self-esteem, Emotions and Relationships

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Kristyn Smith

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To my loving and supportive family!

Abstract

Presently there is a lack of research examining how geographical differences may related to different manifestations of hook up culture. Females from rural communities' were focused on in order to try to account for the gap in literature focusing on whether females' affect and self-esteem predicted future hook-up behaviors. Among young females, those who are from a rural community engage in hook-ups more frequently than those from an urban area; as well as report negative experiences within the community after they engage in a hook-up. The relationship between female's self-esteem and their intent to participate in a hook-up in the future was accounted for by negative affect. Together these findings suggest that female's from rural communities engage in hook-ups despite the potential negative consequences due to their low self-esteem or negative affect.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

More permissive sexual norms and relaxed attitudes towards sex and casual sex is related to a higher number of sexual partners (Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Paul et al (2000) found that 38% (210) of their sample of 555 undergraduates had engaged in casual sex in the past year. Of the 210 undergraduates 78% had sex with an acquaintance or a stranger. Additionally, more males (48%) had penetrative sex than females (33%). In another study, 68.9% of 394 university students engaged in a penetrative hook-up in the past year (Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011). Stinson (2010) noted that college students expect 85% of individuals on campus to be engaging in hook-ups, when in actuality only 53-76% of students were engaging in hook-ups.

Sex was once thought to be a behavior between a husband and a wife. As society has grown the concept and idea of sex has also changed. In present society sex is used in advertisements with the idea that “sex sells”. It is also commonly seen in movies, television shows and in musical lyrics. Attitudes towards sex and sexual behavior have changed from a conservative stand point to a more open-minded stance, especially among young adults. Across college and university campuses, research has found that norms regarding dating have been changing from monogamous relationships to casual sexual relationships, also known as hook-ups (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010). A “hook up” is seen as being a casual sexual encounter that is different from “friends with benefits” or a “booty call” (Gute, & Eshbaugh, 2008). A friend

with benefits describes the relationship between friends where the relationship is focused around sex. A booty call can emerge from friends with benefits, but involves an impulsive arrangement of a sexual interaction (Wentland, & Reissing, 2011).

Hook- Ups

Researchers have worked to describe the phenomenon of hook-ups. A hook up is an event that may or may not include sexual intercourse and that usually occurs only once between two individuals who are either acquaintances or strangers prior to the encounter (Paul et al., 2000). Additionally, the encounter is engaged in without the expectation of future encounters (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley and Fincham, 2010). Bradshaw et al. (2010) defined a hook up experiences as an experience where two people meet, either at a party or a bar, show interest in each other through eye contact, physical contact or flirting, and then engage in sexual acts. The hook up is considered over when one person falls asleep or leaves. Similar to this is the idea that hook ups are a spontaneous sexual encounter between two individuals who had no previous plan of engaging in a hook-up with each other. However, the individuals may have had the plan of wanting to hook-up with someone at the end of the night, the target person is unknown and usually anonymous (Paul et al., 2000). For the purpose of this paper, a hook up will be defined as a casual sex encounter between two individuals where sexual intercourse may or may not occur and there is no intention on seeing each other after the encounter. A hook-up can include activities ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse.

There are numerous reasons as to why individuals engage in casual sex. Levinson, Jaccard and Beamer (1995) classified reasons for engaging in a hook-up based on their research on adolescent motivation for sexual behavior. These reasons include positive social and interpersonal advantages, positive emotional outcomes, positive physical outcomes/pleasure, and

