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How Do Relationship Labels Affect Partner Treatment And Relationship Status Perceptions?

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**HOW DO RELATIONSHIP LABELS AFFECT PARTNER TREATMENT AND
RELATIONSHIP STATUS PERCEPTIONS?**

by

Katharine L. Golub

A Proposal Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in Psychology

04/29/2013

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Joel Wade". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "T".

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A second handwritten signature in black ink, identical to the one above, appearing to read "T. Joel Wade".

Department Chairperson: T. Joel Wade

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Abstract

The present research examined which terms are most used by college students to define relationships, and how these various terms prime or affect partner treatment and relationship status perceptions. Once primed with the labels “hooking-up,” “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend,” it was hypothesized that public displays of affection, commitment, jealousy and sociosexuality would influence partner treatment. The results indicate that being primed with various relationship labels does influence public displays of affection. This priming does not influence jealousy, and it influences commitment on some occasions. The data collected can further our understanding of relationship dynamics among college students by differentiating between various terms.

Introduction

The hook-up culture is extremely prevalent on college campuses today. Past research has defined the college hook-up culture as, “casual sexual contact between non-dating partners without an (expressed or acknowledged) expectation of forming a committed relationship” (Armstrong et al., 2000; Bogle, 2008; Flack et al., 2006; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Paul et al., 2000; Paul, 2006; as cited by Heldman & Wade, 2010). Despite its prevalence, not all men and women choose to engage in the hook-up culture. Some prefer to commit and become couples. In the past, couples would go on dates before becoming sexually active (Bogle, 2009). Today, the opposite tends to occur. College couples often commence as a hook-up and get progressively more serious. This progression can involve an open conversation about the “status” of that couple, which leads to the production of a label. “What are we? Are we hooking up? Exclusive? Non-exclusive? Dating?” College students use a multitude of labels and expressions to define relationship status, and unless explicitly discussed, the “rules and behaviors” expected of each label are ambiguous. This can be confusing for people in relationships because the male and female might not share a mutual understanding of what they “are.” If a couple says they are “hooking-up,” what does this mean? What are the behavioral expectations? Do the man and woman view this in the same way?

Hooking-Up: A Definition

Psychologists have created various definitions for the term “hook-up.” It is important to distinguish between “hooking up” and a “hook up.” Lambert, Kahn and Apple (2003) define “hooking up” as the act when “two people agree to engage in sexual behavior for which there is no future commitment.” “Hooking up” implies an ongoing process, while a “hook-up” suggests a one-time interaction. Garcia and Reiber (2008) define “hook-up” as “a spontaneous sexual interaction in which 1) the individuals are explicitly *not* in a traditional romantic relationship with each other, 2) there are no *a priori* agreements regarding what behaviors will occur, and 3) there is explicitly *no* promise of any subsequent intimate relations or relationships” (Garcia & Reiber, 2008, p. 193). Paul, McManus and Hayes (2000), on the other hand, define a “hook-up” as “a sexual encounter, usually lasting only one night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances” (Paul et al., 2000, p. 76). In essence, it is a casual sexual encounter (Owen, Finchman & Moore, 2010). This is very common among young adults, especially college students (Grello, Welsh & Harper, 2006).

It is not easy to navigate the hook-up culture because there are no “guidelines.” As aforementioned, people interpret relationship labels differently. One might wonder why people choose to engage in the hook-up culture because of its noncommittal reputation. Gender norms play a large role. For men, it reinforces masculinity. Men feel empowered and masculine when they have sex with multiple women. They receive positive reinforcement from their friends. In general, men desire less committed relationships than women (Owen et al., 2010). Women tend to seek long-term

relationships, and they believe that hooking-up (i.e., a short-term relationship) can be the first step (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). It is viewed as a transitional phase that will eventually lead to something more serious. Women give in to the hook-up culture with the hope of finding “Mr. Right.”

