



## **ASA NEWS**

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**On-site Press Room (Aug. 17-20):** Colorado Convention Center, Mezzanine A, (303) 228-8350

**EMBARGOED until Friday, August 17, at 12:01 a.m. EDT**

### **Study: College Students Lose Respect for Peers Who Hook Up Too Much**

DENVER — Almost half of college students judge men and women with similar sexual histories by the same standard and hold equally negative attitudes towards both their male and female peers who they believe hook up “too much,” suggests new research to be presented at the 107th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.

“Men and women are increasingly judging each other on the same level playing field,” said Rachel Allison, co-author of the study and a doctoral candidate in the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Department of Sociology. “But, gender equality and sexual liberation are not synonymous. While we’ve come a long way in terms of gender equality, it seems that a large portion of both college men and women lose respect for individuals who they believe participate in too frequent casual sexual activity.”

The study relied on a subsample of more than 19,000 students from the 2011 Online College Social Life Survey (OCSLS), which includes data from 22 different colleges. Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement: “If (wo)men hook up or have sex with lots of people, I respect them less.” Based on their answers to this statement and other follow-up questions, the researchers placed the respondents into one of four categories: egalitarian conservative, egalitarian libertarian, traditional double standard, and reverse double standard.

According to the study, approximately 48 percent of the college students in the survey were egalitarian conservatives—meaning they judge men and women with similar sexual histories by the same standard and lose equal respect for members of both genders who they believe hook up too much. In addition, roughly 27 percent of the students surveyed were egalitarian libertarians (i.e., they lose respect for neither men nor women regardless of how much they hook up); nearly 12 percent held a traditional double standard (i.e., they lose respect for women, but not men, for hooking up too much); and approximately 13 percent held a reverse double standard (i.e., they lose respect for men, but not women, for hooking up too much).

More specifically, women were more likely than men to have egalitarian conservative attitudes, with approximately 54 percent of college females and over 35 percent of college males in the sample falling into the egalitarian conservative category. Women were also less likely than men to hold a traditional double standard. Only six percent of women reported holding a traditional double standard, compared to nearly 25 percent of men.

While the majority of men did not hold a traditional double standard, male athletes and Greek affiliated men were more likely than men who were neither involved in campus athletics nor engaged in Greek life, to negatively evaluate women, but not men, for frequent hooking up. Thirty-eight percent of male athletes and 37 percent of Greek affiliated men in the study held a traditional double standard. The authors suggested that Greek culture tended to permeate university culture, leading many to erroneously believe that the traditional double standard was the most common view of hooking up on campus.

“Because Greek brothers and athletes tend to be at the top of the social stratification ladder—the big guys on campus—we see this adversarial double standard infused in people’s perceptions of college and hook up culture,” said Barbara Risman, co-author of the study and a sociology professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “These men, who are in fact the minority, end up holding a great deal of social power on campus.”

Interestingly, Greek affiliated women who lived in Greek housing were more likely than other female

undergraduates to hold a reverse double standard. Sorority sisters living in Greek housing were also 42 percent more likely to hold a reverse double standard than an egalitarian libertarian view of hooking up.

This attitude among women who lived in Greek housing may derive from their close social and geographic proximity to Greek culture, and a resultant unfavorable reaction towards fraternity brothers' casual sexual behaviors, suggested the authors.

"Women who hold to this reverse double standard are invoking a kind of gender justice," Risman said. "They are critical of men who treat women badly and they do not accept a 'boys will be boys' view of male sexuality."

Other demographic factors including religious affiliation, sexual identity, and college location, were also related to people's perceptions of gender equality and hooking up.

Buddhist, Jewish, and non-affiliated students were less likely than Catholic students to lose respect for people who engage in frequent casual sexual activity. And, women who identified as evangelical or fundamentalist Christians were nearly 76 percent more likely than Catholic women to judge harshly those who they believe are hooking up too much.

Sexual orientation was also tied to individuals' perceptions of hooking up. Non-heterosexual men and women were less likely than heterosexual students to lose respect for anyone's casual sexual activity. The majority of non-heterosexual young adults were egalitarian libertarians.

Additionally, students' sexual attitudes were linked to their college's geographic region. Men and women from West Coast colleges tended to be more liberal in their sexual attitudes, while students from Midwest colleges were more likely to hold conservative sexual views. Students from East Coast colleges fell somewhere in between.

The study assessed the data within the framework of the sexual revolution—a historical trend towards the disentanglement of sex from marriage.

"You have to remember how far the sexual revolution has come," Risman said. "Before, sociologists would study stigma directed toward sexually active unmarried women. Now, we are looking at whether stigma still exists toward men and women who too often engage in purely recreational sexual activity outside the confines of a dating relationship. That's a sea change in attitudes towards sex."

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### **About the American Sociological Association**

The American Sociological Association ([www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org)), founded in 1905, is a non-profit membership association dedicated to serving sociologists in their work, advancing sociology as a science and profession, and promoting the contributions to and use of sociology by society.

The paper, "A Double Standard For 'Hooking Up': How Far Have We Come Toward Gender Equality?" will be presented on Monday, Aug. 20, at 2:30 p.m. MDT in Denver, Colorado, at the American Sociological Association's 107th Annual Meeting.

To obtain a copy of the paper; for more information on other ASA presentations; or for assistance reaching the study's author(s), members of the media can contact Daniel Fowler, ASA's Media Relations and Public Affairs Officer, at (202) 527-7885 or [pubinfo@asanet.org](mailto:pubinfo@asanet.org). During the Annual Meeting (Aug. 17-20), ASA's Public Information Office staff can be reached in the press room, located in Mezzanine A of the Colorado Convention Center, at (303) 228-8350 or (914) 450-4557 (cell).

This press release was written by Arielle Baran, ASA Office of Public Affairs and Public Information.

Papers presented at the ASA Annual Meeting are typically working papers that have not yet been published in peer reviewed journals.