

Different Strokes for Different Folks: A Comparison of Heterosexuals and Homosexuals/Bisexuals

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Abstract

“Hooking up” has been defined as ‘a sexual encounter, usually only lasting one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances’ (Paul et al. 2000, 79). However, the majority of “hooking up” research only uses samples of heterosexuals. Using data collected from a survey administered to 310 students in the Fall of 2009, an attempt is made to document the similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual/bisexual students’ “hooking up” behaviors. A cross tabulation of the data revealed many similarities and differences between the two groups, specifically in regards to the types of sexual behavior engaged in. This study demonstrates that heterosexuals and homosexuals/bisexuals, despite similar backgrounds in other areas, might look to different sources in forming their perceptions about “hooking up.” This data could be used to argue that there are separate “hooking up” cultures that influence student sexual behavior dependent on the student’s sexual orientation.

Introduction.

The scope in which homosexual group behaviors and norms have been documented in the social sciences has been severely limited. Most of the research efforts into this sub-culture have focused primarily on the causes of and reasons for prejudice towards this group. However, little research has been done on behaviors and norms that exist in this culture especially concerning courtship rituals and hooking up. One of the reasons that could explain this lack of investigation is the fact that homosexuality is not primarily observed or prevalent in one racial, ethnic, economic, etc... group, but rather can be found in all groups, thus making it difficult to decipher any behavioral similarities between its members. However, as a homosexual, I have noticed several unifying factors amongst groups of homosexuals that transcend racial, ethnic, economic, etc... groups. In an attempt to determine whether or not a separate set of norms exist within this group, this specific query into homosexual behaviors and norms deals with the ‘hooking up’ behaviors of non-heterosexual students to see if there is in fact a difference between their behaviors and the behaviors of the larger heterosexual population in the sample.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question

Does sexual orientation affect how a student surveyed would have experienced a ‘hook up’ and the type of “hook up” that occurred?



Hypotheses

Based on the current literature two hypotheses can be given:

1. If “hooking up” behavior is perceived to happen more than it actually does, and it is determined by peer norms, then the students surveyed, because of their shared environment, would have the same likelihood of experiencing a “hook up” and the types of “hook up” regardless of sexual orientation.
2. If “hooking up” behavior is influenced by the media and a person’s degree of sexual liberalness, then homosexual/bisexual students will be more likely than heterosexual students to have experienced a “hook up” because of the highly sexual media portrayal of homosexuality/bisexuality and because of the sexual liberalness that is associated with being homosexual/bisexual.

Methodology and Limitations

Methods

- A Pen – and – pencil survey was administered to Concord University students.
- In order to gather a sufficient number of homosexual/bisexual participants, the survey was also administered to the Concord University Gay, Straight Alliance.
- Gay/Lesbian and Bisexual categories were combined into one group in the analysis.
- A crosstab for each question was generated for comparison.

Limitations

- This was not a random sample.
- Approximately only 295 of the 310 surveyed responded to the questions under study.
- Only 9.2% of the students surveyed that answered these questions identified as non-heterosexual, therefore, tests of statistical significance were not performed.

Results

•All of the crosstabs excluding the crosstab dealing with have you ever had a making out “hook up” showed no conclusive differences.

Have you ever had a making out hookup?			
	Sexual Orientation		Total
	Heterosexual	Gay/Bisexual	
Have you ever had a making out hookup?			
No	159	11	150
Yes	51.7%	40.7%	50.7%
	130	16	146
	48.3%	59.3%	49.3%
Total	269	27	296
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Have you ever had an oral sex hookup?			
	Sexual Orientation		Total
	Heterosexual	Gay/Bisexual	
Have you ever had an oral sex hookup?			
No	179	13	192
Yes	67.0%	48.1%	65.3%
	88	14	102
	33.0%	51.9%	34.7%
Total	267	27	294
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Have you ever had a sexual intercourse hookup?			
	Sexual Orientation		Total
	Heterosexual	Gay/Bisexual	
Have you ever had a sexual intercourse hookup?			
No	159	11	160
Yes	70.5%	40.7%	67.8%
	79	16	95
	29.5%	59.3%	32.2%
Total	238	27	265
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Have you ever had a friends with benefits hookup?			
	Sexual Orientation		Total
	Heterosexual	Gay/Bisexual	
Have you ever had a friends with benefits hookup?			
No	153	9	162
Yes	71.7%	34.6%	68.6%
	76	17	93
	28.3%	65.4%	31.5%
Total	229	26	255
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Conclusions

- The results do indicate that the type of “hook up” that the student experienced can be determined based on his or her sexual orientation.
- Hypothesis 1 was not supported due to the differences between groups, especially in the final three questions.
- Hypothesis 2 is was supported based on the disparity in answers between both groups.
- There is no set of perceived norms on hooking up behavior that is shared by the students surveyed that envelops both heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals.
- Sexual liberalness could be a determining factor that differentiates hetero’s from non- heterosexuals due to the “explicitness” of actions taken.
- Media , too, could possibly influence these behaviors amongst non-heterosexuals

Discussion

The research would seem to imply that there does exist a separate set of sexual norms governing the “hooking up” behaviors of heterosexual and homosexual/bisexual students. This could be due to several factors:

- Heterosexual and homosexual/bisexual students are more likely to look to members of their own groups to form their sexual norms concerning “hook ups.”
- Because of the sexual liberalness of the homosexual/bisexual culture, this group of students is more likely to experience a more “intense hook up.”
- The over sexualized media portrayal of homosexuals/bisexuals could reinforce sexual liberalness within this group.

Also, it is important to note that traditional dating as defined by the heterosexual culture is relatively new to the homosexual/bisexual culture due to the strict societal and legal restrictions placed on this behavior in the past. Furthermore, it could be argued that the shift from “traditional dating” to “hooking up” in the heterosexual community reflects a transition to the adoption of more liberal sexual norms that have already been present within the homosexual/bisexual communities.