Sociosexuality

Although 70% of college students report having engaged in intercourse with partners they do not consider romantic (Grello et al., 2006), this does not mean that *all* college students are likely (or willing) to engage in these types of sexual relationships. Sociosexuality may influence this. Sociosexuality refers to people’s sexual behavior, more specifically the way people feel about the number of partners they have sex with and how willing people are to initiate sexual relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). People are either considered to have a restricted or an unrestricted sociosexual orientation. People with a *restricted* sociosexual orientation normally insist on being emotionally committed to a person before having sexual intercourse. They are usually more sexually inexperienced and rarely have sex with someone on only one occasion. They have fewer sexual partners (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991, p. 870). Individuals with an *unrestricted* sociosexual orientation fall on the opposite end of the spectrum. They feel comfortable having sex with someone before they become emotionally attached. These people tend to have multiple sex partners, and are willing to sleep with someone on only one occasion (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991, p. 870). Sociosexual orientation may be useful when trying to understand a person’s behavior towards his or her partner. For

example, in a couple that is “hooking-up,” more restricted individuals may be less likely to hook-up with someone else because they believe they are committed. An unrestricted individual might not experience this sense of commitment in a relationship labeled “casual.” Sociosexuality can also help us understand mate selection, specifically if someone is seeking a long-term versus short-term mate.

The type of relationship a person seeks influences the behaviors of that couple, because of what each hopes to “achieve” from that relationship. More specifically, people either look for a short-term mate (i.e., casual sex) or a long-term mate (i.e., boyfriend/girlfriend). Restricted individuals are more likely to seek a long-term mate, while unrestricted individuals are more likely to seek a short-term mate (Simpson, Wilson & Winterheld, 2004). It has been found that unrestricted individuals who are involved in dating relationships are more willing to pursue other romantic involvements, than are restricted individuals (Simpson et al., 2004 as cited by Seal, Agostinelli & Hannett, 1994). They are less committed. In addition, unrestricted individuals are more likely to view infidelity as acceptable (Simpson et al., 2004 as cited by Feldman & Cauffman, 1999). The type of relationship causes behaviors to vary because of the level of commitment. Research suggests that more serious relationships would elicit more serious commitment behaviors. In this study, the Revised Sociosexuality Inventory (SOI-R) (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) was used to determine whether sociosexuality influences participants’ beliefs about commitment when participants are primed with various relationship labels.

Public Display

Past research on public displays of affection indicates that “tie signs vary in their intended purpose but almost universally carry significant relational meaning” (Afifi & Johnson, 1999, p. 9). A tie sign is a haptic affection display (public display of affection). Some individuals navigate a relationship’s meaning based on nonverbal signals (Afifi & Johnson, 1999, p. 10). “The findings from studies examining differences by relationship type in the intended function served by nonverbal affection displays imply that the degree of relational intimacy and commitment may strongly influence the cognitions accompanying the enactment of such displays” (Johnson & Edwards, 1991 as cited by Afifi & Johnson, 1999, 11). On the one hand, tie signs may be ambiguous to the recipient or the public. On the other hand, they can signal exclusivity (Afifi & Johnson, 1999, p. 12). Intimacy can be displayed nonverbally, and doing this in public emphasizes the seriousness of a relationship. Johnson and Edwards (1991) found that “individuals’ perception of relationship stage is tied to the kinds of touch behaviors displayed, with hugs, kisses and ultimately sexual intercourse, being increasingly more likely as relationships develop romantically” (Afifi & Johnson, 1999, p. 12). Morris (1971) studied the link between public displays of affection and relational stage. He characterized his findings (type of public display) based on the level of intimacy (high versus low). The present research seeks to find out if relationship label affects a couple’s likelihood of engaging in public displays of affection.

Jealousy

The main purpose of jealousy is to “deter a partner’s infidelity” (Wade & Walsh, 2008). Expressing jealousy helps with mate retention and reproduction (Buss, 2000; Wade & Walsh, 2008 as cited by Wade & Weinstein, 2011) because it reinforces interest to one’s partner. Past research indicated a sex difference in jealousy reactions. Men are more upset by a woman’s sexual infidelity, while women are more upset by a man’s emotional infidelity (Buss et al., 1992; DeSteno et al., 2002; Geary et al., 1995; Harris, 2000; Pierrzak et al., 2002; Shackelford, Buss & Bennett, 2002; Wiederman & Kendall, 1999 as cited by Shackelford et al., 2004). This relates to a man’s fear of paternity uncertainty, and a woman’s fear that the man will abandon her and her child (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Although there is a sex difference in the type of jealousy men and women experience, both sexes experience jealousy to the same degree, and have the same likelihood of being jealous (Buss, 2000). No research has been done to determine whether jealousy is influenced by relationship seriousness. In essence, would a woman be more jealous if her partner cheated if they were hooking-up, exclusive or boyfriend/girlfriend? The present research seeks to fill this void.