lastly fulfillment of basic needs, including the need to have sex. Similar to these, Bradshaw et al. (2010) stated that among females, physical intimacy is the number one reason for engaging in a hook-up. Additionally, generally there are no expectations for future encounters, but the hope for the hook-up to turn into a traditional relationship was another reason for females to engage in hook-ups. Garcia and Reiber (2008) sampled 507 students, 89% were motivated by the desire to have physical/sexual gratification, slightly over half were driven by emotional gratification and 50% of students indicated that they had hope that the hook-up would initiate a traditional relationship, although this was not an expectation. Individuals who want to belong and fit in with peers conformed to the perceived social norm of engaging in casual sex, even if internally they do not agree with the norm (Stinson, 2010). Owen et al (2010) found that the best predictor for future hook-ups was previous hooking up behavior. Young adults who had previous positive emotional reactions after engaging in a hook-up were more likely to engage in a hook-up in the future. Additionally, alcohol use was a stronger prediction of engaging in a hook-up among females than among males. It is hypothesized by Owen et al. that females use alcohol as a way to lower inhibitions in order to engage in casual sex.

Emotions

Affect is an automatic physical and cognitive response to a stimulus. The emotional response, known as affect, consists of action tendencies, internal sensations and automatic reactions. (Palencik, 2007). The internal sensations are defined by what they make you do or want to do. For example, an internal sensation that makes you want to scream or throw something or hit someone would be identified as anger. Affect can be both positive and negative. Negative affect encompasses emotions that elicit negative thoughts or feelings, for example sadness, depression, anger, etc. Whereas positive affect encompasses emotional responses that

elicit positive responses, thoughts or feelings; happiness, joy, excitement etc. Affect that is experienced in the moment may impact future behavior. For the purpose of this paper, affect will be thought of as internal sensations that are defined based on how they make an individual feel.

Research has looked at how gender mediates the relationship between emotions and hook-ups, there are some similarities and differences between males and females when it comes to emotions and hooking up. Owen et al (2010) used a sample of 832 undergraduates and found that although males and females were almost equal in number of hook ups, females were more at risk for feeling upset about the experiences, and were found to be less likely to report a positive experience. Additionally, for individuals who reported a negative reaction to their experiences, they also reported lower psychological well-being. Depressive symptoms are also related to hook ups and were more common among female participants than males (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). According to Townsend and Wasserman (2011), females experienced more worry and vulnerability after the hook up, and these feelings increased with the number of sexual partners. Males, however, experienced the opposite effect where negative feelings decreased as the number of sexual partners increased. Based on previous research, it can be hypothesized that females experience greater negative affect as the number of hook-ups they engage in increase.

The likelihood of having a positive hook-up experience for both males and females was related to whether or not oral sex was involved in the last hook up (Lewis et al., 2012). Although approval of sex is related to an increase of sex, as previously mentioned, Owen et al., (2011) found positive emotions related to past experiences to be related to higher rates of casual sex. However, if an individual identifies as lonely they are less likely to engage in casual sex. In addition, not using a condom has been associated with intimacy and commitment; females experienced higher rates of negative affect when a condom was used during a hook up despite

the heightened danger for negative consequences when condoms are not used (Owen, & Fincham, 2011).

Self-Esteem

The identity theory, used to explain self-esteem, focuses on the degree to which individuals are able to achieve a successful match between an identity goal, also known as an ideal or identity standard, and the perceptions of the environment, or the actual performance of the self (Cast & Burke, 2002). Based on this theory, self-esteem can be thought of as a direct outcome of a successful match between the ideal self and actual performance self, also known as self-verification. Self-verification is defined as when the meanings of the individual match the meanings of the social situation. Perceptions of the actual self or actual performance of the self, arise from three processed; reflected appraisals, social comparisons and self-attributes, that are related to role performance within groups. Negative emotions are often experienced when perceptions of the environment and identity standard meanings do not match. Essentially, the self-verification process is disrupted. Generally, self-esteem refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves (Cast & Burke, 2002). Usually this appraisal of the self is positive. Self-esteem consists of two dimensions, competence and worth (Cast & Burke, 2002). Competence refers to whether and individual sees themselves as being capable of doing something. Worth refers to whether the individual sees themselves as a person of value. Usually self-esteem has been seen as a self-motive, aiding individuals to behaving in a certain way in order to maintain or the positive evaluation of self. For the purpose of this paper self-esteem will be defined as the individual's appraisal of themselves.

