

## The Effect of Differential Susceptibility to Social Influence on Endorsement of College Hookup Culture

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**ABSTRACT.** College hookup culture is seen on nearly every college campus in the United States with many students partaking in the culture. Many college students feel pressured to hook up because they are misled by the belief that most of their peers are hooking up. For the present study, we examined the effects of a woman's extent of susceptibility to social influence, college year, and relationship status on her perceptions of college hookup culture. To investigate this topic, 115 female undergraduate participants were gathered from a single-sex college who identified either as an underlevel or upperlevel student and as being single or in a relationship. Then, all participants took an online survey where they completed measures to assess participants' susceptibility to social influence and perceptions about college hookup culture. Finally, participants were asked their relationship status, year in college, and degree of religiosity, the third of which was used as a covariate in analyses. Results found that participants with high susceptibility to social influence perceived hookup culture more favorably than students with low susceptibility. Furthermore, underlevel students did not perceive hookup culture differently from upperlevel students. Finally, it was found that participants in a relationship did not perceive hookup culture differently than single participants. Implications for the study's results include the possible development of sexual educational programs to address perceptions about peers' rates of hooking up versus reality in order to alleviate social pressures that those highly susceptible to influence might feel.

**Keywords:** college hookup culture, hooking up, human sexuality, sexual behavior

College is a time in life when people further their sense of self, attitudes, and values through new experiences. College students are at a point in their lives where they begin to develop a sense of independence from their families and explore new experiences, identities, and freedoms (Arnett, 2000). This exploration can range from creating friendships and living with roommates to experimenting with new sexual

behaviors. Since the 1960s, as a result of the Sexual Revolution, the Women's Movement, and popular media, there has been a cultural shift such that casual sexual behavior outside of traditional, monogamous relationships has become more typical and socially acceptable (Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). At the college level, most men and women partake in casual sexual experiences within a so-called "hookup culture,"



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with between 60% to 80% of North American college students having had a hookup experience (Garcia et al., 2012). Furthermore, one in four college students will hook up more than 10 times during college (England et al., 2008). College hookup culture is found on nearly every U.S. college campus where students may often have a desire to take part in hookup culture to fit in with college life (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Because “hooking up” can have ambiguous interpretations, for the purposes of this study, we are using Stepp’s (2007) definition that:

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 well over many months. Partners may know each other very well, only slightly, or not at all, even after they have hooked up...Feelings are discouraged, and both partners share an understanding that either of them can walk away at any time. (p. 24)

Hookup culture, therefore, can be defined as a social environment in which hooking up occurs such that there are agreed-upon rules, assumptions, and practices that (a) establish that sexual encounters (hookups) are free from emotional and relationship commitment, (b) the partners do not need to know each other in order to hookup, and (c) the sexual encounters between hookup partners can occur a single time or multiple times with the assumption that either partner can leave at any point (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). In this way, hookup culture is the overarching social environment where the physical act of hooking up takes place.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the attitudes women have about hookup culture and how these attitudes may be influenced. Specifically, this study examined how college women’s endorsement of hookup culture, or to what extent women agree with the basic rules and norms of this culture, changes with different social factors (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Although endorsement of hookup culture is not meant to assess actual participant hookup experience, it reflects opinions about hookup culture that may or may not be based on personal experience. Nevertheless, endorsement of hookup culture measures college-aged women’s multidimensional reasons for endorsing, or supporting, college hookup culture and its shared and understood rules, practices, and norms of

hooking up (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). These reasons may include that hooking up (a) is harmless, (b) is fun, (c) enhances one’s social status, (d) allows one to assert control over one’s sexuality, and (e) is a reflection of one’s sexual freedom (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Although women may support college hookup culture for a multitude of reasons, a woman may be more accepting of one reason over another (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Furthermore, even if a woman has had negative experiences with hooking up, it is possible that she still endorses hookup culture, because endorsement is not a direct reflection of one’s sexual experiences. By this same logic, if a woman has not had any experience in hooking up, she may still be able to evaluate hookup culture because of its large presence on college campuses (Aubrey & Smith, 2013).

Studying these perceptions about hookup culture has implications for women’s mental and physical health because perceptions can ultimately influence hookup behavior (Garcia et al., 2012). For instance, there are many positive and negative consequences of engaging in hooking up. Some positive aspects of hooking up include sexual pleasure, feelings of closeness, and mutual comfort (Armstrong et al., 2009). Negative consequences may include contracting STIs, reinforcing sexism, and developing feelings of shame or regret that can lead to depression. In particular, contraction of STIs is a concern for young women engaging in hookup culture because only 36.8% of sexually active college women use condoms for protection (American College Health Association, 2009). According to Weinstock et al. (2004), nearly half of new STI infections are contracted by young people (ages 15 to 24). As for the negative consequence of developing feelings of shame and regret, in a survey conducted by Herold and Mewhinney (1993), 72% of college-aged women agreed with the statement “I feel guilty or would feel guilty about having sexual intercourse with someone I had just met.” Analyzing how women’s perceptions of hookup culture change with different social factors can lead to differences in mental and physical outcomes by developing educational programs aimed for those who possess those social factors.

By studying the characteristics of those most likely to endorse hookup culture, intervention programs can be created with these characteristics in mind in order to reduce the physical and emotional risks associated with partaking in hooking up. Specifically, these programs can reduce the risks associated with hookup culture by providing a

safe space for college women to learn about healthy relationship qualities, sexual communication, safer sex practices, self-esteem and identity building, and other important issues. When women learn how to communicate their sexual and emotional wants and needs in a healthier way, they can reduce any potential conflict that may be associated with hooking up. Moreover, because many college students feel pressured to hook up because they are misled by the belief that most of their peers are hooking up, these programs could help alleviate the social pressure women may feel, so that they may be better able to make decisions about their sexual experiences based more on their own desire and not to just fit in.

