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Development and Validation of the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index

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Although researchers have examined the predictors and outcomes of the behavioral aspect of “hooking up,” typically defined as casual, commitment-free sexual encounters, research has not yet examined the extent to which young people endorse the culture associated with hooking up. Based on the argument that there is a set of understood rules and assumptions associated with hooking up, this article describes the development of an instrument to measure college students’ endorsement of the hookup culture. Results from two studies found that five factors represent endorsement of the hookup culture: (a) a belief that hooking up is harmless and best without emotional commitment, (b) a belief that hooking up is fun, (c) a belief that hooking up will enhance one’s status in one’s peer group, (d) a belief that hooking up allows one to assert control over one’s sexuality, and (e) a belief that hooking up is a reflection of one’s sexual freedom. The index also had acceptable internal reliability, and performed well on the tests of construct validity. Taken together, the results suggest that the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index is suitable for use by researchers interested in the social phenomenon of hooking up.

A recent change in the sexual and romantic behavior of late adolescents and emerging adults is the movement away from a culture of dating, courting, or “going steady” toward a culture of casual, commitment-free, and relationally ambiguous sexual encounters called “hookups.” Recent research has estimated that between 60% and 85% of college men and 50% and 85% of college women have experienced hookups (Grello, Welsh, Harper, & Dickson, 2003; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Puentes, Knox, & Zusman, 2008).

In this study, we argue that hooking up constitutes a culture on college campuses. Studies that have investigated young people’s experience with hooking up reveal that there are agreed-on rules and assumptions about hooking up among college students. If we take the view of culture as a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices (Samovar & Porter, 2001), then hooking up is not only a behavior, it is a culture. Thus, this study developed an instrument that measures college students’ endorsement of the hookup culture. The instrument reflects participants’ beliefs about their participation in hooking up, and their agreement with the rules associated with it.

As we conceptualize it, the endorsement of the hookup culture reflects agreement with the basic rules and norms of the culture, whether or not these rules and norms match their personal experience. For example, although one might endorse the basic premise that hooking up is fun and harmless, research has shown that hookups can bear negative emotional consequences, especially for women (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008). Still, social norms on college campuses reflect acceptance of hooking up (Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). Thus, we see the endorsement of the hookup culture as measuring participants’ perceptions and beliefs about hooking up, whether or not their perceptions are actually true.

Further, we anticipate that college students’ scores on the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index (EHCI) will be correlated with hooking up because participation in hooking up will likely occur if participants are in general agreement with the rules and assumptions of the culture. However, we would also anticipate that the endorsement of the culture will not be perfectly correlated with the hooking up experience. In some cases, participants might have hooked up in the past, but do not agree with the rules of it; in other cases, they might agree with the culture, but have not had the opportunity to hook up. Thus, the EHCI will improve our understanding of hooking up by providing a way...
of investigating an attitudinal component of the rules and assumptions of the hookup culture.

**Literature Review**

**Conceptualizing the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture**

Although definitions of hookups vary among the participants of the hookup culture, research on hooking up has generally followed a similar definition. The crucial component of the definition is the lack of expectations for a future commitment (e.g., Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Finc-ham, 2010). For this study, we used the definition provided by Stepp (2007) in her book, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both*. Although the definition comes from a popular press book, we used this definition of hooking up because it conveyed a casual, conversational tone that we hoped set the participants at ease while keeping the same crucial components of hooking up that is present in the hookup literature. Research suggests that using terminology to which young people relate is important because they hold widely divergent views on what behaviors are considered “sex” (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999).

Hooking up can consist entirely of one kiss or it can involve fondling, oral sex, anal sex, intercourse, or any combination of those things. It can happen only once with a partner, several times during one week, or over many months. Partners may know each other very well, only slightly, or not at all, even after they have hooked up regularly. A hookup often happens in a bedroom, although other places will do: dance floors, bars, bathrooms, auditoriums, or any deserted room. . . . Feelings are discouraged, and both partners share an understanding that either of them can walk away at any time. (Stepp, 2007, p. 24)

Like other definitions of hookups in the literature, the definition is inclusive enough to encompass a variety of sexual activities, ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse, and to encompass both typical hookups, which are typically short term and occur outside of a relationship, and “friends with benefits” relationships, which allow the possibility of long-term involvement still without relational commitment (Hughes, Morrison, & Asada, 2005).

Fundamental to the conceptualization of the endorsement of the hookup culture is the notion of culture. We view the hookup culture as one specific component of the larger party culture that exists on college campuses. For example, in a year-long ethnography of students living in an undergraduate residence hall, Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney (2006) described the party culture as a synergistic intersection of individual behaviors and expectations (e.g., a homogenous set of students with rather standard expectations about partying) and organizational policies and constraints (e.g., university and fraternity/sorority rules and procedures). Students in this system typically have a desire to participate in the hookup culture to feel a part of college life; however, they are often not allowed to host their own parties due to university rules, and must attend parties at other sites (houses or fraternities) where they are expected to submit to the rules of the culture. Further, participants share the attitude that hooking up is fun and an essential component to the college experience; thus, they are reluctant to criticize it, even if they are unhappy with the way that it makes them feel. According to the ethnographic study, hooking up is functional for young women in college because they derive status and self-esteem from securing attention from men. Similarly, for men in college, status is enhanced from hooking up with high-status women.