Negative and positive emotions have been found to be related to one's self-esteem (Cast & Burke, 2002). Specifically, negative emotions likely result from perceptions of environment

that do not match the identity meanings. In terms of hook up behavior, self-esteem has been positively correlated with the number of sexual partners for males. Additionally, the fewer sexual partners males have is related to lower self-esteem but also poorer mental health. The causal relationship between female's self-esteem and hook-ups is unknown, however females' who engaged in penetrative hook-ups reported lower self-esteem than those who did not (Fielder & Carey, 2010). There is a lack of research on the relationship between female's self-esteem and hook-ups as it has only been assumed that female self-esteem mimics male self-esteem when it comes to hook-ups. The goal of this study is to add to previous research that has been conducted on the phenomenon of hook-ups, and investigate how hook-ups impact females' self-esteem.

Rural Living

Rural communities are seen as different and unique from urban communities, with their own norms and ways of functioning. A rural community is defined as living in an area with a population of less than 50,000 people and not a suburb of an urban area. Living in a rural community can have its pro's and con's. The community is often tight knit, where everyone knows each other and offers support to community members. A downside to this is that one's behavior is known to all within the community (Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin, & Patrick, 2007). Additionally, rural communities are often more isolated and lack the diversity common in urban areas, this can result in more stigmatization towards those who do not fit in in the community, whether it be race, ethnicity, or sexuality. These factors can significantly impact the behavior of youth.

Cronk and Sarvela (1997) found that individuals from a rural area started drinking before individuals from urban areas, and that binge drinking was more prevalent among rural individuals. Atav and Spencer (2002) noted that alcohol was the substance of choice among rural

youth. Additionally, that different from urban areas, in rural communities large, unsupervised, parties in remote locations were frequent. At these parties, younger individuals associate with older individuals, resulting in easier access to substances like alcohol and other illicit drugs. The use of alcohol and other drugs was found to be related to individuals having more than four sexual partners and not using condoms during intercourse. Among rural areas there is a higher rate of unmarried teenage mothers as well as an increased risk of pregnancy compared to urban areas (US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (USDA), 1997). Related to rural youth involvement in sexual behaviors are six factors; absence of recreational options for community members, lack of diverse leisure time activities for youth, lack of activities for youth who are dating, easy access to risk leisure time behaviors (for example alcohol), limited safe environments for socializing and cost-barriers to engaging in leisure activities (Akers, Muhammad, & Corbie-Smith, 2011). The combination of factors associate with living in a rural area and engagement in sexual activities creates a unique feature of living in a rural community. That is that individuals are often branded; when a young woman has sex with a male she is branded as easy and everyone in the community knows about it (Shoveller et al., 2007). Individuals from rural areas will be specifically focused on in this paper to examine the unique factors related to living in a small community and how they relate to involvement and engagement in hook-up behavior.

Purpose

The study focused primarily on rural communities for the purpose of determining what factors are related to experiences associated with hooking up in a rural community. Specifically focusing on negative experiences within the community after hooking-up and worries about negative consequences they may face in the community for hooking up. Secondly, we examined

the unique contributions of past hook-ups, self-esteem, positive affect and negative affect on the intent to engage in a future hook-up. Lastly, we explored whether negative affect mediates the relationship between self-esteem and the intent to engage in a future hook-up. The rationale for the study is that research has found there to be a shift in culture, moving away from relationships to casual sexual encounters, known as hook ups (Bradshaw et al, 2010). Past research has found that females are at a higher risk of experiencing negative emotions and depressive symptoms after engaging in a hookup (Owen et al, 2010; Grello et al, 2006).

