

How to end the hook-up culture

**An economic and institutional examination of the hook-
up culture on college campuses**

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Abstract

The hook-up culture that exists amongst modern day college students is a well-documented phenomenon in sociological, psychological, and gender studies research, but little to no research exists examining such a culture from an economic or institutional perspective. This paper provides a definitional summary of the literature on the hook-up culture, examining its social norms, origins, and harms, and adds that the hook-up culture can be conceptualized as an economic club good. Borrowing upon Gerry Mackie's work, it then argues that the hook-up culture can be viewed as a societal convention analogous to the historic Chinese practice of footbinding and the modern day practice of Female Genital Mutilation. Importantly, the author does not claim that the hook-up culture harms men and women to the same degree as footbinding or FGM. Both footbinding and FGM are degrees of magnitude more harmful and more demoralizing than the hook-up culture—and it would be offensive to argue otherwise. Instead, the author's point in making the comparison is solely structural: when each of the three conventions persist, they persist because those harmed cannot socially coordinate. Thus, to understand how to end the hook-up culture, it is helpful to understand how similar conventions ended (or could end). The paper then provides three frameworks for "solving" the harms the hook-up culture propagates.

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Introduction

The hook-up culture is a defining feature of the millennial generation. Whereas “going-steady” was once the overwhelming tradition of the baby-boomers, college students now seek casual no-commitment sex in its stead. But whereas the potential origins, customs, and effects of the hook-up culture have been well documented in sociological, psychological, and gender studies research, little to no analysis exists on the hook-up culture from an economic or institutional perspective. This paper seeks to partially fill that gap. Part I defines the hook-up culture and provides background on its characteristics and debated origins. Part II argues that the hook-up culture is best conceptualized as an economic club good. Part III borrows upon Schelling and Mackie’s “convention theory”¹ to argue that the hook-up culture can be modeled as an inferior, yet self-enforcing institutional convention. Finally, Part IV provides three manners by which groups, whether college campuses or other communities, might alleviate the negative aspects of the hook-up culture, either by 1.) alleviating the negative side-effects of the hook-up culture, 2.) eliminating the mutual exclusivity between hook-up culture and dating culture, and/or 3.) abandoning the hook-up culture entirely for a more superior convention (i.e. a “dating” culture).

PART I – Background on the Hook-Up Culture

Defining Hook-Up Culture

In proceeding, it is necessary to first define what I mean by a hook-up culture before analyzing it from a game theoretic standpoint as an institution. Though the term itself can be defined in many manners, I shall utilize the definition employed by Caroline Heldman and Lisa Wade in their summary of the relevant literature, *Hook-Up Culture:*

¹ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

Setting a New Research Agenda. In it they define the hook-up culture as, “casual sexual contact between nondating partners without an (expressed or acknowledged) expectation of forming a committed relationship.”² This definition has enjoyed use amongst many other researchers of the subject.³ It is intentionally vague about the extent of the “sexual content” that takes place between partners, but this vagueness is indicative of the culture as a whole. It has been well documented that students treat the phrase “hook-up” as a catchall to encompass any number of intimate interactions from simple kissing to vaginal intercourse.⁴ In a way, this ambiguity mirrors the “sexual freedom” and “lack of commitment” that undergirds the hook-up culture itself.

Importantly, in this paper’s definition of the hook-up culture all sexual relations are consensual and free of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Consequently, at least three sexual encounters of note are not encompassed in the hook-up culture: 1. Forced sex (i.e. rape), 2. Drug facilitated sexual assault (ex. date rape using Rohypnol), and 3.) Sexual interaction where one of the partners is too drunk to give consent. Importantly, interactions where both parties are too intoxicated to give consent are still encompassed within this definition of hook-up culture, consequently acknowledging the use of alcohol as a “social lubricant” to facilitate sexual encounters while simultaneously diminishing the culpability of those involved. This is not to imply that sexual assault and STIs aren’t prevalent in the hook-up culture itself, but rather to delineate that these activities fall

² Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

³ These other sources, almost of which I draw upon later, include Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616; Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.; Flack, W. F., Kimble, M., Brian, L., & Neacsiu, D. (2006). *Unwanted sex, alcohol use, and hooking up among students at two U.S. colleges*. Los Angeles, CA: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), Los Angeles Convention Center.; Garcia, J. R., & Reiber, C. (2008). Hook-up behavior: A biopsychosocial perspective. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 2, 49-65; Paul, E. K., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). “Hook ups”: Characteristics and correlates of college students’ spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37, 76-88.; and Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

⁴ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press

outside of our definition. In defining the hook-up culture this way, it is easier to distinguish later on between inherent harms of the hook-up culture versus the culture's harmful side effects.

Characteristics of Hook-Up Culture

Several norms distinguish the hook-up culture. Interestingly, norms of the “hook-up script” are overwhelmingly understood implicitly amongst older college students,⁵ with rarely ever any explicit verbal or written conveyance.⁶ It appears that the human interactions by which an individual hooks-up are not themselves social taboos, but discussing in everyday conversation the specific steps involved in “hooking-up” is taboo. This hints at the possibility that students find it either embarrassing to talk about such a “hook-up script” or embarrassing to be perceived as “in the dark” about its content.

Kathleen Bogle has nonetheless summarized the typical hook-up script, which usually occurs in party or club settings and follows a three-step process.⁷

First, there is an exchange of communication to signal mutual attraction. This almost always involves non-verbal signals, especially eye contact, and can occur before or after the event at which the hook-up takes place. It can arise between friends, acquaintances, or complete strangers (a “random hook-up”).⁸

Second, the individuals decide where to engage in the hook-up, either in a private location (ex. dorm room) or semi-private location (ex. in a secluded corner of the party/club) to engage in sexual interaction. This decision is again usually made without

⁵ I denote “older college students” here, as the lack of explicit conveyance of the hook-up script can be a confusing, and even detrimental, aspect of the hook-up culture for a newly admitted college boy or girl to discover. Once he/she discovers the hook-up process however, whether through trial and/or error or observation, he/she typically adapts to the social norm of not explicitly discussing the “hook-up” process, perpetuating the lack of clearly defined norms.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bogle, K. A. (2007a). *Hooking up and the sexual double standard among college students*. New York: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

⁸ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press

verbal intention to hook-up with each other, and is influenced by factors such as the anticipated level of sexual intercourse and whether or not one of the partners will “spend the night.” For example, individuals that are simply kissing might relocate to a semi-private location, as opposed to a completely private location were the individuals to engage in sexual intercourse. As an additional example, individuals might go to one dorm room or another depending on whether one of the individuals intends to “sleep over” and desires to avoid the “walk of shame”⁹ the next morning.¹⁰

Third, the individuals engaging in the hook-up decide “how far to go,” again usually utilizing non-verbal signals. Involved in such a determination is not only the moral beliefs of the consenting individuals but also the perception of sexual norms that are prevalent amongst the community. Paradoxically, statistical research demonstrates that college men and women are less likely to be sexual with someone they actually like. Undergirding this practice is the belief that moving “too fast” with someone a person likes will undermine the viability of a legitimate relationship later on. The consequence being that an interaction that begins as “just a hook-up” can run the gamut of sexual interaction, while at the same time decreasing the likelihood of any future relationship. While potentially sexually liberating for men and women alike, this poses a danger to young college women and men (specifically freshman women) who, having not yet learned the norms of the hook-up culture, anticipate higher levels of commitment as a result of their engaging in higher levels of sexual intimacy.¹¹ A quantitative study, for

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The “walk of shame” is a colloquial expression for “walking back to one’s dorm room in the morning with disheveled party clothes from the previous night; Bogle, K. A. (2007a). *Hooking up and the sexual double standard among college students*. New York: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

¹¹ Ibid.

example, demonstrated that “49 percent of college students who engaged in sexual intercourse during a hookup encounter said they never saw the person again.”¹²

Expanding upon this basic hook-up script, many sub-types of hook-ups exist, including:¹³

one-time sexual encounter (a “random”); multiple encounters, generally on the week-ends, often without any contact during the week (a “regular”); infrequent sexual encounters with an acquaintance or friend late at night, generally after an “unsuccessful” night of hooking up (a “booty call”); and repeat hook ups with a friend that do not involve a dating relationship (“friends with benefits” or “fuck buddies”)

The prevalence of hook-up culture has also been significantly studied using a range of methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Studies show that between two thirds¹⁴ and three quarters¹⁵ of students hook up at least once during college. One study showed that, of those who have hooked up at some point, 40% did so three or fewer times, 40% did so between four and nine times, and 20% of students hooked up ten or more times during college.¹⁶ A contrasting study found that a slightly higher 28% had ten or more hook ups during college.¹⁷ Heldman and Wade summarized the findings by simply stating, “a majority of college students participate in hook-up culture and about a quarter will hook-up ten or more times during college.”¹⁸

¹² Paul, Elizabeth L., Brian McManus, and Allison Hayes. 2000. Hookups: Characteristics and Correlates of College Students’ Spontaneous and Anonymous Sexual Experiences. *Journal of Sex Research* 37: 76-88.