Another assumption of the hookup culture is the expectation of alcohol use in party contexts in which hooking up is likely to occur (Feldman, Turner, & Araujo, 1999; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Maticka-Tyndale & Herold, 1999; Paul et al., 2000). Consuming alcohol makes hooking up more likely because of its disinhibiting effects (Owen et al., 2010; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009), but also alcohol intoxication is used as a justification for hookups, before and after they occur (Vander Ven & Beck, 2009).

Research on hooking up can be categorized into two major camps: (a) studies that have examined variables best conceived as predictors of hooking up, including the relationship and psychosocial factors that predict individuals’ tendency to engage in hookup behaviors (Grello et al., 2006; Herold, Maticka-Tyndale, & Mewhinney, 1998; Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2006; Paul et al., 2000); and (b) studies that examine the outcomes of hooking up, including their emotional and relational costs (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Esbaugh & Gute, 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Owen et al., 2010). Research on the predictors of hooking up has found a variety of antecedents, including personal standards with regard to the acceptability of casual sex, previous casual sex behaviors, environmental/situational expectations (i.e., hooking up is expected during Spring Break; Herold et al., 1998), love styles, and relationship status (Grello et al., 2006).

In terms of outcomes, research has also shown that hookup experiences can yield negative consequences. Participants often feel badly after hooking up; many have found that they often cannot remember what happened during the encounter (Lambert et al., 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). Also, many young people feel frustrated and disappointed to discover their own desire for a committed relationship with a hookup partner (Paul & Hayes, 2002), and Grello et al. (2006) found that hooking up predicted depressive symptoms among college women.
The emphasis in the existing literature has been on measuring hookup behaviors. For example, using a similar definition of hookups to the one that we use in this article (i.e., a casual sexual encounter where there is no expectation of commitment), studies have asked participants to indicate, either on a scale or in real numbers, how many hookups they have experienced during a specified time period (Owen et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000). Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) measured hookups as participants’ engaging in intercourse or oral sex with someone they had known for less than 24 hours or with someone once and only once, and Manning et al. (2006) operationalized hookups as the occurrence of sexual intercourse with any partner not identified as a girlfriend or boyfriend.

Beyond these behavioral measures, a smaller number of recent studies have taken an alternative approach in measuring the underlying emotional and attitudinal dimensions of hooking up. First, Owen et al. (2010) measured emotional reactions to hooking up, using an adjective checklist of positive emotions (e.g., desirable or pleased) and negative emotions (e.g., empty or confused). Second, Bradshaw et al. (2010) included one item on their survey that measured participants’ preferences for traditional dating over hooking up. The ECHI, in contrast, measures college students’ multidimensional reasons to endorse the hookup culture.

Taken together, the extant literature on hooking up implies that there are rules and assumptions that guide the hookup culture. Next, we explicate our operationalization of some key beliefs that comprised the EHCI.

### Operationalizing the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture

The existing hookup literature provided the starting point for our theorizing. We closely examined the qualitative literature that has examined the nature of the hookup culture. This literature includes studies based on focus groups, intensive interviews, and ethnographic methods (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bogle, 2008; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Epstein et al., 2009; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Hughes et al., 2005; Manning et al., 2006; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Stepp, 2007). We operationalized five indicators of the EHCI: (a) a belief that hooking up is a way to avoid emotional commitment; (b) a belief that hooking up is fun; (c) a belief that hooking up will enhance one’s status in one’s peer group; (d) a belief that hooking up allows one to assert power and control over one’s sexuality; and (e) a belief that hooking up is a reflection of one’s sexual freedom. The benefit of examining multiple dimensions is that it allows for the possibility that participants might endorse some aspects of the culture more than others. For example, although the belief that hooking up enhances one’s status and the belief that hooking up is fun are not mutually exclusive—a participant might be more accepting of one of these beliefs over the other.

### Commitment

The first indicator was the belief that hooking up is an appropriate alternative to a more serious emotional commitment with a steady partner. This belief is related to the idea that college and emerging adulthood should not be focused on investing the emotional intimacy required for a committed romantic relationship; such an investment is better postponed until later in life. Research suggests that emerging adults consider establishing an intimate partnership with another to be quite low on their list of priorities (Arnett, 2002), and they frequently report too much commitment as the disadvantage of romantic relationships (Feiring, 1999).

### Fun

The second indicator of the EHCI was the belief that hooking up is a fun thing to experience during college. Hookups often provide sexual pleasure, and generally occur in party atmospheres that have all the makings of a collective erotic energy: alcohol, music, attractive people, and flirting (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Although there are a few negative repercussions, hookup participants report that they represent a small price to pay for all of the good ones (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2006; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009). Indeed, Armstrong et al. (2006) argued that finding fault with the hookup culture “potentially threatens meaningful identities and lifestyles” (p. 492); thus, participants avoid criticizing it.