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Participants

The participants for the study were 83 individuals who identified as being a female from a rural community between the ages of 19-30 ($M= 23.6$, $SD=2.2$) and from North America. Of the 83 participants, 42 were from Canada, 38 from the United States and one was from both Canada and the United States. Majority of the participants identified as being Caucasian (74) and nine identified as belonging to a minority. Two hundred and fifty nine participants were recruited through Qualtrics, Facebook, word of mouth, e-mail and Amazon Turk; sixty-seven were not included due to not being from a rural community, thirty did not identify as being female, sixteen identified as not being from North America and sixty were excluded because they did not complete the survey. In order to have statistical power with the multiple regression, 50 plus eight times the number of independent variable (three) must be used for participants resulting in a total of 74 participants needed for statistical power (Murphy & Myers, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2004).

Measures

Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS is a 20-item questionnaire that assess mood, distinguishing between positive and negative affect. The questions are answered using a five-point scale, ranging from 1=very slightly/not at all to 5=extremely. Participants indicate the extent to which they generally feel different emotions. Some emotions included on the scale are “interested”, “hostile”, “proud”, and

“ashamed”. The PANAS has been found to be internally consistent with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .86 to .90 for positive affect and from .84 to .87 for negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965). The RSES is a scale used to measure self-esteem based on current feelings. The RSES is a 10-item questionnaire that uses a four-point likert type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. An example of questions on the RSES are; “I certainly feel useless at times”, “I feel like I have a number of good qualities” and “I take a positive attitude towards myself”. The RSES has been found to be stable and consistent across time with a Cronbach’s alpha value ranging from .77 to .88, an inter-rater reliability value of .82 to .85, and a criterion validity value of .55 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Hook up questionnaire. Due to the fact that hook up culture is a relatively new phenomenon to be studied, no standard hook-up questionnaire presently exists. For the purpose of this study a questionnaire that looks at hook-up experiences will be used (Edwards, Bradshaw & Brinker, in preparation). The hook-up experiences questionnaire assess an individual’s involvement in different hook-up behaviors and situations. Examples of questions on the questionnaire are; “How many times have you hooked up in your life time”, “Rate your level of intoxication during your first hook-up”, and “If sexual activities were on a ranged in the following order: Kissing, touching above the waist, touching below the waist, receiving oral sex, giving oral sex, and having sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal intercourse), assuming sex is the furthest activity one can engaged in during a hook-up, what is the furthest you’ve gone?”

Rural Living. To analyse the rural living questions, a factor analysis was completed and showed that the six individual questions are combined into two separate factors; negative experiences within the community after hooking-up and worries about negative consequences

they may face in the community for hooking up. Worries about negative consequences was assessed by using two questions; fear of individuals in the community finding out about the hook-up as well as whether individuals in the community are labeled as a “whore, slut or easy” after a hook up. Negative experiences within the community was assessed through the use of four questions; 1) being in a social situation with more than one individual that one has hooked-up with, 2) being labeled due to friends behavior, 3) relationships being impacted due to past hook-ups and 4) rumors being spread based on hook-ups.

Demographics questionnaire. In order to find out basic information about participants a demographics questionnaire will be used. The questionnaire will gather information on race/ethnicity, education, age, gender, household income, and country of residence. The information will be used in order to describe the participants but also to see how they related to hook up behavior.

Procedure

The study was conducted online through the use of Qualtrics. Before participants accessed the survey they read and reviewed a consent form. They then indicated whether they agree with the terms or if they did not want to participate in the study. The consent form indicated the purpose of the research, that participation is solely voluntary, they could withdraw at any time and that the information collected will only be used as group data. After agreeing with the terms of the consent form, participants continued to fill out the survey. The questionnaires took participants about 20 minutes. Once participants completed the survey, they read a debriefing statement where they were reminded of the purpose of the study as well as potential resources they can use if taking the survey resulted in any discomfort. In order to protect confidentiality no identifying information was collected. IP addresses that were collected

via Qualtrics were deleted as soon as it was feasible. All data was analyzed and reported in aggregated form that does not allow for identification of individual participants. The data was coded in order to ensure anonymity and exported into SPSS. The data will be stored indefinitely on password protected workstations located in the advisor's lab space and office.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The sample used in the analysis below consisted of 83 females from rural communities across North America. Majority of the participants were between the ages of 23 (18.1%) and 24 (16.9%), of the 83 74 identified as being Caucasian (89.2%) and 10.8% identified as a minority (Asian/Pacific Islander, African American/Black, Hispanic, First Nations and Multiracial). Over half of the participants (72.3%) indicated that they had some college (30.1%) or a bachelor's degree (42.2%). Of the 83 participants, 78.3% indicated that their average house hold income was between less than \$10,000 and \$74,999.