### Women's Perspectives of Hookup Culture

In evolutionary terms, human sexual hookups are interpreted as a "fitness-enhancing short-term mating strategy" because it maximizes the number of mates and thus maximizes reproductive output (Buss, 1998; Garcia et al., 2012, p. 165). In accordance with this view, men will try to mate with as many partners as possible, consent to sex quickly, and not commit to long-term partners in order to maximize reproductive output (Buss, 1998; Garcia et al., 2012). As for women in this context, they are expected to commit to their mate long-term in order to obtain the maximum amount of resources for their offspring (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Garcia et al., 2012). These gender differences of sexual behaviors and attitudes can lead to differences in sexual frequencies. Specifically, the differences in evolutionary backgrounds of men and women may lead men to be more sexually permissive and women to be more sexually restrictive (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992). Therefore, there are evolutionary differences between men and women that ultimately may influence sexual behaviors and attitudes between these two genders.

Women may engage in hooking up for several reasons. According to Fielder and Carey (2010), women are motivated to hook up for the following reasons: (a) 80% feel sexual desire, (b) 58% have a spontaneous urge, (c) 56% feel attracted to their partners, (d) 51% are intoxicated, (e) 33% have a willing partner, and (f) 29% want to feel attractive or desirable. In addition, Owen et al. (2011) found that the strongest predictor of women's hookup behavior is having a previous hookup. In other words, once a woman engages in a hookup, she is more likely to engage in another, and for the women who have penetrative sex during a hookup,

they are 600% more likely to do this again over the course of a semester (Owen et al., 2011). Another reason why women may feel a desire to partake in hookup culture is so that they can experience and fit in with college life. Furthermore, college women hook up to derive status and self-esteem from obtaining men's attention (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Because hookup culture is so ubiquitous on college campuses, college students who criticize it often feel alienated and ostracized, thus many go along and accept hookup culture to avoid this (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). One final reason college women choose to hook up is that they hope a hookup with a partner will turn into a committed relationship. According to Owen and Fincham (2011), 65% of women hoped that their hookup would become a committed relationship. Alternatively, only 45% of men wished for the same, that their hookup encounter would lead to a monogamous relationship (Owen & Fincham, 2011). Furthermore, most women (51%) who hoped that their hookup would lead to a committed relationship reported actually trying to discuss this possibility with their hookup partner (Owen & Fincham, 2011). On the other hand, many college-aged women consider committing to a partner to be a low priority for them because relationships are too much commitment and interfere with their career goals (Arnett, 2002).

Because women choose to hook up in college for a multitude of reasons, there exists a need to study how these factors influence a women's endorsement of hookup culture. No data currently exists measuring college-aged women's perceptions of hookup culture and to what extent women support or do not support this culture. Therefore, the present study aimed to dive deeper into the social factors that changes these attitudes toward college hookup culture.

### Susceptibility to Social Influence

The perceptions of other college students' hookup behaviors may influence a college student's own hookup behavior. People in a culture often follow a culture's social norms and expectations in order to fit in and be accepted within that culture (Kassarjian, 1962). However, people individually differ to what degree they conform to a culture's norms and beliefs such that for some people, their behavior depends almost exclusively on the expectations and influences of others within their culture, and for others, their behavior is guided by their own values and beliefs and not as much on the opinions of others (Kassarjian, 1962). In this way, people who

have different degrees of susceptibility to social influence would tend to behave differently in various aspects of life (Kassarjian, 1962). Susceptibility to social influence extends into numerous areas of psychology, and for this reason a general definition can be given: "Susceptibility to social influence can be understood as one's tendency to change attitudes, intentions, communication, and behavior in response to others' activities" (Stockli & Hofer, 2020), p. 1). A woman's degree of susceptibility to social influence (SSI), for the purpose of this study, is categorized into four different levels to which a woman would fall into a single category: (1) high SSI, (2) medium-high SSI, (3) medium-low SSI, and (4) low SSI. College women may have varying degrees of SSI when it comes to hookup culture such that those with a lower degree of susceptibility would not feel as socially pressured to hook up relative to other women with a higher degree of susceptibility. Conversely, those with a higher degree of susceptibility may feel more socially pressured to hook up relative to other women with a lower degree of susceptibility. Within the context of college hookup culture, a common motivation to partake in hooking up is to go along with the culture's norm in order to fit in even if there exists some hesitance on the individual's part (Kooyman et al., 2011). Therefore, college students may have varying degrees of SSI pertaining to hookup culture such that those with a lower degree of SSI would not feel as socially pressured to hook up while those with a higher degree of SSI may feel more socially pressured to hook up.

A disconnect exists between perceptions of hooking up and the actual prevalence of hooking up on college campuses. In a study conducted by the American College Health Association in 2008, 94.6% of college students perceived that the average student had had vaginal sex one or more times in the past year whereas actually 76.3% of the surveyed students reported having had zero to one sexual partner in the past year. In this way, women who are highly susceptible to social influence may feel pressured hook up in order to "keep up" with their peers and be accepted. Therefore, a woman's degree of SSI should be analyzed to see if it influences her perceptions about college hookup culture.

#### **College Year**

A woman's year in college may play a role in her perception of college hookup culture. Among women in their first semester of college, 60% have

had lifetime experience with oral, vaginal, or anal sex hookups (Fielder & Carey, 2010). Often, college is the first time when a woman may become fully immersed in hookup culture and therefore be behind on the "learning curve" of the norms of hookup culture (Heldman & Wade, 2010). As a result, she may perceive that she is "behind" her peers in regard to her sexual experiences (Heldman & Wade, 2010). First year female college students tend to "go further," or engage in more intense types of sexual contact, than they otherwise might in a hookup because they hope it will lead to a relationship or do not know how to say no to a partner (Heldman & Wade, 2010). By the time women are in their second year of college, Heldman and Wade (2010) suggest that students' sexual patterns shift in such a way that they have figured out the social norms and expectations of hookup culture. Because sexual behaviors and attitudes may shift throughout different years of college, it is important to look at how a woman's year in college may affect her perception of hookup culture.