### Status

The third predicted indicator of the EHCI was the belief that hooking up is a way to create and maintain status in one’s peer culture. Hooking up is so normalized on college campuses that those who do not participate in the culture can often feel alienated and ostracized (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009); thus, participation in the hookup culture is a way to generally accepted in college peer cultures (Lewis, Lee, Patrick, & Fossos, 2007; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold, & Mewhinney, 1998). Further, one’s status can be enhanced based on the desirability of one’s hookup partner (Armstrong et al., 2006). In particular, men derive status from hooking up with high-status women, and women derive status from getting attention from high-status men. Additionally, young people often share the tales of their hookups with their peers (Hughes et al., 2005; Paul & Hayes, 2002), suggesting that part of the appeal of hooking up is having stories to tell one’s friends that might elevate one’s status.
To derive our initial five factors, a more externally conceptualized, we developed between seven and 14 items to represent it. The initial index consisted of 51 testable items. The following research questions were posed:

**RQ1:** What is the factor structure of the EHCI?

**RQ2:** What is the overall reliability of the instrument and the reliability of any subscales that might be derived?

A central concern of the hookup literature is the issue of gender differences and, thus far, the literature has yielded mixed results. On the one hand, research has demonstrated that men, in general, are more comfortable with hooking up than women (Lambert et al., 2003), whereas participation in the hookup culture is predictive of shame and regret for women (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Paul & Hayes, 2002). On the other hand, recent research has demonstrated that, although women report more dissatisfaction with hooking up than men, there is no difference in men and women endorsing the rules and norms of hooking up (Kratzer & Aubrey, 2010). Additionally, Grello et al.’s (2006) investigation of the reactions to hooking up—particularly, the experience of regret—yielded few gender differences. Given the mixed nature of the reported findings, we deemed it important to investigate gender differences in the EHCl. We posed the following research question:

**RQ3:** Does the factor structure of the EHCl differ for men versus women?

**Method**

Participants. Participants in Study 1 were undergraduate students recruited from introductory communication classes at a large, Midwestern university. A total of 226 completed surveys were analyzed. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 28, with a mean age of 19.80 years (SD = 1.68). The sample was comprised of 25.7% (n = 58) freshmen, 44.2% (n = 100) sophomores, 16.8% (n = 38) juniors, and 13.3% (n = 30) seniors. The gender split was 46.7% male (n = 105) and 53.3% female (n = 120). In total, 80.1% (n = 181) reported their race as Caucasian, 8.9% (n = 20) as African American, 4.9% (n = 11) as Asian American, 2.7% (n = 6) as Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining 3.5% (n = 8) did not report their race. Additionally, 44.7% (n = 101) reported being involved in a romantic relationship, and 55.3% (n = 125) reported not being involved in a romantic relationship. Most participants (69.9%; n = 158) reported that they had engaged in at least one previous hookup, and 28.8% (n = 65) of the sample was “absolutely” open to hooking up in the future. Although we did not specifically ask participants to report their sexual orientation in Study 1 (we did in Study 2), 99 of the 100 people who were in a romantic relationship reported having an opposite-sex partner, thus implying a largely heterosexual sample.

**Development of the EHCl.** To derive our initial five categories, we closely examined the qualitative literature that has examined the nature of the hookup culture (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bogle, 2008; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Epstein et al., 2009; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Hughes et al., 2005; Manning et al., 2006; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Stepp, 2007). We took a Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss,
strongly agree

The 51-item EHCI. The final section included demographic questions.

Participants were recruited during their class sessions and invited to complete the online survey on their own time during a two-week period. An online survey was utilized because research has shown that research participants are more likely to report sensitive behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and drug use (Aquilino, Wright, & Supple, 2000; Gribble et al., 2000) via computer-assisted questionnaires than in face-to-face interviews or paper-and-pencil self-administered questionnaires. Participants were compensated with extra credit for their participation.

Protocols and measures used in this study were reviewed and approved by the institutional review board of the university. Participants provided consent via electronic signature immediately before starting the survey.

Data Analysis

First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done on the initial battery of 51 items. The goal was to reduce the items to a manageable number by retaining items that exhibited a .55 primary loading with no secondary loadings higher than .40. Then, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the final factor structure and to test whether the final model fit the data differently for male versus female participants.

Results

RQ1 addressed the factor structure of the EHCI. An EFA was performed using principal axis factoring and promax oblique rotation. We used an oblique rotation because we assumed that the factors would exhibit intercorrelations. Based on the criterion of eigenvalues over 1.0 (and in agreement with the inspection of the scree plot), our initial EFA results produced a nine-factor structure, which was too unwieldy for use. Thus, we sought to reduce the items by analyzing statistical properties (low inter-item correlations, low factor loadings, and substantial cross-loading). We went through two rounds of item reduction before arriving at a satisfactory five-factor solution that exhibited clean factor loadings (i.e., our criterion was a .55 primary loading with no secondary loadings higher than .40). The factor loadings are shown in Table 1.

The five-factor solution accounted for a combined 61.9% of the variance. Of the initial 51 items, 20 items remained for the EHCI, with four items representing each of the five factors. Our interpretation of the factors was similar to the five that we originally conceptualized, with the main difference relating to the first factor. Contrary to our original conceptualization, the category that represented participants’ belief that hooking up was a desirable substitute for a committed relationship ultimately reflected a more generalized casual sentiment that hooking up is not a serious issue. This factor represented the attitude that hooking up is harmless and should not be taken seriously. Items reflecting this belief were in the original conceptualization of the factor, but the items that specifically pertained to hooking up as a way of circumventing commitment fell out of this factor and did not constitute their own separate factor.