¹³ Direct quote from Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

¹⁴ Garcia, J. R., & Reiber, C. (2008). Hook-up behavior: A biopsychosocial perspective. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 2, 49-65.

¹⁵ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.; England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.; and Paul, E. K., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). “Hook ups”: Characteristics and correlates of college students’ spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37, 76-88.

¹⁶ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.

¹⁷ England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

A final characteristic deals with the sexual content of “hook-ups,” which itself has changed over time. In the last decade there has been a shift away from vaginal intercourse, corresponding with an increase in the commonness of oral and anal sex, along with a revised sexual script placing oral sex before vaginal intercourse in the typical sexual script’s hierarchy of intimacy. Comparing two studies, Heldman and Wade noted that anal sex among 18-24 year olds had increased from 16.2% for women and 15.8% for men in 1992 to 26.5% for women and 27.2% for men in 2002.¹⁹ A statistically significant increase in oral sex among 15-19 year olds was also recorded from 1995 to 2002, with the percentage experiencing the practice rising from 49.5% to 55.0%.²⁰ Other studies have corroborated this finding of an increase in the prevalence of oral sex amongst young adults.²¹ Nonetheless, whereas college aged men are more likely than ever to experience oral sex performed by a female, they are correspondingly less inclined to pleasure female partners in a reciprocal manner. The same survey comparison that showed an increase in the prevalence of anal sex from 1992 to 2002 also documented a jump in the percentage of women performing oral sex (from 69.1% to 72.4%) and a drop in the percentage of men performing oral sex (from 72.4% to 66.3%).²²

Potential Origins of Hook-Up Culture

Significant debate exists regarding the origin of hook-up culture, with several proposed theories. From the 1920s to the 1960s a “going steady” culture was the norm on

¹⁹ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., & Michaels, S. (1992). National health and social life survey. Health and Medical Care Archive, Robert Wood Johnson. and Mosher, W., Chandra, A., & Jones, J. (2005). Sexual behavior and selected health measures: Men and women 15-44 years of age, United States. *Advance Data*, 362, 1-55.

²⁰ Gates and Sonenstein 2000; Lindberg Duberstein et al. 2008

²¹ Prinstein et al. 2003, p. 243; Halpern-Felsher et al. (2005) p. 845; Gindi et al. 2008; Aral et al. 2005

²² Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., & Michaels, S. (1992). National health and social life survey. Health and Medical Care Archive, Robert Wood Johnson. and Mosher, W., Chandra, A., & Jones, J. (2005). Sexual behavior and selected health measures: Men and women 15-44 years of age, United States. *Advance Data*, 362, 1-55.

most college campuses.²³ While pockets of individuals existed in this time period who engaged in “hook-ups,” such activity did not permeate interactions to the extent that a “hook-up culture” was standard. A transition at one point occurred whereby college campuses switched from being a “culture with hook-ups” to a “hook-up culture.” Today, “opportunities for hooking up are no longer balanced by a dating culture.”²⁴ Casual sex is now “hegemonic,” in the words of sociologist Paula England, with an interest in romance and relationships seen as undesirable.²⁵ One third of students report that their first time experiencing intercourse occurs during a hook-up.²⁶

That being said, though we know the change occurred sometime in the post 1960s time period, “the timing and causes of its emergence are a genuine puzzle.”²⁷ Most scholars point to a multiplicity of factors, including the influence of the Sexual Revolution of the late 1960s, an increase in sexual permissiveness,²⁸ and the advent of birth control.²⁹ Heldman and Wade argue, “The second wave Women’s Movement and Sexual Revolution [were] necessary...but not sufficient causes of hook-up culture,” and that, “it is arguable that hook-up culture started in the 1990s.” They point to the decline in intercourse and rise in oral and anal sex as evidence of this 1990s temporal origin.³⁰

²³ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press

²⁴ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.; England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁵ England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Garcia, J. R., & Reiber, C. (2008). Hook-up behavior: A biopsychosocial perspective. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 2, 49-65.

²⁷ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

²⁸ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press; England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.; Harding, D., & Jencks, C. (2003). Changing attitudes toward pre-marital sex: Cohort, period, and aging effects. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 67, 211-226.

²⁹ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press; Fugere, M. A., Escoto, D., Cousins, A. J., Riggs, M. L., & Haerich, P. (2008). Sexual attitudes and double standards: A literature review focusing on participant gender and ethnic background. *Sexuality and Culture*, 12, 12, 169-182.

³⁰ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

Finally, they point to nine factors that they argue may have attributed to the rise of the hook-up culture:³¹

1. College policies that established co-ed housing for the first time and lessened student supervision
2. The gender distribution of college students with more students entering undergraduate institutions
3. An increase in the rate of alcohol consumption
4. An increase in access and consumption of pornography
5. An increase in sexualization of mass media
6. An increase in student self-objectification, especially amongst women
7. An increase in the prevalence of narcissism in the millennial generation
8. A decrease in the perceived risk of sexual interaction
9. A change in marriage norms, whereby young adults delay marriage for the sake of prioritizing professional or academic success³²

In sum, the specific cause of the rise in the hook-up culture remains allusive. But if the hook-up culture is indeed an inferior social convention, these factors present potential explanations for why the realization of a superior equilibrium remains difficult to achieve.

PART II – The Hook-Up Culture as a Club Good

I now add to our definition of the hook-up culture, drawing upon economic literature to argue that the hook-up culture can be conceptualized as a club good.

³¹ Ibid.

³² This particular formulation for the origin of the hook-up culture is often invoked as a reason explaining the sustainment of the hook-up culture across time. It is this author's opinion that this factor, in and of itself, is not wholly explanatory of the hook-up culture's self-enforcing nature, as will be discussed later.

The Four Types of Goods

Paul Samuelson is first credited with dividing goods into two types in his landmark essay *The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure*, where he delineates the differences between private goods and public goods.³³ Samuelson described private goods as both excludable (individual A could be excluded from consuming the good) and rivalrous (what individual A consumed from the good, no one else could consume). An example was a piece of pizza. One could easily exclude someone else from eating his or her piece of pizza, and what bites he or she took from the pizza could not be consumed by anyone else. Public goods, on the other hand, were both non-excludable and non-rivalrous—individual A could not be excluded from consuming the good and whatever individual A consumed does not limit the consumption of others. The military is the most oft-cited example of a public good. It is nearly impossible to exclude a non-tax-paying citizen from the benefits of the military, and that person’s ability to benefit from the military does not prevent others from benefiting. The free market best provides private goods, such as food, Samuelson argued, whereas the government best provides public goods, such as national defense.³⁴

James Buchanan added to this two-good dichotomy in 1965 with his publication of *An Economic Theory of Clubs*.³⁵ Writing that there was an “awesome Samuelson gap between the purely private and purely public good,” Buchanan proposed the label of “club good,” for goods that were simultaneously excludable yet non-rivalrous. The quintessential example for such goods is a movie theater or a local swimming pool. In

³³ Samuelson, P. (1954). The pure theory of public expenditure. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 36(4), 387-389.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Buchanan, J. (1965). An economic theory of clubs. *Economica*, 32(125), 1-14.

both situations it is easy to keep individuals who don't pay from utilizing the good—in both cases by charging admission. Yet the ability of one person to enjoy the good does not significantly detract from the utility another individual derives from using it—one person swimming in a swimming pool does not immediately detract from the enjoyment that other swimmers experience in the pool.

In most situations club goods are necessarily small-scale. As in the case with swimming pools and movie theaters, one eventually reaches the point where an additional person utilizing the good *does* significantly detract from the utility another gains from its use. For example, while a movie theater or swimming pool might be built to a capacity to comfortably fit 100 individuals, the 101st individual detracts from the enjoyment of the 100 in a way the additional 99 did not from the 1st.