#### **Relationship Status**

The relationship status of a female college student may also influence how she perceives college hookup culture and to what extent she endorses it. In a study analyzing endorsement of hookup culture carried out by Aubrey and Smith (2013), nearly half of their college student sample reported being in a committed, romantic relationship at the time of the survey. As a result of participant relationship status, the researchers believed these participants endorsed hookup culture not because it offered a way of avoiding commitment, but rather that hooking up did not have an influence on commitment (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). In other words, because these participants were in romantic relationships already, the researchers believed that participants did not want to avoid commitment and endorsed hookup culture for a different reason other than lack of commitment that hookups offer (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Garcia and colleagues (2012) found that 63% of college-aged men and 83% of college-aged women preferred, at the time of the study, a traditional romantic relationship over an uncommitted sexual relationship, otherwise known as a "hookup." Furthermore, of 500 participants in another survey who all had experiences with hookups, 65% of women and 45% of men reported that they wished their hookup encounter would turn into a committed relationship, and 51% of women and 42% of men reported trying to discuss

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starting a committed relationship with their hookup partner (Garcia et al., 2012). In this way, many single individuals who engage in hookups do so in an effort to try to initiate a romantic relationship. Therefore, a college student's relationship status should be considered when studying her perceptions of college hookup culture.

### Religiosity

In addition to SSI, college year, and relationship status, religiosity, or the extent to which one identifies with and practices a religion, may influence how a woman perceives hookup culture. All major religious traditions have certain sexual restrictions that are preached to their followers with particular emphasis that sex before marriage is a sin or wrongdoing (Bartkowski, 2001; Gay et al., 1996). Many of these religions, specifically Catholicism and Protestantism, expect followers to have "sexual purity" such that they do not engage in sexual activities of any kind prior to marriage (Bartkowski, 2001). These sexual activities include sexual touching, oral sex, vaginal sex, and anal sex.

The relationship between an adolescent's religion and their sexual behavior has been examined in previous studies. The internalized religious self-concept, or how religious people consider themselves to be, has been shown to influence sexual behavior in general as well as within the context of college hookup culture. For example, Bearman and Bruckner (2001) found that highly religious adolescents have fewer sexual partners and delay sexual relations of any kind (touch, oral, vaginal) until later age relative to their less religious peers. Conversely, those with lower religiosity have less sexual conservatism, and thus tend to accrue more sexual experiences as they develop (Aalsma et al., 2013). Because most major religions emphasize abstaining from premarital sexual activities, many women who have internalized religious norms about sexuality often feel inclined to avoid such behavior (Ellison & George, 1994). To engage in hooking up may bring feelings of regret, guilt, and shame for these deeply religious women because it would be violating their religious values (Ellison & George, 1994).

Depending on an individual's religiosity, the more religious a woman is the more likely she may feel inclined to actively participate in religious activities. For instance, previous research has suggested that religious participation affects moral attitudes about sexuality (Hertel & Hughes, 1987). In particular, the more a college student attends worship and

holds religious feelings, the less likely they are to engage in sexual behaviors (Penhollow et al., 2005). Women who participate more in religious activities, therefore, may be less inclined to hook up relative to those who are not as involved in their religion. Some reasons for this phenomenon may include (a) that more religious participation exposes followers to messages reinforcing the importance of refraining from sex before marriage, (b) that more participation in religious organizations may limit college students' time to participate in nonreligious environments involving hooking up (parties and other nonsecular socializing events), and (c) that more religious participation may increase time spent engaging in wholesome social activities with other religious peers such as church-sponsored functions or volunteering, which are both alcohol and drug free and not nearly as conducive to hooking up (Ellison & George, 1994). Because religiosity has been shown in previous studies to influence sexual behavior, it is essential to consider how religiosity can influence perceptions of hookup culture because religiosity seems to change the desire a woman has to hook up at college.

### Present Study

Past studies have primarily looked into the statistics surrounding the prevalence of hookup culture in college. The results of these studies are limited, thus pointing out the need for further research into the effects of relationship status, college year, and religiosity on students' attitudes toward college hookup culture. Furthermore, no studies have evaluated how a woman's SSI affects her perceptions of college hookup culture. It is important to examine the relationships between a college student's SSI, year in college, relationship status, and religiosity and their endorsement of hookup culture because there are many positive and negative consequences of hooking up in college, as mentioned previously. By studying the characteristics of those most likely to endorse hookup culture, intervention programs can be created with these characteristics in mind in order to reduce physical and emotional risks associated with partaking in hooking up.

The present study aimed to examine the effects of participant susceptibility to social influence, college year, relationship status, and religiosity on perceptions of hookup culture. One dependent measure as criteria of perception of hookup culture was measured: endorsement of hookup culture. The key hypothesis was that participant susceptibility to social influence would have an effect on

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the perceptions of college hookup culture such that women with high SSI would perceive hookup culture more favorably than women with low SSI. Furthermore, participant year in college would have an effect on the perception of hookup culture such that underlevel students would perceive hookup culture more favorably than upperlevel students. As a third hypothesis, participant relationship status would have an effect on the perception of hookup culture such that women in a relationship would perceive hookup culture less favorably than single women. Finally, as the fourth and final hypothesis, SSI would most strongly predict endorsement of hookup culture of four variables: SSI, college year, relationship status, and religiosity.

### Method

This study consisted of a quasiexperimental design, which examined the effect of three independent variables on one dependent variable: endorsement of hookup culture. These three independent, categorical variables included (a) college year (underlevel or upperlevel), (b) relationship status (single or in a relationship), and (c) susceptibility to social influence (low, medium-low, medium-high, and high). Additionally, degree of religiosity (religious, not religious, and somewhat religious) was included as a covariant. Group assignment was based on these three intrinsic participant characteristics (college year, relationship status, and degree of susceptibility to social influence) and therefore was not randomized. In addition, the design of the study was between subjects due to the nature of the four independent variables (participants could not possess multiple conditions of a variable at the same time).