Four items constituted the next factor, fun, representing the attitude that hooking up is enjoyable (e.g., “I hook up to have a good time”). The next factor, which we labeled status, was comprised of four items tapping the sentiment that hooking up is good for one’s reputation (e.g., “Hooking up would improve my status among my friends”). The next four items represented the control factor, which signified the power and control one feels during a hookup (e.g., “I feel powerful during a hookup”). The next factor was labeled sexual freedom,
Table 1.  Factor Loadings for the Five-Factor Solution of the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Harmless</th>
<th>Fun</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Sexual Freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is not a big deal.</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hookup is just a hookup.</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is harmless.</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is just for fun.</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I overlook some of the questionable parts of hooking up because it is fun.</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hook up to have a good time.</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like hooking up because it provides immediate gratification.</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is pleasurable.</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up would be a way for me to make a name for myself.</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would improve my reputation to hook up with someone who others find appealing.</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up would make me more popular.</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up would improve my status among my friends.</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can control what I want to happen during a hookup.</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I assert my needs during a hookup.</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel powerful during a hookup.</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is fun when I am in control.</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College is a good time to experiment with hooking up.</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College is a time to experience sex.</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up allows me to be sexually adventurous.</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooking up is a natural thing to do in college.</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in bold represent factor loadings.

and was comprised of four items representing the idea that hooking up provides participants with the opportunity to exercise sexual freedom (e.g., “College is a time to experiment with hooking up”).

The final 20-item scale was tested for goodness of fit using the AMOS software package (Armonk, NY: IBM Corporation). The model is displayed in Figure 1. The fit of the five-factor, 20-item model was deemed adequate: χ²(314, N = 224) = 502.36, p < .001 (Chi-square/degree of freedom ratio = 1.81, comparative fit index [CFI] = .96, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .060). The loadings on each factor were quite high, ranging from .59 to .93. Further, the intercorrelations between factors were also quite high, ranging from .34 to .78. This suggests that the EHCI can be combined to represent an overall measure of the endorsement of the hookup culture, or it can be treated as subscales representing different factors of the construct.

In response to RQ2, the scale’s overall reliability was .91. The internal consistency of the subscales was also adequate (harmless, α = .88; fun, α = .84; status, α = .85; control, α = .80; and sexual freedom, α = .85).

To answer RQ3, we investigated whether the CFA varied between male and female participants. We ran multiple-group analyses as outlined by Byrne (2001). First, we split the CFA baseline model into two groups, one for male participants and one for female participants, letting AMOS estimate all parameters separately for male and female participants. The fit of that model was satisfactory: χ²(316, Male N = 104, Female N = 124) = 505.62, p < .001 (CMIN/DF = 1.60, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .050). Next, we compared the fit of that model to a constrained model in which we set all parameters to be invariant between males and females: χ²(339, N = 224) = 536.46, p < .001 (CMIN/DF = 1.59, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .050). According to Byrne, if the fit of the unconstrained model is significantly better than that of the constrained model (as measured by a chi-square difference test), we can conclude that the models were not equivalent across separate groups. In this case, a chi-square difference test suggested that the CFA did not vary between men and women: χ²(23) = 30.84, p = .12. Thus, the fit of the observed CFA model did not significantly differ between men and women.

**Brief Discussion**

The results of Study 1 provide evidence for the factor structure of the EHCI, and suggest that the resultant 20 items measure the concept for which it was designed. The overall internal consistency of the index, as well as the consistency of the subscales, was also satisfactory.

The main difference between our observed model and our hypothesized model was that we initially conceptualized that one dimension of the EHCI would be viewing hookups as a way of avoiding emotional commitment with a relational partner. Contrary to our hypothesis, none of the anti-commitment items (e.g., “I would rather hook up than be emotionally committed to someone”) comprised an interpretable factor. The factor that emerged instead reflected hooking up as harmless, as “not a big deal.” Our interpretation of this finding is that it is not that college students endorsed the hookup culture because it offers a way of avoiding commitment but, rather, hooking up, when it does happen, just does not have any influence on commitment. It is notable that
nearly one-half of the sample (44.4%; n = 100) reported being in a current romantic relationship, and those who were in a romantic relationship reported a high degree of happiness in the relationship (M = 5.82, SD = 1.70, on a seven-point scale). Thus, a substantial proportion of the individuals in the study were involved in a romantic relationship already; thus, it makes sense that they did not want to avoid commitment.

The results did not reveal gender differences in the factor structure of the EHCI. This finding contradicts previous research that has shown that women suffer more emotional tolls from hooking up than men (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Owen et al., 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002). However, in light of the research indicating that hooking up is ubiquitous on traditional college campuses (Lambert et al., 2003; Owen et al., 2010), the results from this study imply that men and women do not differ in their support of hookup culture, even though it might be more emotionally beneficial for men than for women. Providing further support for this idea, research has also suggested that men and women agree on basic tenets of hooking up, such as the short-term nature of hookup relationships (Grello et al., 2006) and the expectations for potential hookup partners (Kratzer & Aubrey, 2010). Thus, in line with these recent studies, our results similarly suggest that men and women do not differ in the beliefs and expectations that comprise their endorsement of the hookup culture.

Study 2: Replication and Validation of the EHCI

One purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the factor structure of the EHCI with an independent sample. The first hypothesis related to the replication of the factor structure in Study 1:

H1: The EHCI will fit a five-factor structure: harmlessness, fun, control, status, and sexual freedom.

Another major purpose of Study 2 was to establish construct validity of the EHCI by examining the correlations between the EHCI and a variety of scales that measure theoretically related concepts. Thus, the next set of hypotheses tested our expectation about the similarity of EHCI to other established measures of sexual attitudes (H2), sexual self-perceptions (H3 and H4), sexual behaviors (H5a and H5b), and related risk behaviors (H6).