Among participants the number of hook-ups one has engaged in in their life time ranged from none to 100. A total of six participants (7.2%) indicated that they had never engaged in a hook up. Out of the 83 participants, 33 indicated that they hooked up between one to five times (39.6%), and 16.8% had participated in over 20 hook ups in their life time. Within the past year over half of the participants reported not engaging in a hook-up (54.2%), and the remaining 44.8% engage in one to 20. The most hook-ups participants engaged in in a given year ranged from one to 25; over half of the participants (57.9%) engaged in one to five hook-ups. While indicating the farthest they had gone in a hook-up, 58 participants (69.9%) stated that they engaged in sexual intercourse. Being drunk or somewhat drunk was reported by 40.9% of participants during a hook up where they had gone the farthest, and among 38.4% of participants during their first hook up. The mean and standard deviations of all variables of interest used in the following analysis can be found in Table 1 (p.21).

To test the first hypothesis; determine what factors are related to experiences associated with hooking up in a rural community, a Kendall's Tau correlation was conducted. Variables that account for someone indicating negative experiences within the community after engaging in a hooking up are the farthest an individual has gone in a hook up ($r=0.385, p<0.001$), their level of intoxication during the hook-up that they have gone the farthest ($r=0.265, p<0.01$), level of intoxication during first hook-up ($r=0.228, p<0.01$), total number of hook-ups in one's life time ($r=0.422, p<0.001$) and the most hook-ups one has engaged in in one year ($r=0.448, p<0.001$). Worries about negative consequences one may face in the community was not related to any of the variables; farthest an individual has gone in a hook up ($r=0.034, p=0.725$), their level of intoxication during the hook-up that they have gone the farthest ($r=0.131, p=0.134$), level of intoxication during first hook-up ($r=0.088, p=0.314$), total number of hook-ups in one's life time ($r=0.115, p=0.196$) and the most hook-ups one has engaged in in one year ($r=0.104, p=0.252$).

To test the second hypothesis we ran a hierarchal multiple regression to account for life time hook up experiences in the first step. In the second step we included participants positive and negative affect scores, self-esteem scores as well as participants negative experiences within the community after hooking-up and worries about negative consequences they may face in the community for hooking up. All these factors accounted for 20% of the variance in intentions of hooking up. Specifically, negative affect was the only variable that uniquely contributed to participants intention to hook up $\beta=.436, t=3.73, p <0.001$. Positive affect, self-esteem, worries about negative consequences and negative rural experiences were not significant.

To test a mediation Baron and Kenny (1986) state that the following four conditions have to be met; 1) the independent variable is related to the dependent variable ($r=0.240, p<0.05$) 2) the mediating variable is related to the dependent variable ($r=0.469, p<0.001$) 3) the independent