### Participants

Participants included 115 female students enrolled at a single-sex college in the United States. Students were aged between 18 and 23 years old ( $M = 19.79$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ). Students either identified as being an underlevel student (53.0%) or an upperlevel student (47.0%). Participants were placed in one of four SSI groups: low SSI (25.2%), low-medium SSI (24.3%), medium-high SSI (24.3%), or high SSI (26.2%). Students either identified as being in a romantic relationship (33.9%) or being single (66.1%) at the time of the survey. Participants were recruited via flyers placed around the college and the snowball effect. They were selected based on self-identification as female and self-identification as an underlevel or upperlevel student at the participating

college. Participants were not compensated for their participation. Only women were used because the single-gender school is a women's college.

### Measures and Materials

#### *College Year*

This variable had two levels: one of underlevel college students and one of upperlevel college students. Participants were grouped in one of two levels based on their own intrinsic group membership: underlevel (first- and second-year students) or upperlevel (third- and fourth-year students) at the participating college. Participants reported their college year in the demographic questions section of the online survey.

#### *Relationship Status*

This variable had two levels: currently in a relationship or currently single. Group assignment was based on these participant intrinsic characteristics of either being single or in a relationship at the time participants took the survey. Of those who indicated they were in a relationship, participants indicated if the length of the relationship was between 0 and 6 months (30.2%) or if it was longer than 6 months (69.8%). Participants reported their relationship status in the demographic questions section of the online survey.

#### *Susceptibility to Social Influence*

Participants' SSI was measured by the Inner-Other Directedness Scale (Kassarjian, 1962). The Inner-Other Directedness Scale measures social conformity to the norms of one's membership group where an inner-directed person follows their own inner values to guide their behavior and an other-directed person follows the group's values to gain its approval. Therefore, the Inner-Other Directedness Scale was used to measure participant SSI because of its ability to assess how likely a person is to conform to social values within a culture.

Participants responded to 36 two-choice items on a 4-point rating scale that measured responses on a continuum from other- to inner-directedness. Totaled scores could range from 0 (*complete other-directed*) to 144 (*complete inner-directed*) where 72 was the division between inner- and other-directedness. Participant score was calculated by assigning -2 to a strong other-directed answer, -1 for a slight other-directed answer, +1 for a slight inner-directed answer, +2 to a strong inner-directed answer, and 0 for no answer. To ensure there was a not a negative total score caused by consistently answering -2

(strong other-directed) to the questions, a constant of 72 was added to the participant's sum of the individual item scores. Some samples of questions that measured inner-other directedness included: "I respect the person who most (a) is considerate of others and concerned that they think well of him; (b) lives up to his ideals and principles," and "For me it is more important to (a) keep my dignity (not make a fool of myself) even though I may not always be considered a good sport; (b) be a good sport even though I would lose my dignity (make a fool of myself) by doing it." For the questions, participants were instructed to select either (a) or (b) and decide whether they had a slight or strong preference for that chosen letter. The internal reliability for this scale was .58. Originally, participants were placed into one of two groups: high susceptibility if they scored on the other-directed side of the continuum, and low susceptibility if they scored on the inner-directed side of the continuum. However, significant results were not seen between these groups, so each group (high SSI and low SSI) were both split to form medium-high and low-medium degrees of susceptibility to social influence. Therefore, participants were placed into one of four SSI groups: low, low-medium, medium-high, or high SSI based on their total score from the survey. For the purposes of the study, all four groups of SSI were used in analyses.

#### ***Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index***

The Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index (EHCI; Aubrey & Smith, 2013) measures college students' agreement with hookup culture, specifically the shared and understood rules, practices, and norms of hooking up. The EHCI can measure a participant's overall endorsement of hookup culture as well as five assumptions of hookup culture including the beliefs that hooking up (a) is harmless, (b) fun, (c) enhances one's social status, (d) allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, and (e) is a reflection of one's sexual freedom. These five beliefs were calculated as subcategories separate from one another and were added together to calculate the overall endorsement of college hookup culture. Each subcategory was calculated by summing the answers of four specific questions that pertained to that subcategory. For the purposes of the study, the five subcategories as well as the overall endorsement of college hookup culture were used in analyses. Participants were presented with a formal definition of hooking up prior to responding to the EHCI. Then, participants

responded to 20 items using a 5-point rating scale in order to measure the extent to which they agreed with the statements. The 5-point rating scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Scores could range from 21 to 100 and participant score was calculated by summing the individual item scores. Some example statements included, "I hook up to have a good time," "College is a good time to experiment with hooking up," and "It would improve my reputation to hook up with someone who others find appealing." The internal reliability for this index was .93.

#### **Procedure**

Female undergraduates from a women's college were given a URL to an online survey via the psychology department, flyers, and the snowball effect. After signing a consent form, participants completed the Inner-Other Directness Scale (Kassarjian, 1962) and the EHCI (Aubrey & Smith, 2013), which were counterbalanced and displayed on separate pages within the survey so participants could not view any previous page once they had proceeded. Finally, participants answered demographic questions about their current relationship status, year in college, age, ethnicity, as well as neutral filler questions pertaining to college life such as dining hall experiences, roommates, major, and religiosity. The survey took participants about 15–20 minutes in total to complete. Participants were debriefed immediately following completion of the survey.

#### **Results**

A series of one-way between-subjects analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were conducted to determine if there were relationships between participants' SSI, relationship status, and college year on their overall endorsement of college hookup culture as well as their endorsement of five beliefs (or subcategories) of hookup culture. These five beliefs are that hooking up is (a) is harmless, (b) fun, (c) enhances one's social status, (d) allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, and (e) is a reflection of one's sexual freedom. Religiosity was found to covary with SSI, relationship status, and college year, and thus, the following results use participant religiosity as a covariate.

#### **Susceptibility to Influence**

Participant susceptibility to social influence was predicted to affect overall endorsement of college hookup culture such that those with high SSI would perceive hookup culture more favorably than those

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with low SSI. A series of one-way between-subjects ANCOVAs were conducted to analyze the relationship between SSI and endorsement of hookup culture as well as the five beliefs of hookup culture.