Priming

Priming is defined as “the incidental activation of knowledge structures, such as trait concepts and stereotypes, by the current situational context” (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996, p. 230). In other words, this means that one word triggers people to associate this word with something else. This is important because it shows that we

subconsciously make associations between potentially unrelated items. In the Bargh et al. (1996) study, researchers used the word “sex” to prime participants to test whether sex-related representations motivate people to initiate and maintain relationships (p. 1065). The results are noteworthy because they suggest that priming works with regard to sexual relationships as opposed to solely generic images. At present it is not clear, however, how relationship terms prime actions related to romantic relationships. The present research seeks to fill this void.

The Present Study

The present study was comprised of two parts. The goal of the first portion of the study was to discover which descriptive relationship terms are most used by college students to characterize a heterosexual relationship. Participants identified many relationship labels. Three relationship labels (hooking up, exclusive, boyfriend/girlfriend) were used for the second portion of the study. These labels represent three progressive stages of a relationship. Hooking up represents the least amount of commitment. Exclusive represents the middle level of commitment. Boyfriend/girlfriend represents the most serious level of commitment. The goal of the second phase of the research was to understand how these three different terms affect or prime specific behaviors associated with sexual relationships.

Hypotheses

Five hypotheses were tested in this study: (1) Both men and women primed with the most serious relationship condition (boyfriend/girlfriend) will be more likely to report showing public displays of affection. Previous research suggests that couples do engage in public displays of affection, and that the type of public display varies with intimacy level. (2) For each relationship term, women will be more likely to report showing commitment to their partners than men. Men will report showing the most commitment for the most serious type of relationship (boyfriend/girlfriend). Research suggests that women are more likely to commit to a relationship than men because they have higher costs (i.e., becoming pregnant) (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). One would hypothesize, moreover, that women would consider a relationship more serious than men even in its early stages (i.e., when hooking-up or exclusive). (3) Both men and women will exhibit the most jealousy for the “middle” level of relationship seriousness – the exclusive condition. Research suggests that men and women are equally likely to experience jealousy, and that this can be used as a mate retention strategy. One would hypothesize that the “exclusive” prime would elicit the most jealousy because the relationship is neither brand new nor very serious. (4) Men and women will differ in their interpretations of each relationship label. Research does not indicate one specific set of “guidelines” or clear norms that couples follow for the different stages of relationships. This implies that people will interpret these labels in their own ways. (5) Individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report less commitment to their partners, regardless of the relationship term primed. Conversely, individuals with a more restricted

sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report more commitment to their partners for each relationship term primed. Research on sociosexuality indicates that unrestricted individuals have more sexual partners and are more likely to have sexual intercourse before emotional attachment. Restricted individuals, on the other hand, have fewer sexual partners and seek an emotional connection before becoming sexually active (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

Study 1

Methods

Participants

Participants were 80 males and 95 females, who ranged in age from 18 to 23 ($M=19.77$, $SD=1.33$) from a private university in the Northeastern US. Some participants were recruited from the introductory Psychology class. The link for the survey was sent out electronically to several organizations on campus. Participation was voluntary.

Of these participants, 97% labeled themselves as heterosexual, 1% labeled themselves as homosexual, and 2% labeled themselves as other. Thirty-eight percent of participants labeled themselves as being in a relationship, and 62% labeled themselves as not being in a relationship. Fifteen percent of participants labeled themselves as virgins, and 85% labeled themselves as non-virgins. For the purposes of this study, virginity was defined as not having had “vaginal or anal intercourse.”

Procedure

This survey was distributed electronically. The survey consisted of demographic questions regarding age, sex, class year, sexual orientation, relationship status and virginity. The next portion of the questionnaire asked participants to “think of a romantic relationship you are currently in, have been in, or would like to be in. Please list the terms you would use to describe these relationships. These terms should be LABELS you would use to describe the STATUS of the relationship.”