variable is related to the mediating variable ($r=0.403, p<0.001$) and 4) the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable does not exist after introducing the mediating variable. To test the third hypothesis that negative affect mediates the relationship between self-esteem and intent to engage in a hook-up the future, we conducted a three step hierarchal multiple regression. In the first step we accounted for participant's life time experiences of hooking up since past behavior is the strongest predictor of future behaviors. Unsurprisingly, life time hooking up was a significant predictor, $\beta= 0.227, t= 2.094, p < 0.05$. In the second step, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale was included which was significant even after including for life time hook-ups, $\beta= 0.225, t= 2.126, p < 0.05$, which represented a significant R^2 change of 5.1% $\Delta F(1, 80) = 4.522, p < .05$. To show that negative affect mediates the relationship between self-esteem and intent to future negative affect was included in the third step of the multiple hierarchical regression. When negative affect was included it was a significant predictor $\beta=.391, p < .001$, while self-esteem was no longer significant, $\beta=0.074, p=0.494$. This demonstrates that negative affect completely mediates the relationship between self-esteem and intentions to hook up.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study focused specifically on rural communities for the purpose of investigating how hook-ups impact female's self-esteem and affect. In particular we focused on determining what hook-up factors are most prevalent in a rural community that impact one's experiences and potential experiences. Secondly, we examined the unique contributions of past hook-up behavior, self-esteem, positive affect and negative affect on predicting the intent to engage in a future hook-up. Lastly, we explored whether negative affect accounted for the relationship between an individual's self-esteem and their intent to engage in a future hook-up.

Hooking up in a rural community goes across age, education and average household income. The behavior of young adults from a rural area differs from young adults in an urban or suburban area. The number of individuals engaging in hook-ups in a rural community is greater than the number of individuals from an urban area engaging in hook-ups. In urban areas, between 38% and 76% of individuals engage in hook ups (Paul et al., 2000; Stinson, 2010) where as 92.8% of females from rural areas in the sample engage in hook-ups. Most commonly, the farthest an individual had gone in a hook-up was sexual intercourse, followed by giving and receiving oral sex. The level of intoxication during a hook-up where an individual had gone the farthest was most commonly reported as being drunk, blacked out drunk or somewhat drunk. During an individual's first hook-up, their level of intoxication was most frequently reported as either being sober or drunk. These results are not surprising as individuals from rural areas

engaging in drinking, and binge drinking at a younger age and more frequently than young adults in an urban area (Cronk & Sarvela, 1997; Atav and Spencer, 2002).

A characteristic of a rural community is that they are close knit where everyone knows everybody and every one's business (Shoveller et al., 2007). For individuals engaging in hook-ups this means that the hook-up is not just known by the two individuals involved, but it is also known by the community. Having a hook-up be known throughout the community can result in negative experiences for the individual, for instance being stigmatized, labeled, or having rumors spread about one's self. Factors associated with experiencing negative consequences within the community after a hook-up include the number of sexual partners one's had in their life, the most partners they've had in a given year, level of intoxication during their first hook-up, the farthest they've gone during a hook-up and their level of intoxication during a hook-up where they have gone the farthest. This would suggest that individuals who are engaging in more hook-ups, or are drunk during their hook-ups experience more negative consequences or backlash from the community for their behaviors.

An individual's affect after a behavior may influence whether or not they engage in that behavior in the future. Although females experience more negative affect after engaging in a hook-up (Grello et al., 2006; Owen et al., 2010; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011) the best predictor of future hook-up behavior is past hook-up behavior. Interestingly, positive affect had no bearing on whether an individual intended to engage in a future hook-up, whereas negative affect impacted whether an individual intended to engage in a future hook-up. This suggests that negative affect may work as a motivator for females to engage in future hook-ups. Essentially, the worse a female feels the more likely she is to hook-up in the future.

According to Cast and Burke (2002) negative and positive affect are related to an individual's self-esteem; low self-esteem resulting in negative affect and high self-esteem resulting in positive affect. The relationship between a female's self-esteem and the intent to engage in a future hook-up is accounted for and influenced by negative affect. Given this relationship between affect and self-esteem, and the results that found negative affect may work as a motivator to engage in a future hook-up suggests that low self-esteem may also work as a motivator to engage in a hook-up.

With negative affect accounting for the relationship between self-esteem and the intent to engage in a future hook-up, as well as serving as a motivator can create a vicious cycle. Individuals may use the physical intimacy or physical pleasure found in hook-ups as an easy way to fix experiencing negative affect. However, as noted above, females are more likely to report negative affect after engaging in a hook-up so benefits of engaging in the hook-up wear off and the individual is right back where they started, creating a vicious cycle; engaging in a hook-up to feel better, then experiencing negative affect and engaging in another hook-up. Additionally, females may be using hook-ups as a way to feel better about themselves.