Nonetheless, the scale at which a club good might transition from non-rivalrous to rivalrous varies. Elinor Ostrom has therefore argued for replacing the term “rivalry of consumption” with “subtractability of use” and conceptualizing “subtractability of use” and “excludability” to vary along relative scales. With this in mind, she added a fourth type of good, common-pool-resources, to the three thus delineated, defining CPRs as goods with low excludability but high subtractability of use.³⁶ Figure 1 synthesizes this information.

³⁶ Ostrom, Elinor. "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems." The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics Lecture. Swedish Academy. Sweden, Oslo. 8 Dec 2009. Lecture.

Figure 1

	Low subtractability of use	High subtractability of use
Low excludability	Public Goods	Common Pool Resources
High excludability	Club Goods	Private Goods

The Hook-Up Culture as a Club Good

This paper argues that the hook-up culture convention is best delineated as a club good. Taking a macro level view of hook-up culture sees it as incorporating the total number of individuals in the geographic area (ex. the college campus) who are hooking-up. Just as one becomes a member of a swim-club and gains the benefits of utilizing the pool's resources, college students become members of the hook-up culture and gain the benefits of the sexual activity it facilitates. Furthermore, just as participating as an active member of the swim-club is a contribution to the preservation of the club's existence, participation in the hook-up culture is a contribution to the preservation of the hook-up club's existence. Most importantly, the hook-up culture fits the two requisites of club good identification.

First, the hook-up culture has high excludability; it is both easy for members of the culture to exclude others, as well as for non-members to choose not to participate. Individual A may want to join the hook-up culture but will be easily excluded if no one in the hook-up population chooses to hook-up with him. Additionally, should individual A decide he does not want to participate in the hook-up culture, it is easy for him to avoid;

Individual A can openly choose not to engage in hook-ups or not to frequent the parties and clubs where hook-ups occur.³⁷

Second, the hook-up culture has low subtractability of use. Another person joining the culture does not immediately detract from the utility others garner from the culture. Indeed, since the hook-up culture by nature is one without commitment, it is distinctly not the case that an additional person joining the hook-up population subtracts from the options available to those in the group. To put it another way, because of the “no strings attached” aspect of the hook-up culture, if individual A joins the group and takes individual B as a hook-up partner, individual B is still available as a potential partner to all other members of the group. If anything, individual A joining the hook-up culture provides yet another hook-up option to the members of the population (or options if considering non-monogamous hook-ups). In this way, the hook-up culture might be one with “additionality of use” rather than “subtractability of use,” where the more people who join the more the total utility of the group increases.³⁸

There are still reasons to consider some subtractability of use to exist in the hook-up culture, however. For example, individual A joining the culture and hooking up with individual B at a certain time precludes individual C from hooking up with individual B at the same time (assuming individual A and individual C both want to monogamously hook-up with individual B). In this case, however, it is almost certainly the situation that the additional utility provided by each new member outweighs this small subtractability of use that only exists at a certain given time. It could also be imagined that the hook-up population grows so large that demand for structural capital of the hook-up culture

³⁷ Again, for purposes of this paper, hook-ups are always defined as consensual. Therefore individual A does have power to make a conscious choice not to engage in hook-ups. This is not to say that the hook-up culture does not have as a negative externality an increase in rape and sexual assault, something that will be addressed later in more detail.

³⁸ This specific aspect of the hook-up culture will be incorporated later into this paper’s use of a Schelling diagram

exceeds supply (i.e. demand for nightclub space, alcohol, etc. exceeds supply). This would in effect lead to a subtractability of use for at least some of the members of the hook-up population. But in today's world, with nightclubs, alcohol, and empty dorm rooms abundant, such a situation is never likely to manifest itself.

Finally, subtractability of use should not be confused with increase of risk. The hook-up culture as I have defined it entails members who always respect the consent of others involved (i.e. abstain from rape and sexual assault) and who are in good health (i.e. free of STIs). But due to the nature of the hook-up culture as a club good, there is little to no screening that takes place to exclude individuals who violate either condition. In this way, it is possible for a non-member of the hook-up culture to “infect” the population. If the culture's members unknowingly admit a rapist to the hook-up culture, he or she can then proceed to take advantage of the culture in a manner significantly harmful to the population. Similarly, if an individual with an STI is unknowingly admitted to the hook-up culture, he or she can then proceed to spread his or her STI to other members of the culture. In this way, though each additional “genuine member” of the hook-up culture does not lead to subtractability of use, each additional individual admitted nonetheless increases risk to the population as a whole.³⁹ As will be demonstrated, this is in fact occurring in the real world with hook-up culture facilitating sexual assault and the spread of STIs.

³⁹ This assumes that no screening process exists to ensure that only “genuine members” of the hook-up culture are admitted. With regard to rapists and sexual assaulters, this seems a reasonable assumption to make, as such individuals are often extremely difficult to identify in advance. The same is true of those infected with STIs, though some physical manifestation of the infection might show itself. This does not mean, however, that policies might be put in place that seek to diminish the prevalence of sexual assault and STIs, therefore decreasing risk as a whole.

PART III – The Hook-Up Culture as an Inferior Convention

Drawing upon the “convention theory” developed by Gerry Mackie in his piece, *Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account*, I argue that the hook-up culture as a club good is comparable to female footbinding and female genital mutilation (hereafter FGM) as an inferior, yet self-enforcing, convention. In doing so, it is necessary to answer three distinct questions: 1.) How is hook-up culture a convention similar to footbinding and female genital mutilation? 2.) Why is hook-up culture an inferior equilibrium? and 3.) Why is this convention self-enforcing, despite its societal harm?⁴⁰

How is hook-up culture a convention similar to footbinding and female genital mutilation?

Mackie draws upon the former Chinese practice of footbinding as an example of a societal convention that harmed women. He argues that the modern day practice of FGM closely mirrors footbinding, and invokes a Schelling coordination diagram to model each practice. I will do the same. Importantly, I do not claim that the hook-up culture is equivalent in its net harm to women and men as footbinding or FGM, as both footbinding and FGM are explicitly more harmful and demoralizing than the hook-up culture. Nonetheless, all three are conventions that harm women (and in the case of hook-up culture men as well), are structured in an analogous manner, and which exist as a self-enforcing inferior equilibrium.

⁴⁰ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

Mackie delineated twelve characteristics that footbinding and FGM had in common—I posit that hook-up culture shares seven of these twelve characteristics, namely:⁴¹

1. All three customs are dominant where practiced.⁴² All three are persistent and are practiced even by those who oppose them.
2. All three control sexual access to females
3. All three are a group-identifying marker; in the case of footbinding and FGM the practices serve as an ethnic marker, in the case of the hook-up culture, the practice serves as an identifying marker of “sexual power” or “social status.” In all three, specific groups or minorities may lack the respective practice.
4. All three are believed to be sanctioned by tradition
5. All three seem to have a past of contagious diffusion
6. All three are exaggerated over time and the prevalence of all three increases with status; whereas socioeconomic status is the specific status Mackie refers to with regard to footbinding and FGM, hook-up culture is arguably a marker of college social status.
7. All three are supported and transmitted by women and are generally not initiation rites.⁴³

The existence of these seven characteristics, combined with the extensive empirical and ethnographic researched cited previously, provide sufficient evidence to

⁴¹ The five characteristics that hook-up culture does not have in common with footbinding and female genital mutilation are, 1.) it is not necessary for proper marriage and family honor, 2.) it is not believed to promote health and fertility (though it could be argued that it is believed hook-up culture promotes sexual liberation and female empowerment), 3.) it is not defined as aesthetically pleasing compared with the natural alternative (in this case “dating” or “going steady”), 4.) it is not said to properly exaggerate the complementarity of the sexes, and 5.) it is not claimed to make intercourse more pleasurable for the male.

⁴² This varies from college campus to college campus, but it is nonetheless safe to posit that hook-up culture is the dominant (or hegemonic to use Paula England’s label) mating practice on college campuses.

⁴³ Mackie included in this characteristic that footbinding and FGM were transmitted by women on girls about six to eight years old; this obviously does not apply to the hook-up culture, though it could be said that the hook-up culture has its own distinct age group

constitute the hook-up culture as a social convention, or institution, governed by mostly implicit norms.