First, a post hoc power analysis tested the difference between four equally sized independent group means (low, medium-low, medium-high, and high SSI). This analysis showed that, for a sample size of 111 participants and an alpha of .05, the effect size was small ( $d = 0.45$ ), and the power was .92. Therefore, the power was very sufficient for the susceptibility to social influence factor.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing college hookup culture in general was significant,  $F(3, 108) = 6.02, p = .001, d = 0.85$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the EHCI was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 58.42, SD = 14.01$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 46.39, SD = 14.42$ ). Furthermore, post hoc pairwise comparisons using a simple contrast indicated that the average score on the EHCI was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 58.42, SD = 14.01$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 44.30, SD = 15.63$ ). In another pairwise comparison, the average score on the EHCI was significantly higher in the medium-low susceptibility group ( $M = 56.26, SD = 16.29$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 44.30, SD = 15.63$ ). There were no significant differences between the following pairwise comparisons for the average score on the EHCI, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-low, (2) low and medium-high, and (3) high and medium-low susceptibilities.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing the belief that hooking up is fun was significant,  $F(3, 108) = 3.98, p = .01, d = 0.65$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the fun subcategory was

significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 12.55, SD = 4.41$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 9.59, SD = 4.66$ ). Furthermore, post hoc pairwise comparisons using a simple contrast indicated that the average score on the fun subcategory was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 12.55, SD = 4.41$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 9.26, SD = 4.11$ ). There were no significant differences between the following pairwise comparisons for the average score on the fun subcategory, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-low, (2) low and medium-high, (3) medium-low and medium-high, and (4) high and medium-low susceptibilities.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing the belief that hooking up allows one to assert control over one's sexuality was significant,  $F(3, 108) = 5.95, p = .001, d = 0.68$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the control subcategory was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 12.90, SD = 3.82$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 10.14, SD = 4.27$ ). Furthermore, post hoc pairwise comparisons using a simple contrast indicated that the average score on the control subcategory was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 12.90, SD = 3.82$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 9.52, SD = 3.63$ ). In another pairwise comparison, the average score on the control subcategory was significantly higher in the medium-low susceptibility group ( $M = 13.37, SD = 4.61$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 9.52, SD = 3.63$ ). Moreover, the average score on the control subcategory was significantly higher in the medium-low susceptibility group ( $M = 13.37, SD = 4.61$ ) than in the low susceptibility group ( $M = 10.14, SD = 4.27$ ). There was no significant difference between the following pairwise comparison for the average score on control subcategory, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-high susceptibility.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing the belief that hooking up is a reflection of one's sexual freedom was significant,  $F(3, 108) = 3.66, p = .015, d = 0.55$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the sexual freedom subcategory was significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 13.53, SD = 4.01$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 11.28, SD = 4.16$ ). Furthermore, post hoc pairwise comparisons using a simple contrast indicated that the average score on the sexual freedom subcategory was

**TABLE 1**

**Average Scores on the EHCI and the 5 EHCI Subcategories for Four Groups of Susceptibility to Social Influence**

Degree of Susceptibility	EHCI	Fun	Control	Sexual Freedom	Harmless	Status
Low	46.39 <sup>a</sup>	9.59 <sup>a</sup>	10.14 <sup>ad</sup>	11.28 <sup>a</sup>	10.03	5.55
Medium-low	56.26 <sup>c</sup>	11.93	13.37 <sup>cd</sup>	13.32	11.93	6.11
Medium-high	44.30 <sup>bc</sup>	9.26 <sup>b</sup>	9.52 <sup>bc</sup>	10.48 <sup>b</sup>	9.07	5.96
High	58.41 <sup>ab</sup>	12.55 <sup>ab</sup>	12.90 <sup>ab</sup>	13.53 <sup>ab</sup>	11.77	6.87

Note. EHCI = Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index. EHCI is the composite measure of 20 items. Superscripts indicate significant post hoc differences within a column.

significantly higher in the most susceptible group ( $M = 13.53, SD = 4.01$ ) than in the medium-high susceptibility group ( $M = 10.48, SD = 4.02$ ). There were no significant differences between the following pairwise comparisons for the average score on the sexual freedom subcategory, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-low, (2) low and medium-high, (3) medium-low and medium-high, and (4) high and medium-low susceptibilities.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing the belief that hooking up is harmless was not significant,  $F(3, 108) = 2.28, p = .083, d = 0.42$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the harmless subcategory was not significantly different in the most susceptible group ( $M = 11.77, SD = 4.03$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 10.03, SD = 4.26$ ). Furthermore, there were no significant differences between the following pairwise comparisons for the average score on the harmless subcategory, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-low, (2) low and medium-high, (3) medium-low and medium-high, (4) high and medium-low, and (4) high and medium-high susceptibilities.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of SSI on endorsing the belief that hooking up enhances one's status was not significant,  $F(3, 108) = 0.89, p = .45, d = 0.43$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the status subcategory was not significantly different in the most susceptible group ( $M = 6.87, SD = 3.61$ ) than in the least susceptible group ( $M = 5.55, SD = 2.37$ ). Moreover, there were no significant differences between any of the other following pairwise comparisons for the average score on the status subcategory, as seen in Table 1: (1) low and medium-low, (2) low and medium-high, (3) medium-low and medium-high, (4) high and medium-low, and (5) high and medium-high susceptibilities.

Overall, participant SSI had a significant effect on endorsing hookup culture in general (see Figure 1). Furthermore, SSI had a significant effect on endorsing the beliefs that hooking up is fun, allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, and is a reflection of one's sexual freedom (see Figure 2). Participant SSI did not have a significant effect on endorsing the beliefs that hooking up is harmless and enhances one's social status (see Table 1).