Results

The goal of Study 1 was to determine which labels are most used by college students to describe different types of relationships. Several different labels were identified in the data collection, see Table 1.

Some of the labels mentioned by participants were not listed in Table 1 because the participants did not fully understand the prompt. Instead of listing labels, some participants mentioned words used to describe relationships, such as “loving, romantic, happy, honest, etc.” These words describe how people *feel* about a relationship, rather than how they would define the *status* of a relationship.

The labels, “boyfriend/girlfriend,” “exclusive” and “hooking-up” were chosen as the three terms to be used in Study 2 based on their frequency. Although “dating” (N=36) was listed more times than “hooking-up” (N=29), it seemed as though it was too similar to “boyfriend/girlfriend.” The hope was to get three distinct categories between which Study 2 participants could differentiate. Including extra labels would significantly

increase the length of Study 2, which is why only three out of eleven identified labels were chosen.

Discussion

The results from Study 1 indicate that “hooking-up,” “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend” are the most commonly used relationship labels by college students. “Hooking-up” was chosen over “dating” because dating is considered to be very similar to, or overlap with, “boyfriend/girlfriend.” In Study 2, it should be easier for participants to distinguish between three distinct levels of relationship seriousness.

Study 2

Methods

Participants

Participants were 67 males, 122 females and 1 labeled as “other”, who ranged in age from 18 to 23 ($M= 19.84$, $SD= 1.37$). The majority of participants came from a private university in the Northeastern US; however, the link was also sent out to students on some other college campuses. It is impossible to know if these students took the survey because all responses were anonymous. Once again, some participants were recruited from the introductory Psychology class. The link to the survey was sent out to various organizations on campus. The subject pool was not identical to that of Study 1.

Study 1 occurred first semester, while Study 2 occurred second semester. There were potentially some overlapping participants from Study 1 and Study 2. This was not problematic, however, because participants were answering different types of questions. Participation was voluntary.

Of these participants, 98.4% labeled themselves as heterosexual, 1.1% labeled themselves as homosexual, and 0.5% labeled themselves as other. Thirty-five point three percent of participants labeled themselves as being in a relationship, 58.4% labeled themselves as not being in a relationship and 6.3% was unsure. Thirteen percent of participants labeled themselves as virgins, and 87% labeled themselves as non-virgins. For the purposes of this study, virginity was defined as not having had “vaginal or anal intercourse.”

Procedure

This survey was also distributed electronically. The survey consisted of demographic questions regarding age, sex, class year, sexual orientation, relationship status and virginity. See Appendix A. The next portion of the questionnaire was the revised sociosexual orientation inventory (SOI-R) (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). See Appendix B. The order of the next three questions of the survey varied for all participants. All participants were given each condition (hooking up, exclusive, boyfriend/girlfriend), but the order was random every time the survey link was clicked. Participants received a list of twenty-six behaviors associated with heterosexual relationships. These behaviors related to jealousy, public displays of affection,

commitment, and exclusivity. This list is comprised of twenty-six behaviors used by O'Sullivan, Cheng, Harris and Brooks-Gunn (2007) in a measure utilized to investigate relationship progression, factors from the jealousy inductions tactics list (Fleischmann, Spitzberg, Anderson & Roesch, 2005), as well as some behaviors generated by the Principal Investigator. Participants were asked how likely they would be to engage in each of these behaviors if they were "hooking up," "exclusive," and "boyfriend/girlfriend." See Appendix C.

The Revised Sociosexuality Inventory needed to be scored for data analysis. Item 6 (*I do not want to have sex with a person until I am sure that we will have a long-term serious relationship*) needed to be reverse coded. Items 1-3 (*With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months? With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse on one and only one occasion? With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse without having an interest in a long-term committed relationship with this person?*) were coded and aggregated to form the "Behavior Facet." The Behavior Facet indicates a person's number of casual sex partners. Items 4-6 (after reverse scoring) (*Sex without love is OK; I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying "casual" sex with different partners; I do not want to have sex with a person until I am sure that we will have a long-term, serious relationship.*) were coded and aggregated to form the "Attitude Facet." The Attitude Facet indicates a person's attitude toward uncommitted sex. Items 7-9 (*How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship? How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with*

someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship? In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?) were coded and aggregated to form the “Desire Facet.” The Desire Facet is for people not in a romantic relationship.