How is hook-up culture an inferior equilibrium?

I now turn to how this convention constitutes a societal harm, and how it can be modeled economically using a Schelling coordination diagram.⁴⁴

Schelling and Lewis's Conventions as Coordination Problems

First, I will provide a brief summary of Schelling⁴⁵ and Lewis's⁴⁶ analysis of conventions as solutions to coordination problems, very similar to the summary that Mackie includes in his piece. In doing so I use a game-theoretic account of coordination problems that assumes strategic rationality.⁴⁷ Schelling argued that the stability of institutions and traditions is the result of such coordination games; therefore, if the hook-up culture can conceptually be modeled as a coordination game, it could explain the stability of this institution despite the hook-up culture's status as an inferior equilibrium.

⁴⁴ Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The strategy of conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Lewis, D. (1969). *Convention: A philosophical study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁴⁷ Mackie defines "rationality" as "choosing what one wants more over what one wants less, whether self-regarding or other-regarding, given beliefs and constraints; Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

Figure 2

	C1	C2
R1	2, 2	0, 0
R2	0, 0	-1, -1

(A) Single Equilibrium

	C1	C2
R1	2, 2	0, 0
R2	0, 0	2, 2

**(B) Coordination:
Indifferent Equilibria**

	C1	C2
R1	2, 2	0, 0
R2	0, 0	1, 1

**(C) Coordination: Ranked
Equilibria**

	C1	C2
R1	1, 2	0, 0
R2	0, 0	2, 1

**(D) Coordination:
Conflicting Equilibria**

In each of these diagrams there are two players, each of whom has two strategies. The lower left payoff in any box is that of Player R, whereas the upper right payoff in any box is that of Player C. We assume that players cannot communicate with each other and

that they play pure strategies. With this in mind, let's note the distinctions and interpretations of the four games delineated above.

Figure A represents a single equilibrium game, where R1C1 is the sole equilibrium choice. For both players there is no better outcome than R1C1 and no reason to expect the other player to deviate and therefore decrease his or her payout. For this reason, Figure A does not represent a coordination problem, as there are not a minimum of two proper coordination equilibria, a criteria according to Lewis.⁴⁸

Figure B on the other hand represents a coordination problem. For example, if Player C chooses Column 1 (C1), then Player R would coordinate by choosing Row 1 (R1) for an end result of R1C1. If on the other hand Player C had chosen Column 2 (C2), then Player R would have correspondingly coordinated by choosing Row 2 (R2) for an end result of R2C2. If coordination were to fail however, with an end result of R2C1 or R1C2, then each player receives no payout. Players therefore must coordinate to meet one of the two equilibria, but are indifferent between the two equilibrium results. The illustration most often employed as an example of this "indifferent equilibria" model is that of drivers choosing to drive on the left or right side of the road. The side of the road that is driven on does not matter, so long as coordination occurs.

Figure D constitutes another form of coordination problem, but this one a version where each of the two equilibriums has a definitive winner and a definitive loser. This introduces elements of strategy, negotiation, and bargaining into the game theoretic model. While nonetheless important to include for the sake of representing the four types of coordination problems in their entirety, this is not the coordination problem that I argue applies to the hook-up culture.

⁴⁸ Lewis, D. (1969). *Convention: A philosophical study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Figure C represents a coordination problem whereby two equilibria exist, one distinctly inferior and one distinctly optimal. R1C1 is better for both Player C and Player R than R2C2, and R2C2 is better for both Player C and Player R than a mismatch of R1C2 and R2C1. Nonetheless, “if people are stuck at inferior equilibrium R2C2, they may lack a concerted way to move to a superior equilibrium R1C1.”⁴⁹ This is the coordination problem I argue applies to hook-up culture.

The “Hook-Up Culture Convention” and the “Dating Culture Convention” as a Coordination: Ranked Equilibria Problem

Figure 3

		Men	
		Dating as dominant convention	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention
Women	Dating as dominant convention	2	0
	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention	0	1

Figure 3 appropriately depicts the conception of the hook-up culture and dating culture as a ranked equilibria problem. In this diagram, dating-dating is the equilibrium with the highest payout to both men and women, with hook-up-hook-up representing a second inferior equilibrium. If mismatch occurs, either because men choose hooking-up

⁴⁹ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

as the dominant convention while women choose dating or vice-versa, no payout occurs. This makes intuitive sense, if men choose hooking-up as the dominant convention while women choose dating, the men will have no one to hook-up with while the women will have no one to date.⁵⁰

It is necessary to address three points for this to be a valid model of a social coordination problem with two distinct equilibria.

First, this model assumes that college aged men and women overwhelmingly desire to mate. I need hardly provide evidence to support this claim here, as the desire amongst men and women alike to engage in sexual activity and form relationships with members of the opposite sex is well documented.

Second, this model assumes that “hooking-up” and “dating” provide the two standard options available for men and women to fulfill their desire to mate, and that the two are mutually exclusive in that one convention must dominate the other. Importantly, this does not mean that dating cannot occur while the hook-up culture convention is dominant or that hook-ups cannot occur while the dating convention is dominant, but rather that one always dominates the other and that the two are the only two potential dominant forms of mating. These assumptions are fair to make based upon the historical record. As previously mentioned, modern college history from the 1920s to the 1960s existed with a norm of “going steady.”⁵¹ This norm still allowed for the existence of “hook-ups,” but a “hook-up culture” was not the prevailing norm amongst the population. During this period the “going steady” culture dominated the “hook-up culture.” Though the temporal origin and cause of the shift is debated, this convention has now changed to

⁵⁰ Importantly, this formulation only seeks to model heterosexual relationships.

⁵¹ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press

one where the “hook-up culture” dominates the “dating culture.” Bogle expressed this empirical finding, writing:⁵²

Although students have many options about how they conduct themselves within the hookup culture, they cannot change the fact that hooking up is the dominant script on campus. An individual student may decide to abstain from hooking up altogether, but they are more or less on their own to figure out an alternative. In other words, no other script exists side-by-side with hooking up that students can opt to use instead.

Consequently, it is fair to model this social coordination problem as one involving two mutually exclusive and exhaustive conventions.

Third, for this model to be an accurate depiction of the mating coordination problem facing college students, it must be that a “dating culture convention” is relatively superior in comparison to a “hook-up culture convention.” This claim is well supported by the relevant literature, which documents several harms of the hook-up culture that are not present in the dating culture. To make this point that the hook-up culture is a harmful social equilibrium, I return to Heldman and Wade’s summary of the relevant hook-up literature, which delineates six distinct ways in which the hook-up culture can promote societal harm, especially to women. In doing so, it is important to distinguish between harms that are inherent to the very act of hooking-up itself, and harms that are a negative “side effect” of the current institutional structure of the hook-up culture.

Societal Harms Imposed by the Hook-Up Culture: Single “Inherent” Harm

Of the six harms that Heldman and Wade identified, only one was inherent to the very act of the hook-up culture itself: emotional distress. While some proportion of

⁵² Ibid.

students expressed profound satisfaction with hook-up culture,⁵³ a “majority report emotional distress to varying degrees.”⁵⁴ Lonely, “no strings attached” hook-ups predominantly devoid of future emotional connection can lead students to feel lonely and isolated.⁵⁵ It has also been noted that the frequent disconnect between what students emotionally desire and receive is one reason for hook-up culture’s emotional harm.⁵⁶

Importantly, this is the only harm of the six that is arguably also present in the dating culture. Indeed, experiencing a break-up in the dating culture is certainly likely to bring emotional distress. The difference that exists relative to the hook-up culture, however, is that this emotional distress is preceded by the positive benefit of emotional connection, something that never exists in the hook-up culture to begin with.

Societal Harms Imposed by the Hook-Up Culture: Five “Symptomatic” Harms

The five other harms delineated by Heldman and Wade are not inherent aspects of the hook-up culture itself, but are nonetheless prevalent wherever the hook-up culture dominates. In this way, these five harms can be said to be “symptomatic” of the hook-up culture, though they need not be.

First, many studies find that hook-up sex is unpleasuarable or coercive in nature.⁵⁷ An “orgasm gap” is well documented between men and women, with a finding that when

⁵³ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society, 23*, 589-616

⁵⁴ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 7*, 323-333.

⁵⁵ Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.; Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 7*, 323-333.