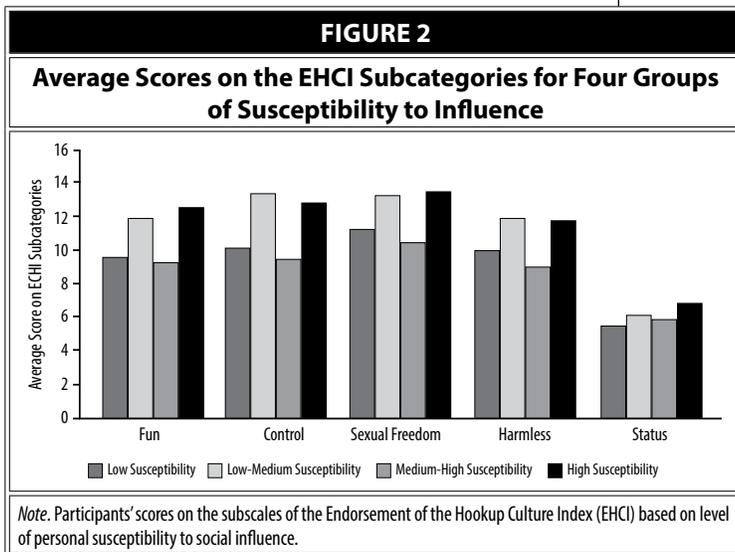
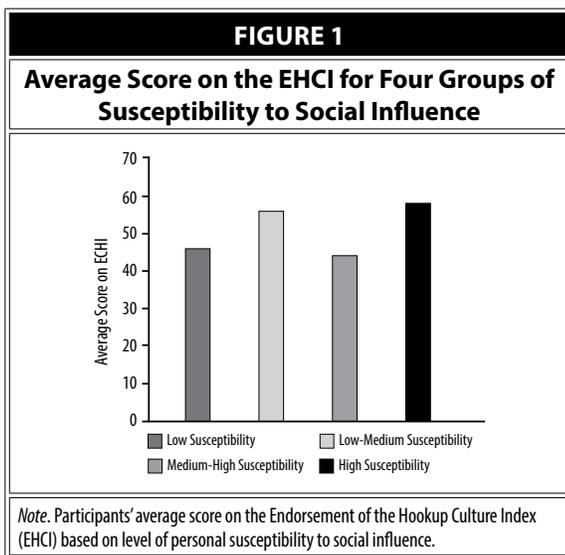
**College Year**

Participant college year was expected to affect

overall endorsement of college hookup culture such that upperlevel students would perceive hookup culture more favorably than underlevel students. A series of one-way between-subjects ANCOVAs were conducted to analyze the relationship between college year and endorsement of hookup culture as well as the five beliefs of hookup culture.

First, a post hoc power analysis tested the difference between two equally sized independent group means (underlevel and upperlevel). This analysis showed that, for a sample size of 115 participants and an alpha of .05, the effect size was small ( $d = 0.36$ ), and the power was 0.48. Therefore, the power was not sufficient for the college year factor.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of college year on endorsing college hookup culture in



general was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.64, p = .95, d = 0.35$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average overall score on the EHCI was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 48.89, SD = 17.02$ ) than in the upperlevel group ( $M = 54.67, SD = 16.03$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of participant college year on endorsing the belief that hooking up is fun was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.76, p = .73, d = 0.31$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the fun subcategory was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 10.27, SD = 4.63$ ) than in the upperlevel group ( $M = 11.71, SD = 4.65$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of college year on endorsing the belief that hooking up allows one to assert control over one's sexuality was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.31, p = .21, d = 0.38$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the control subcategory was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 10.74, SD = 4.30$ ) than in the upperlevel group ( $M = 12.37, SD = 4.19$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of college year on endorsing the belief that hooking up is a reflection of one's sexual freedom was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.47, p = .12, d = 0.37$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the sexual freedom subcategory was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 11.52, SD = 4.97$ ) than in the upperlevel group ( $M = 13.13, SD = 3.53$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of college year on endorsing the belief that hooking up is harmless was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.64, p = .84, d = 0.34$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the harmless subcategory was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 9.91, SD = 4.20$ ) than in the upperlevel group ( $M = 11.35, SD = 4.15$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of college year on endorsing the belief that hooking up enhances one's status was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.03, p = .43, d = 0.00$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the status subcategory was not significantly different in the underlevel group ( $M = 6.11, SD = 2.98$ ) than in

the upperlevel group ( $M = 6.11, SD = 3.22$ ).

Overall, participant college year did not have a significant effect on endorsing hookup culture in general or any of five the beliefs of hookup culture.

### Relationship Status

Participant relationship status was predicted to affect overall endorsement of college hookup culture such that those who were single would perceive hookup culture more favorably than those in a relationship. A series of one-way between-subjects ANCOVAs were conducted to analyze the relationship between relationship status and endorsement of hookup culture as well as the five beliefs of hookup culture.

First, a post hoc power analysis tested the difference between two equally sized independent group means (in a relationship and single). This analysis showed that, for a sample size of 115 participants and an alpha of .05, the effect size was small ( $d = 0.12$ ), and the power was 0.13. Therefore, the power was not sufficient for the relationship status factor.

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of relationship status on endorsing college hookup culture was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.11, p = .34, d = 0.16$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the overall average score on the EHCI was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 49.95, SD = 15.94$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 52.45, SD = 16.12$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of participant relationship status on endorsing the belief that hooking up is fun was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.56, p = .88, d = 0.11$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the fun subcategory was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 10.61, SD = 4.46$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 11.10, SD = 4.81$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of relationship status on endorsing the belief that hooking up allows one to assert control over one's sexuality was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.06, p = .41, d = 0.10$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the control subcategory was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 11.21, SD = 4.65$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 11.66, SD = 4.15$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of relationship status on endorsing the belief that hooking up is a reflection of one's sexual freedom

was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.79, p = .69, d = 0.04$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the sexual freedom subcategory was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 12.38, SD = 4.32$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 12.22, SD = 4.49$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of relationship status on endorsing the belief that hooking up is harmless was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 1.13, p = .34, d = 0.007$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the harmless subcategory was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 10.59, SD = 3.94$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 10.56, SD = 4.39$ ).