Results

Reliability

A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.894 was calculated for the Revised Sociosexuality Inventory. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.775 was calculated by averaging the Cronbach’s alphas for the “hooking-up,” “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend” 26-Behavior Lists.

Public Display of Affection (PDA)

A 2(Gender) x 18 (Public Display) Repeated Measures ANOVA was computed. The test revealed a significant main effect for PDA items, $F(17,170)=6.94, p < 0.0001$. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed that PDA items differed significantly. For each of the statistically significant PDA items (*I eat meals alone with my partner in public; I hold hands with my partner in public; I introduce my partner to others as my partner (not just by name); I tell other people that my partner and I are a couple; I kiss my partner in public*), the means were lower in the “hooking up” condition than in the “boyfriend/girlfriend” condition. The “exclusive” condition was only

significant for “*eat meals with my partner in public,*” see Table 2. The PDA item, *I talk to my partner in public,* was the only PDA item on the 26-Behavior List that was not statistically significant.

Jealousy

A 2(Gender) x 12 (Jealousy) Repeated Measures ANOVA was computed. The test revealed no significant effects for jealousy items, $F(11,176)=1.31, p < 0.223$, see Table 3.

Commitment

A 2(Gender) x 30 (Commitment) Repeated Measures ANOVA was computed. The test revealed an interaction for gender and commitment items, $F(58,316)=1.59, p < 0.007$. In the “hooking up” condition, male means were higher for items, “*I refer to my partner as boyfriend/girlfriend,*” “*I consider us to be a couple,*” “*I tell my partner that I love him/her,*” “*I have sober sexual intercourse with partner,*” “*I allow my partner to spend the night,*” and “*I have sexual intercourse with my partner.*” In the “hooking-up” condition, female means were higher for the items “*I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk*” and “*I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m drunk.*” In the “exclusive” condition, only items “*I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m drunk*” and “*I kiss my partner*” were significant, and female means were higher for both items. In the “boyfriend/girlfriend” condition, only item “*I tell my partner that I love him/her*” was significant, and the female mean was higher, see Table 4.

A 2(Gender) x 30 (Commitment) Repeated Measures ANOVA was computed. The test revealed a significant main effect for Commitment items, $F(29,158)=12.25, p < 0.0001$. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed that commitment items differed significantly. Commitment items “*I refer to my partner as boyfriend/girlfriend,*” “*I kiss my partner,*” “*I have sober sexual intercourse with partner,*” “*I allow my partner to spend the night,*” and “*I have sexual intercourse with my partner*” showed no significant results. The means were higher in the “hooking up” condition than in the “boyfriend/girlfriend” condition for items “*I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk*” and “*I only have sexual intercourse when I’m drunk.*” The means were lower in the “hooking up” condition than in the “boyfriend/girlfriend” condition for the items “*I consider us to be a couple,*” “*I tell my partner that I love him/her,*” and “*I kiss my partner when I’m sober,*” see Table 5.

Correlations

A series of correlations were computed for sociosexuality and commitment items across the “hooking up,” “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend” conditions. Restricted individuals were more likely to refer to their partner as their boyfriend/girlfriend than unrestricted individuals when primed with “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend.” Restricted individuals were more likely to view themselves as a couple than unrestricted individuals when primed with “hooking-up” or “exclusive.” Restricted individuals were

more likely to tell their partner “I love you” than unrestricted individuals when primed with “hooking-up,” “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend.”

Unrestricted individuals were more likely to kiss their partner than restricted individuals when primed with “hooking up.” Unrestricted individuals were more likely to have sex sober than restricted individuals when primed with “hooking-up,” “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend.” Unrestricted individuals were more likely to allow their partner to spend the night than restricted individuals when primed with “hooking-up,” “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend.” Unrestricted individuals were more likely to have sex with their partners than restricted individuals when primed with “hooking-up,” “exclusive” or “boyfriend/girlfriend,” see Table 6.