⁵⁶ Freitas, D. (2008). *Sex and the soul: Juggling sexuality, spirituality, romance, and religion on America's college campuses*. New York: Oxford University Press.; Garcia, J. R., & Reiber, C. (2008). Hook-up behavior: A biopsy-chosocial perspective. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology, 2*, 49-65.; Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.; Paul, E., & Hayes, K. A. (2002). The casualties of “casual” sex: A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college students’ hook ups. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 639-661

⁵⁷ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society, 23*, 589-616; Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D’Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007).

two partners hook up for the first time, women orgasm only 32% as often as men.⁵⁸ This ratio improves to 49% with repeated hook-ups, but this nonetheless portrays a stark inequality between male and female gains from hooking-up. Put bluntly, female sexual pleasure appears to take less priority in the hook-up culture than male sexual pleasure. This is potentially related to the finding that many women consent to sexual encounters and activities that they do not desire.⁵⁹ Adolescent girls especially have been found to feel empowered saying “yes” to sex, but oftentimes find it difficult to control the trajectory of the sexual encounter afterward.⁶⁰

Second, and arguably most harmful, hook-up culture facilitates sexual assault.⁶¹ Women in college have a significantly greater likelihood of experiencing sexual assault than non-college peers.⁶² According to a study by the American Association of University Women, young women during college have a 20-25% chance of experiencing an attempted or completed sexual assault or rape.⁶³ Additionally, major differences have been noted between representative student samples of those who participate in hook-up culture versus those that do not. In a survey study, Flack et al. (2007) found that “one

Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 139-157.; Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.; Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

⁵⁸ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616

⁵⁹ Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D'Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 139-157.; Littleton, H., Tabernik, H., Canales, E. J., & Backstrom, T. (2009). Risky situation or harmless fun? A qualitative examination of college women's bad hook-up and rape scripts. *Sex Roles*, 60, 793-804.; Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

⁶⁰ Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., & Thomson, R. (1998). *The male in the head: Young people, heterosexuality and power*. London: The Tufnell.; Tolman, D. (1994). Doing desire: Adolescent girls' struggles forwith sexuality. *Gender & Society*, 8, 324-342.

⁶¹ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.; Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D'Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 139-157.; Littleton, H., Tabernik, H., Canales, E. J., & Backstrom, T. (2009). Risky situation or harmless fun? A qualitative examination of college women's bad hook-up and rape scripts. *Sex Roles*, 60, 793-804.; Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

⁶² Karjane, H. M., Fisher, B. S., & Cullen, F. T. (2002, December). *Sexual assault on campus: What colleges and universities are doing about it*. United States Department of Justice.

⁶³ American Association of University Women (2009). *SAAM: Sexual assault on campus*. www.aauw.org. Accessed April 28, 2013

fourth of students who report hooking up also report being raped, while none of the 55 students who have never hooked up report rape. Overall 78% of coerced vaginal, anal, and oral sex occurred while hooking up.”⁶⁴

Third, reputational outcomes as a result of hooking-up differ between genders, leading to a number of negative ramifications. The “stud vs. slut” problem continues to predominate societal norms and college rhetoric, with the number of women a man has “sexually conquered” seen as a marker of increased status while the same such activity by a female would mark her as a “whore” or “skank.” In other words, women continue to face a societal taboo against their engaging in “too much” sexual activity whereas men face no such limit.⁶⁵ Significantly, both men and women perpetuate this perception, with women engaging in “slut-shaming” against their fellow gender as well.⁶⁶

This leads to several harmful ramifications. Men utilize the hook-up culture to “establish a socially dominant image and for masculine “bragging rights,” while women tend to show regret after hook ups because they have been socialized to believe that having sex outside of a relationship is morally wrong for them.”⁶⁷ Additionally, an antagonistic dynamic between men and women is created on campus, whereby men avoid women due to their greater interest in relationships and desire to alleviate reputational damage. This avoidance can manifest itself in unreturned calls, ignored texts, actively

⁶⁴ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Flack, W. F., Jr., Daubman, K. A., Caron, M. L., Asadorian, J. A., D’Aureli, N. R., Gigliotti, S. N., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 139-157.

⁶⁵ Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.; Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.

⁶⁶ England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogerty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today’s college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed., pp. 531-593). New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁷ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

attempting to spend less time with the female, or the male acting as though he had never met the female upon seeing her on the quad.⁶⁸

Fourth, the ambiguity inherent in the hook-up script compared to the historically much more defined dating script means that hooking up is significantly harder to decode and navigate.⁶⁹ This disadvantages young men and women who are more likely to “go farther” or believe that hooking-up will lead to a committed relationship.⁷⁰ And while the evidence indicates that students tend to have learned the “rules of the hook-up game” by their second year of college,⁷¹ this is not always “accompanied by a stronger sense of sexual agency.”⁷² This ambiguity, and the social taboo against open communication about sexuality has led many students to misunderstand the dynamics of the hook up culture. As Heldman and Wade noted, “most students overestimate the frequency with which their peers hook up, how “far” they go in hook ups, and the degree to which their peers enjoy hooking up.”⁷³

Fifth, hook-up culture increases the likelihood of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (hereafter STIs) in comparison to dating. In the hook-up culture, an individual has a greater number of partners, engages in much more sexual content with “strangers,” and is more likely to experience an unplanned sexual encounter that is less

⁶⁸ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

⁶⁹ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press

⁷⁰ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.; Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333.

⁷¹ Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press; Gilmartin, S. K. (2006). Changes in college women’s attitudes toward sexual intimacy. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16, 429-454.

⁷² Gilmartin, S. K. (2006). Changes in college women’s attitudes toward sexual intimacy. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16, 429-454.

⁷³ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press; Freitas, D. (2008). *Sex and the soul: Juggling sexuality, spirituality, romance, and religion on America’s college campuses*. New York: Oxford University Press.; Lambert 2003, and Paul, E. (2006). Beer goggles, catching feelings, and the walk of shame: Myths and realities of the hook up experience. In D.C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The process of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 141-160). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

likely to use protection.⁷⁴ STI transmission has risen in the past decade, with Chlamydia and syphilis rising steadily to new record rates and gonorrhea increasing and remaining at a high steady rate.⁷⁵ Leichter et al. attributed such increases to unprotected oral and anal sex.⁷⁶ Herpes simplex virus-1 rapidly became a popular cause of genital herpes as a result of the rise in unprotected oral sex,⁷⁷ and increased rates of oral cancers caused by the human papilloma virus are believed to have occurred due to changes in the prevalence of oral sex amongst young adults.⁷⁸

Desire for Dating

While not necessarily contributing to the argument that the hook-up culture is socially dangerous, the fact also remains that a significant percentage of college students, male and female alike, desire the ability to date. This gives further credence to the claim that a dating-dating equilibrium is relatively superior to a hook-up-hook-up equilibrium. A survey of over four thousand Duke University undergrads, for example, found that 72.4% of men and 74.6% of women desired to date more.⁷⁹

Why is this convention self-enforcing, despite its inferior status?

Having established that the hook-up outcome is inferior to the dating outcome, it is now necessary to address why this inferior equilibrium persists. Importantly, it is not necessary to address *why* the hook-up-hook-up outcome first became the chosen equilibrium (though earlier I did briefly discuss potential origins). Rather, taking as a

⁷⁴ MacDonald, T. K., & Hynie, M. (2008). Ambivalence and unprotected sex: Failure to predict sexual activity and decreased condom use. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 38*, 1092-1107.

⁷⁵ Engle, M. (2009). Rates of Chlamydia, syphilis on the rise in U.S. *The Los Angeles Times* (January 14).

⁷⁶ Leichter, J. S., Chandra, A., Liddon, N., Fenton, K. A., & Aral, S. O. (2007). Prevalence and correlates of heterosexual anal and oral sex in adolescents and adults in the United States. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases, 196*, 1852-1859.

⁷⁷ Roberts, C. M. (2005). Genital herpes in young adults: Changing sexual behaviors, epidemiology and management. *Herpes, 12*, 9-14

⁷⁸ Chaturvedi, A., Engels, E., Anderson, W., & Gillison, M. (2008). Incidence trends for human papillomavirus-related and unrelated oral squamous cell carcinomas in the United States. *Journal of Clinical Oncology, 28*, 612-619.

⁷⁹ Asher, S. R., & Weeks, M. S. (2012). Social relationships, academic engagement, and well-being in college: Findings from the duke social relationships project. Retrieved from <http://sites.duke.edu/dsrp/files/2011/10/DSRP-Report-FINALrev1.pdf>

given that college campuses exist in the hook-up equilibrium, we ask what keeps men and women from coordinating to reach the more superior dating equilibrium?