A one-way ANCOVA showed that the effect of relationship status on endorsing the belief that hooking up enhances one's status was not significant,  $F(1, 113) = 0.88, p = .57, d = 0.31$ . Post hoc analyses using a simple contrast as a post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average score on the status subcategory was not significantly different for those in a relationship ( $M = 5.51, SD = 2.46$ ) than those who were single ( $M = 6.42, SD = 3.33$ ).

Overall, participant relationship status did not have a significant effect on endorsing hookup culture in general or any of five the beliefs of hookup culture.

### Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to determine if participants' susceptibility to social influence, relationship status, and college year could predict their endorsement of college hookup culture. Religiosity was found to covary with SSI, college year, and relationship status, and thus, religiosity was included in the regression analysis. A simple linear regression was used for analyses. Overall, the variables significantly predicted endorsement of hookup culture  $R^2 = 0.15, p = .002$ .

When endorsement of hookup culture was predicted, it was found that SSI ( $\beta = -0.23, p = .014$ ), college year ( $\beta = 0.28, p = .004$ ), and religiosity ( $\beta = 0.26, p = .005$ ) were significant predictors. Relationship status was not a significant predictor ( $\beta = -0.17, p = .075$ ). Therefore, college year most strongly predicted endorsement of hookup culture, followed by religiosity, susceptibility to social influence, and relationship status, in that order.

### Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the effects of

participant susceptibility to social influence, college year, and relationship status on perceptions of hookup culture. One dependent measure as criteria of perception of hookup culture was measured: endorsement of hookup culture. Furthermore, participant degree of religiosity was used as a covariate in all analyses.

The results of the study were somewhat consistent with the predictions. Results were consistent with the prediction that a participant's SSI would have an effect on their endorsement of hookup culture. However, results were inconsistent with the prediction that college year and relationship status would have effects on endorsement of hookup culture. Instead, underlevel and upperlevel students did not differ in their endorsement of hookup culture and women in a relationship and women who were single did not differ in their endorsement of hookup culture. In addition, SSI was expected to most strongly predict endorsement of hookup culture of the three variables, which was not found to be consistent with results. Instead, college year was the strongest predictor of endorsement of hookup culture.

Women with high and low SSI perceived hookup culture differently from one another. Specifically, participants with high SSI endorsed college hookup culture more than those with low SSI. Furthermore, women with high susceptibility were more likely than those with low susceptibility to endorse the beliefs that hooking up (a) is fun, (b) allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, and (c) is a reflection of one's sexual freedom. However, the two groups of high and low susceptibilities endorsed the following beliefs about hooking up no differently from one another: that hooking up is harmless and enhances one's social status. Therefore, a woman's SSI had an effect on perceiving college hookup culture, as well as endorsing the beliefs that hooking up is fun, allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, and is a reflection of one's sexual freedom. When religiosity as a covariate was taken out of the analyses, women of high and low SSI still perceived hookup culture in general and the same three out of five beliefs differently. Therefore, whether a participant indicated they were religious or not does not seem to make a difference in how they perceive hookup culture and the five beliefs about hooking up when pertaining to a woman's SSI.

As for the intermediate differences between women with low, medium-low, medium-high, and high SSI on overall endorsement of hookup culture,

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women with high SSI endorsed college hookup culture more than women with medium-high SSI. Interestingly, women with medium-low SSI endorsed hookup culture more than women with medium-high SSI. It is not clear why the medium-low group tended to score higher than medium-high group on overall endorsement of hookup culture and the five subcategories. It is reasonable to believe that SSI is a continuous variable, and thus as degree of SSI goes from low to high, endorsement of hookup culture should increase. However, this is not the case between the medium-low and medium-high groups. Future research can more closely examine if and why these differences exist.

Some findings were inconsistent with the predictions of this study. First, underlevel and upperlevel women did not perceive hookup culture differently from one another. Specifically, underlevel students did not perceive hookup culture more favorably than upperlevel students. Furthermore, women of both types of college year (underlevel or upperlevel) perceived the following beliefs about hooking up in the same way: hooking up is fun, allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, is a reflection of one's sexual freedom, is harmless, and enhances one's social status. In this way, underlevel students were no more likely than upperlevel students to perceive hookup culture more favorably, and to endorse the five beliefs about hooking up more favorably. However, it is perplexing to note that when the covariate of religiosity was taken out of the analyses on college years, differences emerged between women of different college years and how they endorse hookup culture. One possible explanation may be that there was not sufficient statistical power to see the significant effect of college year on endorsement of hookup culture.

Second, single women and women in a relationship did not perceive hookup culture differently from one another. Specifically, those who were single did not perceive hookup culture more favorably than those in a relationship. Furthermore, women of both types of relationship status (single or in a relationship) perceived the following beliefs about hooking up in the same way: hooking up is fun, allows one to assert control over one's sexuality, is a reflection of one's sexual freedom, is harmless, and enhances one's social status. In this way, women who were single were no more likely than those in a relationship to perceive hookup culture more favorably, and to endorse the five beliefs about hooking up more favorably. When religiosity as a covariate

was taken out of the analyses, women of both types of relationship status still perceived hookup culture and the five beliefs about hooking up in the same way. Therefore, whether a participant indicated they were religious or not does not seem to make a difference in how they perceive hookup culture and the five beliefs about hooking up when pertaining to a woman's relationship status.

Four variables including susceptibility to social influence, college year, relationship status, and religiosity were analyzed to see which most strongly predicted a woman's endorsement of hookup culture. Of the four variables, college year most strongly predicted a woman's endorsement of hookup culture, followed by religiosity, SSI, and finally, relationship status, which did not predict endorsement of hookup culture at all. Therefore, whether a woman was an underlevel or an upperlevel student most strongly predicted her endorsement of hookup culture. This finding differed from the hypothesis that SSI would most strongly predict endorsement of hookup culture. Another interesting point is that, although college year when examined alone did not have a significant effect on endorsement of hookup culture, college year did remain important to note and most strongly predicted endorsement of hookup culture when examined with other variables. A possible explanation for this is that, because there was not sufficient statistical power for the college year variable, a significant effect might not have been captured between college year and endorsement of hookup culture.