We predicted that EHCI would be correlated with sexually permissive attitudes, which we measured in three ways: (a) a general liberal attitude toward sexuality-related behaviors and policies (e.g., premarital sex, masturbation, contraception, and pornography), (b) sociosexual orientation, and (c) recreational attitudes about sexuality and dating:

H2: Liberal attitudes about sexuality, sociosexual orientation, and recreational attitudes about sexuality and dating will be positively associated with the EHCI and its subscales.
Similarly, we examined the relationships between the EHCI and individuals’ feelings about their own sexuality: arousability and openness to sexual experiences. Our rationale was that individuals who take an open, free, and confident orientation toward their sexuality might be more likely to endorse hooking up and the aspects of its culture. People who possess an ability to become easily aroused and are open to sexual experiences might find the idea of engaging in hookups as fun and exciting:

H3: Arousability and openness to sexual experience will be positively associated with the EHCI and its subscales.

In contrast, people who believe that sex is best shared between people in an intimate and committed relationship are not as likely to endorse the hookup culture. This is because they are not likely to see sex as a recreational activity, but one that strengthens relational bonds:

H4: A relational orientation toward sexuality will be negatively associated with the EHCI and its subscales.

Next, we examined the relationships between the EHCI and participants’ self-reported behaviors regarding hooking up (i.e., openness to hooking up in the future and estimates of number of hookup partners) and sex in general (i.e., number of sexual partners in the last calendar year and number of one-night stands). We speculated that EHCI would be correlated with more experience in hooking up because we assumed that the more accepting of the rules and norms of the hookup culture, the more likely that individuals would participate in hooking up:

H5a: Experience with hooking up and openness to hooking up will be correlated with EHCI and its subscales.

H5b: Sexual experience will be positively correlated with EHCI and its subscales.

Because research has demonstrated that alcohol use is associated with hooking up (Feldman et al., 1999; Grello et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2003; Maticka-Tyndale & Herold, 1998; Owen et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009), we also speculated that EHCI would be correlated with alcohol use:

H6: Alcohol use will be correlated with EHCI and its subscales.

Method

Participants. Like participants in Study 1, participants in Study 2 were students recruited from introductory communication classes at a large, Midwestern university. The study yielded 423 participants. A total number of 404 completed surveys were analyzed. The average age of the participants was 20.00 years ($SD = 1.77$). One hundred sixty-nine participants reported their sex as male (41.8%), and 58.2% reported their sex as female ($n = 235$). The sample was comprised of 23.9% ($n = 96$) freshmen, 41.8% ($n = 168$) sophomores, 25.6% ($n = 103$) juniors, and 8.7% ($n = 35$) seniors. The participants predominately identified as White/Caucasian (83.1%; $n = 334$); 7.9% ($n = 32$) identified as African American, 4.2% ($n = 17$) as Asian American, 1.7% ($n = 7$) as Hispanic/Latino, and 3.0% ($n = 12$) identified with the “other” category. The majority of the sample reported being heterosexual, (97.5%; $n = 392$), with 1.7% ($n = 7$) as homosexual, and the remaining 0.7% ($n = 3$) as bisexual. The sample was nearly evenly split on relationship status; 51.7% ($n = 209$) of the sample reported being involved in a romantic relationship, and the remaining 48.3% ($n = 195$) reported not being involved in a romantic relationship. Most participants (79.7%; $n = 322$) reported that they had engaged in at least one hookup, and 35.4% ($n = 143$) of the sample was “absolutely” open to hooking up in the future.

Survey Instrument and Procedure

The survey instrument was comprised of five sections. First, participants answered questions related to their current relationship status and their previous experience with hookups. The second section was the 20-item EHCI. The third section included the previously established scales of sexual attitudes. The fourth section assessed participants’ behaviors, including their sexual experience and their alcohol consumption. The fifth section contained measures of participants’ demographic characteristics.

Participants were recruited during their class sessions, and invited to complete the online survey on their own time during a two-week period. Participants were offered extra credit for their participation. As in Study 1, an online survey was utilized. All aspects of this study were approved by the university’s institutional review board.

Measures

Endorsement of hookup culture. Participants completed the 20-item EHCI reported in Study 1. The reliability of each subscale was again adequate: harmless, $\alpha = .84$; fun, $\alpha = .88$; status, $\alpha = .90$; control, $\alpha = .79$; and sexual freedom, $\alpha = .86$. The alpha for the overall EHCI scale was .91.

Attitudes toward sexuality scale. To measure liberal sexual attitudes toward such topics as contraception, pornography, nudity, and premarital sexual intercourse,
we used Fisher and Hall’s (1988) 13-item Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale. Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale their agreement with 13 statements (e.g., “Information and advice about contraception should be given to an individual who intends to have intercourse”). Higher scores on the scale reflected more liberal attitudes. The scale was adequately reliable ($\alpha = .78$).

**Sociosexual orientation inventory.** Simpson and Gangestad’s (1991) measure of sociosexual orientation was included to measure participants’ acceptance of sex without romantic attachments. Participants rated their agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale with three statements: “Sex without love is OK,” “I can imagine myself enjoying casual sex with different partners,” and “I would have to be emotionally attached to someone before I could feel comfortable having sex with him or her.” Internal consistency was adequate ($\alpha = .85$).

**Attitudes about dating and relationships.** Ward and Rivadeneyra’s (1999) 33-item Attitudes About Dating and Relationships Scale measured both a recreational orientation toward dating and relationships (e.g., “You don’t need a relationship to have good sex; all you need are two people who are attracted to each other”), as well as a relational orientation (e.g., “Sex is best when the partners are in a loving and committed relationship”). The subscales for both demonstrated adequate internal consistency (recreational, $\alpha = .81$; relational, $\alpha = .84$).