In short, the coordination diagram represents a collective action problem. While in a world with simply ten men and ten women, it might be easier to collectively communicate intentions to move to the more-superior equilibrium, the difficulty of such communication is exponentially expanded when the population grows larger. As a hypothetical analogy, imagine if for some reason it was empirically proven that driving cars on the left-hand side of the road led to fewer accidents than driving on the right-hand side. Though driving on the left hand side of the road was now a more superior equilibrium, it would still be practically impossible for all drivers in the U.S. to coordinate to start driving on the left hand side.

The reason for this, as Schelling has noted, deals with psychological salience.⁸⁰ Individuals choose an outcome not because that outcome is good necessarily, but rather because it is salient. In Mackie's words, "the salient choice is not uniquely *good*, just noticeably *unique*. It all depends on what players believe about each other."⁸¹ In a recurring game, such as car-driving, if "drive on the right side of the road"⁸² has been chosen the last 10 times, than that equilibrium is strongly salient. In this way, "coordination by precedent is convention."⁸³ In order to reach the more superior equilibrium, there must be some manner of communication that can override the psychological salience of tradition and convince individuals to coordinate. This is exactly what happened in Sweden, Mackie notes, when "at 5:00am, Sunday, September 22, 1967

⁸⁰ Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The strategy of conflict*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁸¹ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

Sweden switched from driving on the left side of the road to driving on the right.”^{84,85}

The Swedish government had to effectively mandate and communicate to all Swedish drivers that this change was going to take place—the drivers could not do it themselves.

The same concept can be applied to the hook-up culture and dating. With most college campuses housing thousands of students, and in some cases tens of thousands, the ability to effectively communicate and organize so as to shift the convention is immensely difficult. And such a shift necessarily requires large numbers of people to deviate from the inferior equilibrium. If one person were to unilaterally deviate and attempt to date, they would enter a “dating pool” that is minimal at best, non-existent at worst. In describing FGM, Mackie noted, “women believed that men would not marry an unmutilated woman, and men believed that an unmutilated woman would not be a faithful partner in marriage...expectations were mutually concordant and a self-enforcing convention was locked in.”⁸⁶ With regard to dating, the idea that, “I can’t start dating because no one else is dating and I will be left without any partner(s) at all” is a self-fulfilling, self-sustaining belief analogous to this very observation of the FGM convention. Additionally, hook-up culture has now been in existence for over two decades, with each generation of college students communicating to the next that this is the tradition that takes place. Students are actively told and come to learn that “dating is dead.” Over time, knowledge of the previous dating-dating equilibrium disappears, “as if the northwest quadrant of the matrix in Figure 2C [fades] away.”⁸⁷ Put differently, the hook-up culture has extremely high levels of saliency combined with a very large

⁸⁴ Interestingly, the reason for this change was to minimize the number of car accidents caused by tourists visiting Sweden who were used to driving on the right side of the road.

⁸⁵ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017. citing Hardin, R. (1988). *Morality within the limits of reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. and Ullmann-Margalit, E. (1977). *The emergence of norms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁸⁶ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

population of players. These two factors make it extremely difficult for the individuals involved to coordinate to relocate to the more superior dating equilibrium.

Brief Rebuttal of an Economic Argument for Hook-Up Culture

This coordination problem analysis also serves as a response to an oft-cited reason for the persistence of the hook-up culture: that college students, while still desiring to maximize sexual consumption, delay serious relationships to make time for more professional or scholarly pursuits. College students, for example, are less likely to see college as a time to search for a marriage partner than ever before. The median age for first marriage in the US is the highest it's ever been (26 for women and 28 for men in 2009).⁸⁸ Surveys have also shown that many students “believed relationships interfered with their career goals and, accordingly, substituted hook ups for more time- and emotion-intensive relationships.”⁸⁹ Taking this argument as valid, one would restructure the numerical payoffs of the mating game in Figure 3, reconfiguring it such that hook-up-hook-up was indeed the more superior equilibrium; in other words, by allowing students to account for economic constraints such as limited time, the hook-up-hook-up equilibrium would be economically superior to the dating-dating equilibrium.

There are several responses to this critique. First, it assumes that a hook-up outcome is necessarily less of a time-commitment than a dating outcome. There is no reason to automatically assume that hooking-up is less time intensive, on net, than dating. Indeed, hooking up requires a great deal of specific time commitments. These can include, for example, time spent: 1.) attending clubs, 2.) preparing for a night out, 3.) investing social capital to be invited to certain parties, 4.) “pledging” or “rushing” a

⁸⁸ U.S. Census (n.d.b). Current Population Survey. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls>

⁸⁹ Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-Up Culture: Setting a New Research Agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 323-333. citing Armstrong, E. A., & Hamilton, L. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society*, 23, 589-616.

fraternity, sorority, or other living group to join a social circle that facilitates hook-ups, and 5.) “scouting” or attempting to find a hook-up partner. Many of these time commitments immediately cease upon the identification of a committed monogamous partner; in colloquial terms, one no longer needs to spend time “on the prowl.” It is therefore conceivable that while dating is time-intensive, it is not necessarily more time intensive than the hook-up culture. Furthermore, it is arguable that even were dating to be more time intensive than hook-up culture, the possible “end payout” of a committed monogamous relationship is exceedingly superior in minimizing economic constraints so as to be worth the risk of time-costly dating.

Second, this argument makes the assumption—appropriately so in the opinion of this author—that college students generally desire to maximize sexual activity. But it assumes that hook-up culture is superior in maximizing the total amount of sexual activities that a student experiences. Again, while not necessarily empirically proven, it is conceivably possible that an individual who finds a committed partner as a result of dating would be able to enjoy a more constant (and hopefully more enjoyable) flow of sexual activities than someone who must repeatedly engage in the hook-up culture. While it might be that the “risk” of dating is high, as before, the “end payout” of a committed monogamous relationship is likely to be superior in maximizing the sexual consumption of the individual.

Third, this formulation of the hook-up culture as a superior equilibrium does not account for the six harms previously delineated in this paper and expanded upon in the literature. As argued previously, these costs, taken as a whole, likely relegate the hook-up

equilibrium to an inferior status, regardless of whether it saves students time or maximizes sexual activity.

Fourth, this formulation doesn't account for the high number of students that desire to date. Were it really so that students on the whole desired to delay monogamous relationships for the sake of professional or academic achievement, it would not be the case that such high numbers of students indicate a desire to see more dating on campus.

Finally, though students express a desire in some survey responses to delay commitment to focus on professional work or schoolwork, this does not necessarily mean they are correct in deciding to do so. These responses were given by college students existing in a hook-up equilibrium, without knowledge of a potentially more superior equilibrium. Quite frankly, young adults might simply be unaware of the value they are likely to gain from dating, and are therefore not able to make an informed decision.

Importantly, while I argue that this economic argument for the persistence of hook-up culture does not necessarily change the structure of the social coordination dilemma (in that it doesn't alter the relative payouts of the game), it nonetheless provides a further reason for why the inferior hook-up outcome continues to exist. As stated previously, it could be the case that students genuinely believe that hook-up culture is better for them than a dating culture. Furthermore, since the hook-up culture represents a social coordination problem, the economic payout of unilaterally deviating *is* fundamentally very low. Students are therefore right in that "dating now is not worth the time" because the economic payout of dating is low when no one else is doing it. Were there, however, to be a convention shift, this would alter the economic payout of dating. The rationale that, "I don't have time to date because I have to focus on academics"

might then cease to exist, as students realize that dating is worth the newly enlarged payout.

Part IV – Solving the Coordination Problem

Returning to our Figure 3 diagram, we can see that there are three different ways one could alleviate the harm imposed by the inferior equilibrium.

Figure 3

		Men	
		Dating as dominant convention	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention
Women	Dating as dominant convention	2	0
	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention	0	1

Second, one could solve the dilemma by eliminating the mutual exclusivity between the hook-up convention and the dating convention. Third, one could solve the dilemma by directly solving the coordination problem, by organizing individuals in the inferior hook-up population to relocate to the more superior dating equilibrium. I will elaborate on each solution in kind.