General Discussion

There is a small body of research that has explored the hook-up culture, its effects on college students and priming; however, there is a lack of research on how relationship terms prime actions related to romantic relationships. The present research sought to fill this void. The goal of the present research was to identify which descriptive relationship terms are most used by college students to characterize a sexual relationship, and to understand how these different terms affect or prime specific behaviors associated with sexual relationships. The terms identified in Study 1 were “hooking-up,” “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend.” One hypothesis was fully supported, one hypothesis was not supported and three of the hypotheses were partially supported.

Hypothesis 1 (*Both men and women primed with the most serious relationship condition (boyfriend/girlfriend) will be more likely to report showing public displays of affection*) was supported. Hypothesis 5 (*individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report less commitment to their partners, regardless of the relationship term primed. Conversely, individuals with a more restricted sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report more commitment to their partners for each relationship term primed*), Hypothesis 2 (*for each relationship term, women will be more likely to report showing commitment to their partner than men. Men will report showing the most commitment for the most serious type of relationship (boyfriend/girlfriend). Women are more likely to commit to a relationship than men because they have higher costs if they become pregnant*) and Hypothesis 4 (*men and women will differ in their interpretations of each relationship label*) were partially supported. Hypothesis 3 (*both men and women will exhibit the most jealousy for the “middle” level of relationship seriousness – the exclusive condition*) was not supported.

Public Display

Hypothesis 1 stated that both men and women primed with the most serious relationship condition (boyfriend/girlfriend) will be more likely to report showing public displays of affection. Results were consistent with this hypothesis. Individuals primed with the most serious relationship label, boyfriend/girlfriend, were the most likely to agree with engaging in public displays of affection. Public display is something that tells the world that two people are a couple. Couples in more serious relationships were more

likely to engage in acts of PDA because they are more established as a couple. In this study, the PDA items included eating meals with your partner, holding hands with your partner in public, talking to your partner in public, telling other people that you and your partner are a couple, kissing your partner in public and introducing your partner to people as your partner (not just by name). These items indicate that two people are a couple. The boyfriend/girlfriend prime was rated highest for each item except “talking to your partner in public,” which was not statistically significant. This is consistent with past research on tie signs because these actions suggest that the two people are boyfriend/girlfriend, and are therefore more serious than hooking-up. The main effect means that for the items shown, there was a reliable statistical difference between each of the relationship labels. There was no interaction, which means that males and females do not rate these items differently.

Commitment

Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. It stated, “women will be more likely to report showing commitment to their partner than men for each relationship term. Men will report showing the most commitment for the most serious type of relationship (boyfriend/girlfriend).” Unlike the PDA items, there was an interaction for the commitment items. Men and women differed in their responses. Women were more likely to show commitment for items, “I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk” and “I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m drunk” under the “hooking-up” prime. Women were more likely to show commitment for items, “I only have sexual

intercourse with my partner when I'm drunk" and "I kiss my partner" under the "exclusive" prime. Women were more likely to show commitment for the item, "I tell my partner I love him/her" under the "boyfriend/girlfriend" prime. These data all suggest that women are more likely to commit than men, independent of the label. Male responses were only significant under the "hooking-up" prime, underscoring the idea that men are more likely to seek short-term, less committed relationships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

The significant items rated higher for males were, "I refer to my partner and my boyfriend or girlfriend," "I consider my partner and I to be a couple," "I tell my partner 'I love you'," "I have sober sex with my partner," "I allow my partner to spend the night," and "I have sex with my partner." These behaviors seem more likely to occur in a more "advanced" relationship than what would occur for a hooking-up relationship. This can be explained because it is possible that males think they are supposed to act a certain way. They might think that females want them to engage in more "serious" relationship behaviors.

Female commitment was rated the highest (more than men) under the exclusive and boyfriend/girlfriend primes. This can be explained by the fact that women seek out men who are willing to commit in case pregnancy occurs. Women need that sense of security – they have higher costs and more to lose (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). The only item that was statistically significant for the boyfriend/girlfriend prime was "I tell my partner I love him/her." It was hypothesized that men would be the most committed in this prime because it is the most serious; however, females had a higher mean. Saying "I love you"

is an extremely powerful way of telling a partner that you are seriously committed. This helps explain why women are more likely to say it than men.