**Arousalability and openness to sexual experiences.** To measure arousalability and openness to sexual experiences, we used two subscales of the Sexual Self-Concept Scale (Reynolds, 1997). The arousalability subscale was comprised of five items (e.g., “I become sexually aroused very easily”). Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .76. The openness to sexual experiences subscale was comprised of four items (e.g., “I am, or would be, open to new and different sexual experiences”). Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .73.

**Hooking up experiences.** Given the definition of a hookup adapted from Stepp (2007), participants were asked to report whether they had ever hooked up (yes or no). If participants indicated that they had experienced a hookup, they reported how many hookups they had ever experienced on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (1–2 times), 2 (3–10 times), 3 (11–20 times), 4 (21–30 times), to 5 (more than 30 times). Finally, participants rated how open they were to hooking up in the future on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (absolutely not), 2 (probably not), 3 (maybe), to 4 (absolutely).

**Sexual experience.** To measure sexual experience, we included two items on the questionnaire. First, participants reported how many sexual partners they had had in the past calendar year. Second, participants reported how many people they had “had sex on one and only one occasion.” Close-ended response options for both variables ranged from “zero” to “more than 15.” Both variables demonstrated positive skewness; thus, both variables were transformed using a logarithm transformation.

**Alcohol use.** To measure alcohol use, participants were asked to answer the following question: “Of the past 30 days, how many days have you consumed three or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage in a single day?” Response options ranged from “zero” to “30.”

**Results**

**Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive statistics of the EHCI and its subscales and all variables used to demonstrate construct validity of the EHCI are provided in Table 2. On a scale from 1 to 5, participants reported a level of agreement with the composite EHCI at just below the midpoint. Of the five subscales, there was the most agreement with the EHCI–fun subscale, followed by the EHCI–harmless subscale. The ECHI–status subscale yielded the least agreement, significantly less than the scale midpoint, $t(409) = 27.49$, $p < .001$.

On an ordinal five-point scale ranging from 1 (1–2 times) to 5 (more than 30 times), participants reported a mean of 2.30 on the number of hookup experiences, and they were just above the midpoint on openness to hooking up in the future. Participants reported an average of almost three sexual partners in the last year and an average of 1.53 one-night stands. Finally, participants reported having at least three drinks in a single day, on a little over six days of the previous 30 days prior to data collection.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**H1.** The first hypothesis posited that the factor structure from Study 1 would be replicated. All diagnostics fell within appropriate parameters: $\chi^2(314, N = 404) = 508.81$, $p < .001$ (CMIN/DF = 3.04, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .060). The standardized path loadings did not substantively differ from the model presented in Figure 1. We interpreted this as evidence of a successful replication of the measurement model from Study 1.

**H2.** The second hypothesis predicted that three variables—liberal attitudes toward sexuality, sociosexual orientation, and recreational attitudes about dating
and relationships—would be positively associated with the EHCI and its subscales. As shown in Table 3, all correlations were positive and statistically significant, with one exception. The correlation between the status subscale of the EHCI and the Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale did not reach statistical significance. However, in every other case, the results supported H2, with Pearson’s rs ranging from .26 to .68.

H3. For the third hypothesis, we posited that arousability and openness to sexual experience would be positively associated with the EHCI and its subscales. According to Table 3, the third hypothesis was generally supported, with the exception, again, being for the status subscale of the EHCI. In that case, the status subscale was not significantly correlated with either arousability or openness to sexual experience. In every other case, the EHCI and its subscales were positively correlated with arousability and openness to sexual experience, with Pearson’s rs ranging from .16 to .44.

H4. The fourth hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between the EHCI and a relational orientation toward dating and relationships. In support of H4, the composite EHCI was negatively correlated with relational orientation, but the r was small (−.10). Of the five subscales, two demonstrated a negative and statistically significant correlation. Both EHCI—status and EHCI—sexual freedom were negatively correlated with relational orientation. EHCI—fun, EHCI—harmless, and EHCI—control were not correlated with a relational orientation toward dating and relationships. Thus, H4 was only partially supported.

H5a and H5b. H5a posited that experience with hooking up and openness to hooking up would be positively correlated to EHCI and its subscales. The correlations provided support for H5a, with rs ranging from .28 to .64.

Similarly, H5b predicted a positive correlation between the EHCI and its subscales and sexual experience, measured as both number of sexual partners in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>EHCI (composite)</th>
<th>EHCI—fun</th>
<th>EHCI—harmless</th>
<th>EHCI—status</th>
<th>EHCI—control</th>
<th>EHCI—sexual freedom</th>
<th>Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale</th>
<th>Sociosexual Orientation Inventory</th>
<th>Recreational attitudes about dating and relationships</th>
<th>Arousability</th>
<th>Openness to sexual experiences</th>
<th>Relational attitudes about dating and relationships</th>
<th>Hookup experiences</th>
<th>Openness to hooking up</th>
<th>Number of sexual partners in the last year</th>
<th>Number of one-night stands</th>
<th>Alcohol use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>1.00–4.60</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.46–4.92</td>
<td>1.00–7.00</td>
<td>1.00–3.67</td>
<td>2.75–6.00</td>
<td>1.83–5.67</td>
<td>1.00–4.00</td>
<td>1.00–5.00</td>
<td>1.00–4.00</td>
<td>1.00–17.00</td>
<td>0.00–20.00</td>
<td>0.00–30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. EHCI is the composite measure of 20 items.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
the past calendar year and number of one-night stands. The correlations, presented in Table 3, support the hypothesis for both, with the Pearson’s rs ranging from .17 to .34.