Increasing the pay-out of the hook-up convention

First, one could solve the dilemma by increasing the payout of the hook-up convention, thereby making it superior to a dating convention. In the manner in which the game is currently structured, the payout of the hook-up convention is inferior to the payout of the dating convention. It is possible that this need not be the case. As discussed previously, with the exception of emotional distress, the other identified harms of the hook-up culture are “symptomatic” of the culture rather than inherent characteristics.

By crafting policies designed to alleviate these symptoms, it is possible that the payout structure of the game could be altered so as to allow the hook-up convention to become the superior equilibrium. Such a change is demonstrated in Figure 4, where the payout of the hook-up convention has been correspondingly changed to the now superior 3-3 from the inferior 1-1. Importantly, the payout of the dating convention did not decrease absolutely; rather, the hook-up convention simply became relatively more utility maximizing.

Figure 4

		Men	
		Dating as dominant convention	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention
Women	Dating as dominant convention	2 2	0 0
	Hook-Up Culture as dominant convention	0 0	3 3

But while these symptomatic harms of the hook-up culture might be thoroughly identified, proposing remedies for such harms is a significantly more difficult task. Almost all inherently involve a reconceptualization of predominant gender norms. For example, to alleviate the orgasm gap, women must be empowered to demand more in the bedroom while men must also be more generous. To alter the differing reputational outcomes between genders, college culture must overcome the “stud vs. slut” double standard, and facilitate an environment that allows women to feel autonomous and self-efficacious with regard to their own sexual decisions; an atmosphere must be created in which women feel both sexually liberated and sexually empowered without the judgment of other men and women. To alleviate the ambiguity of the hook-up script, social taboos against openly discussing sex must be surmounted, allowing for clarity in sexual norms; information especially should be disseminated to freshman women and men regarding the hook-up script, protecting them from the inevitable pitfalls they all too frequently fall into before discovering the true “rules of the game.” Finally, with regard to both sexual assault and STIs, harsher college punishments for rapists or an increase in available health options could both help alleviate the information asymmetries that allow these practices to propagate in an otherwise consensual and STI free culture.

Given that there exist significant information asymmetries in the hook-up culture, it is interesting to note that no institutional structures have arisen to correct for them. Why is it, for example, that institutions have not arisen to inform incoming freshman about the hook-up culture and its script? Why have institutions not formed to help identify, for those in the hook-up culture, individuals with STIs or individuals who have in the past committed sexual assault? The lack of such institutions is puzzling, as both

economics and political science research suggests that the demand for these institutions would precipitate a response.

Eliminating the mutual exclusivity between the hook-up convention and the dating convention

Hook-up culture is distinct from footbinding and FGM in that it need not be mutually exclusive with alternative conventions. By eliminating the mutual exclusivity between the hook-up convention and the dating convention, one allows both to exist without either dominating the other, therefore opening up to individuals the choice to participate in either and ending the social coordination problem. This can happen in one of two ways.

First, a scenario could exist in which a critical mass of individuals partake in the hook-up convention while a mutually exclusive critical mass partakes in the dating convention. In this way, since both maintain a critical mass of population, neither of the two conventions dominates the other. This requires a *balance* between the two conventions. That being said, if individuals must indeed choose between one convention or the other, Schelling's convention theory would indicate that such a "balanced" scenario is unlikely to occur if not impossible to bring about. This will be demonstrated in my later analysis of the hook-up convention using a Schelling diagram.

Second, a different scenario could exist in which a choice between partaking in the hook-up culture and dating culture no longer predominates—an environment in which individuals choose to partake in both cultures simultaneously as a manner of finding potential mates or fulfilling sexual desire. For example, someone could look for a committed relationship partner by dating while simultaneously fulfilling his or her sexual

impulses by hooking-up. If and when the individual found a partner on the dating market (or possibly even in the hook-up culture) than that individual would leave the hook-up culture to enjoy the newly found committed monogamous relationship. In this way, both dating and hooking-up can be activities engaged in concurrently, both of which can be used to varying degrees to find a potential relationship partner. There is no immediate reason to believe that such a conception couldn't exist. Indeed, Kathleen Bogle has often commented that individuals who repeatedly hook-up sometimes begin to date, referring to this as an "inversion" of the previous dating script.⁹⁰

That being said, while there is no reason to believe that such mutual exclusivity between a dominant hook-up culture and dating culture could not be eliminated, the historical record and vast body of empirical research supports the claim that mutual exclusivity tends to be a distinct factor of the game. One possible reason is the previous economic constraints argument—students find they only have so much time to either hook-up or date, and can only commit to doing one opposed to the other. Further research is also needed to shed light upon why such mutual exclusivity exists, and if or how it could be overcome.

Directly solving the coordination problem

Finally, the negative aspects of the hook-up culture can be alleviated by complete abandonment of the hook-up outcome for the more superior dating outcome. This necessarily requires a solution to the social coordination problem that undergirds Figure 3. I shall argue that, like footbinding was quickly brought to an end in China, the hook-up

⁹⁰ WatchBucknell. "Dr. Kathleen Bogle Interview." YouTube. Online Video Clip. July 9, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg1zcDxWKmw> (accessed April 28, 2013)

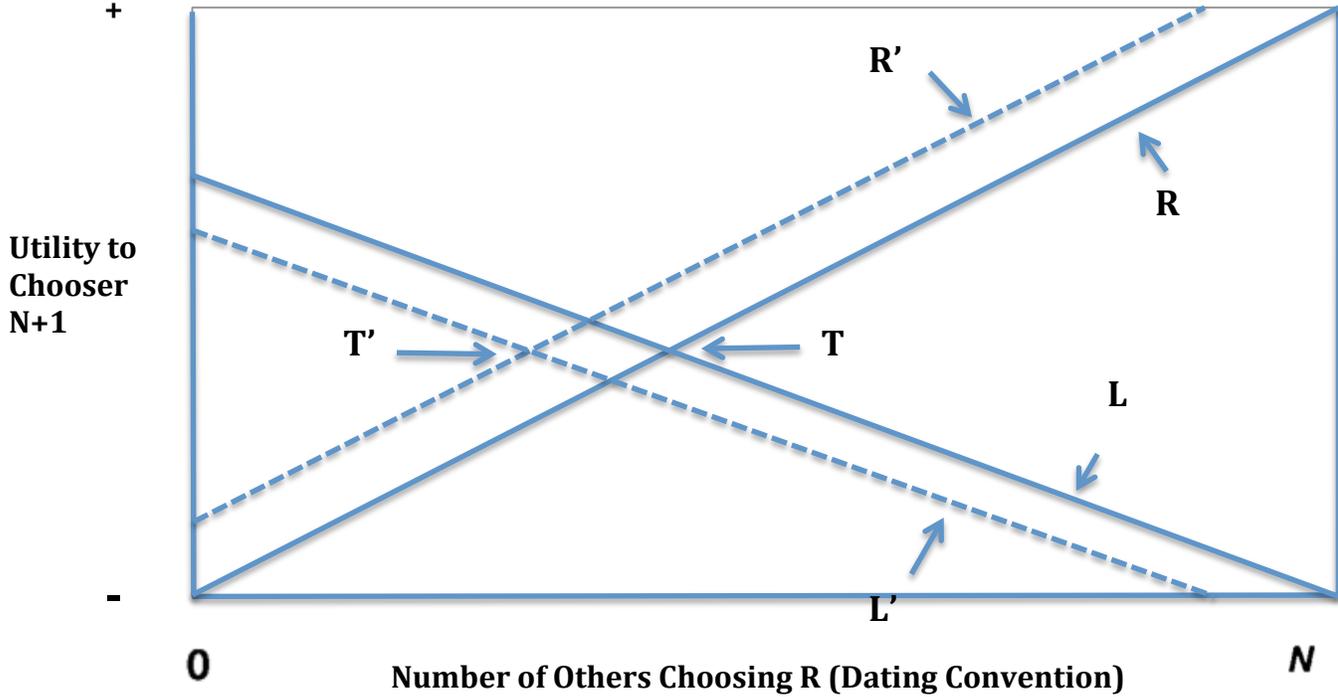
convention on college campuses could be quickly brought to an end and replaced by a dating convention in a similar fashion.