When looking at participants' college year, the results of this study fill a hole where previous research was lacking. Specifically, prior research suggested that first- and second-year students may differ in their sexual patterns within hookup culture, but this prior research did not touch on how upperlevel (third- and fourth-year students) may differ with regards to hookup culture (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Therefore, the present study found that the participants' college year did not have an effect on perceiving college hookup culture differently (although this may be disproven in a future study with sufficient power for the college year variable). When responding to statements about hookup culture on the EHCI, participants of different college years did not differ in their responses from one another. This is a new finding from previous literature because upperlevel students were neglected from studies about perceptions of hookup culture.

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The results of this study pertaining to relationship status fill in gaps previous research missed. Aubrey and Smith (2013) found that, of the college students who reported being in a committed relationship at the time of the study, they endorsed hookup culture not because it offered a way to avoid commitment, but instead for a different reason. Apart from this finding, little to no research has compared perceptions of hookup culture in those who are single and those who are in a relationship. The present study found that participant relationship status did not have an effect on perceiving hookup culture differently, however, there was not sufficient power for the relationship status variable, and so this result may be disproven in a future study. When responding to statements about hookup culture on the EHCI, participants of different relationship statuses did not differ in their responses from one another. This is a new finding from previous literature because the comparison between the two groups were neglected from studies about perceptions of hookup culture.

Finally, because the effect of susceptibility to social influence has not been directly studied in past research, the results found in this study contribute to new and important information about hookup culture. Although no direct research exists about an individual's SSI and how it affects perceptions of hookup culture, some literature has discussed a common motivation for students in wanting to engage in hooking up. Specifically, Kooyman et al. (2011) found that a college student may often go along with the culture's norms and decide to hook up in order to fit in even if there exists some hesitance on the individual's part. The present research, therefore, builds on the understanding of why a student may partake in hookup culture: A woman who is highly susceptible to social influence may feel increased pressure to hook up in order to fit in with college hookup culture. In contrast, a woman who is not as susceptible to social influence may not feel as much pressure to hook up in order to fit in.

The results of this research are important for studying hookup culture and the direct and indirect consequences that come with hooking up, such as STIs and emotional or mental health issues. Moreover, it is essential to know the demographics of people who endorse hookup culture the most because they are more likely to partake in the culture. As indicated by previous research, many college students feel pressured to hook up because they are misled by the belief that most of

their peers are hooking up, and they want to fit in by hooking up. Because the present study found that women who are more susceptible to social influence endorse hookup culture more than those who are less susceptible, sexual education programs can be developed to address myths about peers' rates of hooking up and reality. This type of educational program could help those more susceptible to social influence alleviate the social pressure they may feel to hook up, so that they may be better able to make decisions about their sexual experiences based more on their own desire and not just to fit in.

The limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the sample of primarily White women at an all-women's college may limit the generalizability of the results. Another limitation could be that the present study only measured perceptions about hookup culture and not actual experiences with hooking up, and so participant perception and actual experience may differ. However, a strength of assessing only participant perception is that participants might have felt more comfortable answering hypotheticals and not having to admit any actual experience within the EHCI, and therefore, participants might have been more truthful in their responses.

Further research can discover if gender differences exist in regard to endorsement of hookup culture. It is unclear at this point if there are differences between male and female college students with regard to their endorsement of college hookup culture. Furthermore, future research should sample college students at public institutions with varying ethnicities and sexualities. Thus, future research can explore even more factors that influence why college students perceive hookup culture differently. An additional point of future research may include exploring why women with high SSI differ from women with low SSI in endorsing hookup culture. Finally, religiosity could be examined in future research as to how exactly it influences perception of hookup culture among college students, as results pertaining to college year changed after religiosity was added in as a covariate.

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Be immersed in community engaged, real-world field experiences and intervention opportunities in our scientist-practitioner-advocate program. Leads to licensure as a school psychologist. Approved by NASP and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

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Be a leader and advocate for educational equity for all students in PK-12 schools. Leads to licensure as a school counselor. The program adheres to the



Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards and is nationally recognized by The Education Trust as a Transforming School Counseling program.

### Certificates

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Graduate assistantships and tuition waivers are available.

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\*Online programs are available.

\*\*Questions related to the PhD in school psychology's accreditation status should be directed to the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation, American Psychological Association, 750 First St. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002; (202) 336-5979; [apaaccred@apa.org](mailto:apaaccred@apa.org); or [apa.org/ed/accreditation](http://apa.org/ed/accreditation).

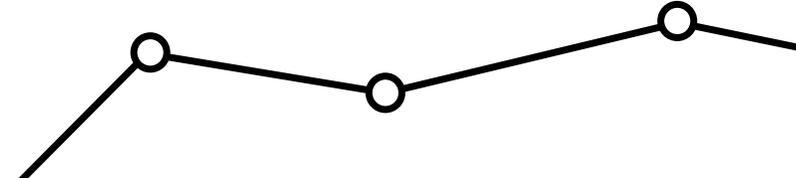
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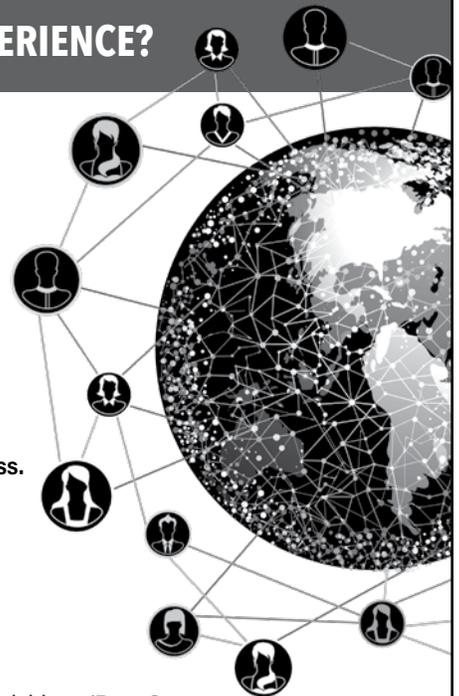
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