**H6.** The sixth and final hypothesis posited a positive relationship between alcohol use and the EHCI and its subscales. As reported in Table 3, H6 was supported. The correlations suggested that alcohol use was positively correlated with the EHCI and its subscales, with rs ranging from .16 to .36.

**Brief Discussion**

Results of Study 2 lend further support to the factor structure of the EHCI. In sum, results of two CFAs conducted with two independent samples of college students at a large, Midwestern university suggest five categories of beliefs comprise endorsement of the hookup culture: (a) a belief that hooking up is harmless, (b) a belief that hooking up is fun, (c) a belief that hooking up will enhance one’s status, (d) a belief that hooking up allows one to assert control over one’s sexuality, and (e) a belief that hooking up is a reflection of one’s sexual freedom.

Additionally, the measure performed satisfactorily on tests of its construct validity. The appropriate correlations with related measures suggest that it does indeed measure what literature suggests it does. As expected, the EHCI and its five subscales were positively correlated with liberal sexual attitudes, operationalized as the Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale (with the exception of EHCI–status, which we discuss later), the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory, and the Recreational Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale (with the exception of the EHCI–status, which we discuss later), the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory, and the Recreational Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale. Thus, it appears that being more accepting and permissive about sexuality, dating, and relationships is related to an endorsement of the hookup culture. Study 2 also showed that those who considered themselves to be sexually adventurous and highly arousable endorsed the hookup culture presumably because they might see it as fun and exciting.

Additionally, people who had hookup experiences and who have had relatively more sexual experiences scored higher on the EHCI. Still, we argue that the EHCI is conceptually and empirically related to hookup experiences, but they are not the same thing. To further illustrate our position on this point, as a post hoc analysis, we divided participants’ EHCI scores by a median split, and compared those who were high or low on the EHCI by experience with hookups (yes or no). Of the 404 participants in the sample, 33.2% (n = 134) fell into the category of having experienced a hookup, but had lower than the median scores on the EHCI. On the other hand, 4.0% (n = 16) fell into the other category of not having an experience with hooking up, but had higher than the median score on the EHCI.

Finally, in line with our expectations, the EHCI was positively correlated with alcohol use. Because participants in the hookup culture consistently report that alcohol consumption in party contexts in which hooking up is likely to occur is commonplace (Feldman et al., 1999; Grello et al., 2006; Maticka-Tyndale & Herold, 1998; Paul et al., 2000), this finding was expected.

Support for our conceptualization of the differences between status and control was also found in the correlations reported in Study 2—that is, we conceptualized the control subscale to reflect the idea that the hookup culture is worthy of endorsing because it allows participants to assert a sense of personal power and control (an internal reason for endorsement), whereas the status factor reflected a focus on others’ perceptions as a reason for endorsement of the hookup culture. In line with this thinking, we would expect that the status subscale would be more strongly correlated with the recreational attitudes about dating and sexuality than the control subscale, and this was supported—that is, the status subscale was more highly correlated with the attitude that dating is just a game than the control subscale. At the same time, we would expect that the control subscale would exhibit stronger correlations with the pleasure-related variables such as arousability and openness to sexual experience than the status variables and this, too, was supported by the results in Study 2.

Two groups of findings, however, did not fall in line with our expectations. First, the status subscale of the EHCI did not exhibit correlations with three of the predicted variables: Attitudes Toward Sexuality Scale, arousability, and openness to sexual experience. It appears, then, that people who have a somewhat liberal sexual identity might endorse the hookup culture because it is fun and harmless, but not because it increases their status. Instead, for these individuals, hooking up might be seen as desirable because it allows them to experience pleasure. Thus, it makes sense that the status subscale is not related to these variables because it assumes that sexuality is a way to raise one’s status among others, whereas these individuals are more focused on their own pleasure.

Second, to demonstrate discriminant validity, we expected to see negative correlations between the EHCI and a relational orientation toward dating and relationships. However, the results revealed that three of the EHCI subscales—EHCI–fun, EHCI–harmless, and EHCI–control—were not significantly correlated with a relational orientation toward dating and relationships. (As predicted, however, EHCI–status and EHCI–sexual freedom were negatively correlated with a relational orientation.) To understand these null findings, it is helpful to consider research that has demonstrated that, although some hookup culture participants outwardly acknowledge that hooking up is based on the lack of commitment between partners, some inwardly hope that hooking up will result in a committed relationship (Bogle, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Thus, this contradiction between hookup participants’ feelings about the hookup culture and their
own orientations toward dating and relationships might explain why statistically significant correlations with three of the five major facets of the endorsement of the hookup culture were not found.

On the whole, however, Study 2 provided evidence of the EHCI’s construct validity. For example, the composite measure of the EHCI was significantly correlated with all of the variables included in Study 2. The appropriate correlations with associated measures suggest that it does indeed measure what theory suggests it does.

General Discussion

These studies were undertaken to develop an instrument capable of measuring college students’ endorsement of the hookup culture. We believe that the findings contribute to a larger understanding of the hookup culture. Although the results demonstrate that hooking up was quite normative among our sample of undergraduates—nearly 70% in Study 1 and nearly 80% in Study 2 had experienced at least one hookup—the goal of this study was not to measure hooking up per se, but rather to measure an endorsement of the shared and understood rules, practices, and norms of hooking up. Data collected from two independent samples suggested that an endorsement of the hookup culture reflects agreement with five fundamental assumptions of hooking up: hooking up is fun, harmless, status-enhancing, a way to assert control and power, and a way to express sexual freedom.