Schelling Coordination Diagram

Mackie argued that footbinding ended in China due to three key factors. First, a modern education campaign was carried out whereby China was informed that the rest of the world did not bind women's feet and that China was therefore losing face to the rest of the world. Second, an education campaign explained the advantages of natural feet and the disadvantages of bound feet. Finally, natural-foot societies were formed wherein members pledged not to bind their daughters' feet nor to let their sons marry women with bound feet. Mackie concludes that these three tactics are "appropriate for escaping an inferior convention."⁹¹ Drawing upon a Schelling Coordination diagram similar to the one used by Mackie to model the quick elimination of footbinding, I argue that the same such model predicts that, were the hook-up culture to end due to this three step process, it too would end rapidly.

⁹¹ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

Figure 5



This Schelling coordination diagram shown in Figure 5 is a way to model the many-person version of the two-person version of the coordination game modeled in Figure 3. Suppose a reference population of $n+1$ homogenous individuals in a mating market (a market of individuals available to either hook-up or date). The vertical axes represent higher or lower utility value to the typical chooser. The horizontal axis runs from zero other people on the left to n other people on the right.

In this particular application, one curve, L , represents the choice resulting in an inferior equilibrium (hook-up culture as dominant). It starts at a zero value on the right because were zero individuals to currently exist in the hook-up culture, the next person to join the hook-up culture would be alone and therefore gain zero utility from the experience. L slopes up to the left because the greater the proportion of people choosing

to hook-up, the more utility the next individual gains from joining the hook-up culture. In other words—as was demonstrated by our analysis of the hook-up culture as a club good—the greater the hook-up population, the greater the utility enjoyed.

The other curve, R , represents the choice resulting in a superior equilibrium (dating culture as dominant). It similarly starts at a zero value on the left because were only one person to exist in the dating culture he or she would gain no utility from residing in that culture. It slopes up and to the right because the greater the number of people that participate in a dating culture, the greater the number of potential mates in the dating population and the lower the risk of someone not finding a mate were they to join the culture.

There are two equilibria in this model. Either everyone hooks up (the intersection of L and the left hand y -axis), or everyone dates, (the intersection of R and the right hand y -axis). Importantly, the latter equilibrium is a superior equilibrium to the former in that it reaches a higher level of utility. The preceding sections of this paper leading up to this point provide the theoretical and empirical foundations upon which this initial model is structured.

Importantly, if L (the hook-up culture) represents the status quo equilibrium, there is no reason for the next person who joins the community to choose to date. He or she would be the only one in the dating population, and therefore experience zero utility from this decision. In this way, the hook-up culture equilibrium is self-enforcing. However if T individuals were to collectively decide to start dating, then the next person to join the population would gain more utility from dating than hooking-up, therefore leading to a cascade effect whereby individuals abandon the L equilibrium (hooking-up) for the R

equilibrium (dating). T in this way represents the “tipping point”—it is the minimum number of individuals that are needed to collectively organize and defect from the L equilibrium to bring about the R equilibrium. Both Schelling and Mackie describe this as “getting over the hump.”⁹²

In seeking to end footbinding, the reformer campaigns stressed that China was alone in the world in binding female feet. This allowed the Chinese population to escape their respective “belief trap” and realize that a superior equilibrium is available. While it is the case that most college students are aware of the corresponding equilibrium—they are aware that a dating equilibrium *could* exist, having heard about it from preceding generations—it is possible, if not likely, that they do not realize it represents a “superior equilibrium.” An information campaign stressing the benefits of dating experienced in other cultures could subsequently inform college students of the superior “dating” equilibrium similar to the manner in which Chinese women were informed of the superior “natural feet equilibrium.” Indeed, not all cultures choose to engage in the hook-up culture. For example, a recent cross-cultural study found that the American hook-up culture differs significantly from the Netherlands, with Dutch young women’s magazines stressing, “the presence of committed sex and love-related articles” to the U.S. young women’s magazines stressing, “casual sex and a lack of love stories.”⁹³

Now suppose there is a number of people currently partaking in the hook-up culture that are more amenable than others to defecting and joining the dating culture, so long as they were convinced that doing so would result in the more superior R equilibrium. It is a reasonable assumption to make that some men and women would

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Joshi, S. P., Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. (2013 (Forthcoming)). A cross-cultural content-analytic comparison of the hookup culture in u.s. and dutch teen girl magazines. *Journal of Sex Research*,

desire to switch to the dating equilibrium, but are nonetheless not cohesively organized. Call this group contingent K . Additionally, K does not outnumber T , or the tipping point necessary to switch the population to the superior equilibrium. So even if they were to collectively organize, they would not be of a sufficient enough number to switch the equilibrium. What K needs to do is both collectively organize and grow in number to overcome the tipping point. The next two steps by which footbinding was brought to an end provide a manner in which contingent K could achieve both.

First, footbinding reformers sought public pledges within church fellowships. Natural-foot societies were formed wherein members pledged neither to bind their daughters' feet nor to let their sons marry women with bound feet. In Chinese culture, renegeing on a public pledge was damaging to family honor. Furthermore, any temptation to renege disappears upon reaching the tipping point and experiencing the new equilibrium. Similarly, analogous societies such as these could be formed between college aged men and woman who desire to date. Imagine groups of women or men publicly declaring their desire for a dating culture and instantaneously creating a larger dating pool population. Additionally, if the same groups vowed not just to begin dating, but to abstain from the hook-up culture entirely (or sex entirely) it would cut in to the utility experienced by the remaining members of the hook-up culture, incentivizing them to defect to dating. If such a public declaration was large enough to overcome T , the model predicts that it would switch the entire population to a new equilibrium.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ The one caveat in this comparison to footbinding is that it is significantly harder to know if the public declaration of individuals is being fulfilled. Whereas it is relatively easy to discover if a woman's feet have been bound, it is significantly harder to know whether a man or woman has violated his or her pledge not to hook up.

Finally, footbinding reformers conducted an “education and propaganda campaign on the disadvantages of footbinding and...the advantages of natural feet.”⁹⁵ Those desiring to bring about a dating equilibrium could also replicate this practice. By informing the college aged population about the dangers of hooking-up, the practice of hooking up comes to be valued less, shifting L down and to the left to L' . Furthermore, as the advantages of dating become better realized, dating comes to be valued more, and therefore R shifts up and to the right to R' . This leads to a resulting decrease in the necessary number of people to trigger the new equilibrium, shifting the tipping point to the left from T to T' . The K that existed before is also likely to grow to K' as a result of this campaign. In conclusion, if $K' > T'$ than the tipping point will be breached and a dating culture will ensue.

This three-step process predicted the quick eradication of footbinding in China, and was modeled by Mackie using an analogously similar Schelling diagram. As Mackie noted, “[footbinding ended] with earliness, suddenness, and completeness” and he attributed this end to, “exposure to a specific superior alien convention and the specific innovation of the 1895 [Chinese footbinding] organization and education campaign, rather than any generalized modernizing trend.”⁹⁶ In applying the same modeling framework, and applying the same three-step process, I argue that a similar rapid end could occur with college hook-up culture.

PART V – Conclusion

In closing, I think it is worth paying heed to the apoplectic, quizzical, or downright humorous reaction many of my peers might have to this formulation of the

⁹⁵ Mackie, G. (1996). Ending footbinding and infibulation: A convention account. *American Sociological Review*, 61(6), 999-1017.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

hook-up culture. Many of my peers engage in such a culture on a regular basis, and I have met individuals who are profound supporters of the convention, defending it on the grounds of female empowerment, sexual liberation, or libertarian values. On other occasions, I have heard of peers, professors, parents, and friends disavow the hook-up convention, arguing that it represents a decay of moral values and a detriment to our generation's ability to later engage in fruitful and rewarding long-term post-college relationships. Duke University certainly is not devoid of phenomena from which to draw upon in analyzing the potential ramifications of such a culture, with the Shooters II nightclub, progressive parties, the Lacrosse scandal, controversially themed fraternity parties, and even the Karen Owen scandal providing fodder for such examination.

While I provide an argument for the disadvantages of the hook-up culture and argue for three specific frameworks by which those detriments could be overcome, it was not my intention to shame anyone who engages in these practices. Rather I seek to shine a spotlight on a well-documented sociological convention that was otherwise poorly researched from an economic or institutional standpoint. It is my hope that this paper, and the arguments contained herein, might entice scholars and students alike to consider the hook-up culture from a new perspective. Further discussion, research, and scientific testing is needed, but these ideas provide a starting point from which this can occur, thereby bringing us closer to developing a more healthy environment for college students.

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