Limitations

The findings of the current study should be interpreted in the context of its methodological limitations. First, the correlational and regression design of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the direction of the effects. Second, while the sample size was large enough for statistical power of the analysis, the sample size was relatively small. Despite this, the sample was drawn from participants across rural communities in the United States and Canada, rather than using a convenience sample of local students. This likely enhances the external validity of the results. Third, all of the measures were self-report, which

may introduce common method bias, especially reporting casual sex experiences and negative affect. We attempted to account for this by cross referencing their responses as well as placing questions that remove the individual from the survey if they do not meet the specific demographic criteria.

Implications

Notwithstanding the limitations noted, the current study emphasized that among the rural females in the study, over 90% are engaging in hook-ups. Females from a rural community are at a higher risk for unplanned pregnancy and teenage pregnancy (US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (USDA), 1997). The increased risk for pregnancy combined with the high rates of hook-ups calls for a need for educational programs and services that recognize and acknowledges the need for addressing sexual behaviors in rural communities. Rural communities are often isolated and lack mental health resources that may benefit females who are dealing with the results of this combination or mental health issues surrounding an unplanned pregnancy (Shoveller et al., 2007). Mental health professionals who serve rural communities may start to see an increase in young females who are presenting with issues surrounding low self-esteem, stigmatization, depression and anxiety related to their sexual behaviors.

With hooking up being related to negative affect, the combination of negative experiences and negative affect can result in females experiencing higher rates of symptoms of depression or anxiety surrounding the potential negative future experiences. Depression and anxiety are reported as being unmet needs in rural settings (Lee, Lohmeier, Niileksela & Oeth, 2009). With the barriers that are already established in a rural community (increased risk of lack of confidentiality, stigmatization etc.) females who are experiencing negative affect or negative experiences in the community related to a hook up may not seek the mental health services that

they need. This combined with the already lack of resources in rural settings may result in an increase in more young adults developing severe mental health issues.

This study focused primarily on females from rural communities, in the future males from rural areas should be included to further explore the negative experiences one faces within the community after engaging in a hook-up, as well as to determine if males face different consequences than females after engaging in hook-ups. Future research should also investigate what motivates young adults from rural communities to engage in hook-ups, beyond their negative affect, given that they face negative experiences in the community after the hook-up. Additionally, explore whether there are unique motivators for young adults from a rural area that are different than motivators for individuals from an urban area.

As norms among young adults continue to change from monogamous relationships to engaging in various hook-ups, the best predictor of engaging in a hook-up in the future is past behavior. Individuals continue to engage in hook-ups despite their negative experiences or negative feelings post hook-up. As hooking up becomes more accepted and common it can pose serious consequences for females from rural communities including mental health concerns, sexually transmitted infections, or unplanned pregnancies as individuals forgo the potential negative consequences in order to engage in a hook-up.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviations of variables of interest

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intent to engage in future hook up	82	0.230	0.425	1.296	-0.330
Most hook-ups in a given year	80	5.940	5.771	1.621	2.299
Number of hook-ups in life time	80	13.110	19.095	2.970	10.152
Number of hook-ups last year	83	1.850	3.411	2.970	10.753
Self-esteem	83	15.469	2.619	0.504	1.082
Positive affect	83	32.819	7.332	-0.584	0.599
Negative affect	83	19.783	7.917	0.857	0.250
Negative experiences in community	83	1.566	1.345	0.318	-1.122
Worries about negative experiences	83	1.000	0.796	0.000	-1.416

Note. *N*=83. Higher self-esteem score=higher self-esteem. Positive affect can range from 10-50, higher score=higher positive affect. Negative affect can range from 10-50, lower score= low negative affect.

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