A reliable and valid measure of the endorsement of the hookup culture can help researchers examine whether endorsement of the hookup culture predicts participation in hookup behaviors, as well as sexual risk-taking more generally. The EHCI can also illuminate other outcomes related to hooking up, including emotional and relational consequences. Further research may also identify different predictors of the endorsement of the hookup culture. For example, based on previous research, we might predict that such variables as age (Armstrong et al., 2006), campus social norms regarding sexuality and alcohol (Vander Ven & Beck, 2009), and psychological factors (Paul et al., 2000) would precede an endorsement of the hookup culture. Based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2009), we also speculate that participation in the party culture would provide an opportunity to model hookup attitudes and behaviors that would comprise endorsement of the hookup culture. Exposure to media messages that present hooking up in a positive light would also be a likely antecedent to the EHCI. In sum, the EHCI opens up avenues for researchers interested in the multilevel sources (e.g., interpersonal, institutional, and media) that socialize young people with regard to the hookup culture.

We reiterate that the EHCI is meant to reflect college students’ endorsement of the major rules and practices of hooking up, but it is not meant to reflect their actual experiences with hooking up. Indeed, it is possible that a person could have had negative experiences with hooking up, but he or she still endorses the rules and practices of the hookup culture. Thus, it is important to keep in mind a possible disconnect between endorsing the culture and actually having positive experiences with hooking up, and this will need further exploration in future research. This possible disconnect seems especially important, as previous research has noted that hooking up is associated with some emotional and psychological risks, especially for women (e.g., Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008). Further, because hooking up often occurs in situations where condoms are not available or in which students’ judgment is impaired (Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009), the hookup culture lends itself to physical risks as well. One important risk is the prevalence of sexual assault and “party rapes” in the hookup culture (Armstrong et al., 2006). Due to recent interest in promoting primary prevention of sexual assaults on college campuses (American College Health Association, 2008), assessing the rules and practices of this cultural landscape is integral to interventions aimed at preventing sexual violence on college campuses.

The lack of gender differences in Study 1 also merits further exploration. Although perhaps non-intuitive, the absence of a gender difference in this regard does have some precedent in previous research. For example, in an ethnographic investigation of party culture at a large, Midwestern university, Armstrong et al. (2006) found that college students articulated a clear set of rules and assumptions regarding hooking up, in particular, and party culture, in general. Similarly, Herold et al. (1998) found that both men and women described a hookup script in remarkably similar ways, invoking the major tenets of the first-date script, but with the inclusion of alcohol, a shorter length of time the partners knew each other, and non-relational outcomes as different contextual features of hooking up in comparison to first dates. The current study contributes to this literature by adding that men and women seem to also agree on five major factors that we argue reflect an endorsement of the hookup culture.

This study is not without limitations. The EHCI was meant to measure participants’ endorsement of the rules and assumptions of the hookup culture, regardless of their personal experiences with hooking up. Still, it is likely that some of the items would be easier to assess if the participants did have some personal experiences with hooking up. Because the participants in these samples were enrolled at a large, public university, they were likely to have had enough knowledge and context of the hookup culture to have been able to assess their feelings about the culture even if they had never experienced a hookup. However, in the future, researchers who intend to use the EHCI with more diverse samples should consider adding the following statement in the instructions for the index: “If you have never personally experienced
a hookup, assess the statements based on what you know about hooking up.’’

Similarly, a limitation of this index is that two of the items explicitly refer to college (i.e., ‘‘Hooking up is a fun and natural thing to do in college,’’ and ‘‘College is a good time to experiment with hooking up’’). This limits the use of this scale to college campuses, even though hookups do occur in other environments. Thus, researchers interested in using the EHCI in other contexts might consider substituting the environment under investigation in the item (i.e., ‘‘Hooking up is a fun and natural thing to do in high school’’). Alternatively, they might omit the reference to college altogether (i.e., ‘‘Hooking up is a fun and natural thing to do,’’ and ‘‘Now is a good time to experiment with hooking up’’).

Other limitations concern the sample that we have utilized in these studies. First, although the studies used two independent convenience samples of college students, there are clear selection biases, as the sample was not obtained via random selection. Because it only included college students, we cannot draw inferences to young adults who do not attend college. Certainly, we would expect that the rules and norms of hooking up would differ for young adults who do not attend college and for teens not yet in college. For instance, the environment and climate of a traditional, four-year university (e.g., the Greek system or residential living) lends itself to the rules and assumptions that we have articulated here regarding the hookup culture. For teens and young adults not in college, the rules and assumptions of the hookup culture are likely to be less clearly defined or defined around different assumptions. Also, it is important to note that the data in these studies were collected from a particular type of college environment: a large, public university in the Midwest. It is possible that different results would emerge in different college contexts (i.e., private, liberal arts, and urban), as they would have different structural aspects (e.g., Greek system or student life) that would affect the hookup culture. Further, an important direction for future research on hooking up is an examination of the racial and ethnic variability in attitudes supporting the hookup culture. This study offered only limited variation on race; thus, it did not adequately address this question.

In the rather casual and uncommitted dating culture today, social norms on college campuses appear to accept hooking up. Thus far, research has primarily investigated behavioral aspects of hookups. Alternatively, the EHCI provides a reliable and valid way of measuring the endorsement of the hookup culture.

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