Although there were differences between men and women (gender interaction), there were also differences between the relationship labels (main effect). The items “I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk” and “I only have sexual intercourse when I am drunk” had higher means for the “hooking-up” prime than the “boyfriend/girlfriend” prime. This is consistent with prior research because the items with higher means for the “hooking-up” prime are more sexually based and make reference to alcohol. It makes sense that a couple that is less serious would engage in these behaviors over a couple that is more serious. The items, “I consider us a couple,” “I kiss my partner when I’m sober” and “I tell my partner ‘I love you’” had higher means for the “boyfriend/girlfriend” prime than the “hooking-up” prime. This is understandable because these acts are more “serious” and would therefore be more likely to occur between a more serious couple.

Jealousy

The results were not consistent with the jealousy hypothesis, “both men and women will exhibit the most jealousy for the “middle” level of relationship seriousness, exclusive.” None of the results were statistically significant. This means that individuals are no more likely to be jealous if they are hooking-up versus exclusive versus boyfriend/girlfriend. Furthermore, one sex is no more likely to be jealous than the other. This can be explained with previous research. Psychologists have found that although men and women differ in the types of jealousy they are likely to experience, one sex is no

more “prone” to experiencing jealousy than the other (Buss, 2000). These results can be explained for several reasons. The first is a social desirability bias. It is possible that participants were hesitant to truly admit jealous feelings. Second, it is possible that first and second year students lack experience with the hook up culture. Together, these participants comprised 53.7% of the sample. It might take one or two years for college students to establish their “own rules.”

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. It stated, “men and women will differ in their interpretation of each label.” This is a very general hypothesis, and was partially supported by the data. It was supported for the commitment items, but not for the PDA and jealousy items. The commitment items were the only ones with an interaction. For the commitment items, men and women had the most statistical differences for the “hooking-up” prime. Eight out of ten items differed. The significant items were “I would consider my partner and I to be a couple; I refer to my partner as my boyfriend or girlfriend; I tell my partner I love him/her; I allow my partner to spend the night; I have sexual intercourse with my partner; I have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m sober; I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m drunk; I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk” Only two items (I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I’m drunk; I kiss my partner) in the “exclusive” prime differed, and one item (I tell my partner I love him/her) in the “boyfriend/girlfriend” prime differed. This makes sense because hooking-up is the least serious relationship label and the most ambiguous.

Couples who are “hooking-up” are not always sure of the behavioral expectations of that label. Researchers have come up with multiple definitions of the term. For example, hooking up is “a term that refers to a range of physically intimate behavior (e.g., passionate kissing, oral sex, and intercourse) that occurs outside of a committed relationship” (Owen et al., 2010, p. 653). Lambert et al., 2003 define “hooking up” as the act when “two people agree to engage in sexual behavior for which there is no future commitment.” It makes sense that men and women differed most for this prime because each sex might have different expectations of where the relationships should go (i.e., short-term versus long-term relationship).

Sociosexuality

Results were partially consistent with Hypothesis 5, “individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report less commitment to their partners, regardless of the relationship term primed. Conversely, individuals with a more restricted sociosexual orientation are hypothesized to report more commitment to their partners for each relationship term primed.” Three out of the ten commitment items were more likely to occur for restricted individuals. These items are “I refer to my partner as my boyfriend or girlfriend, “I consider my partner and I to be a couple” and “I tell my partner that I love him/her.” Since all of these items are emotion-based, it makes sense that more restricted individuals were likely to do them. Restricted individuals need emotional investment before sex. The hypothesis is only partially supported, however, because the items are not *only* significant under the “boyfriend/girlfriend” prime (e.g.,

showing the most commitment). Items were significant across all three primes for restricted individuals. “I refer to my partner as my boyfriend or girlfriend” was significant for “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend.” “I consider my partner and I to be a couple” was significant for “hooking-up” and “exclusive.” “I tell my partner that I love him/her” was significant across all three primes.

Four out of the ten commitment items were more likely to occur for unrestricted individuals. These items were, “I kiss my partner,” “I have sober sex with my partner,” “I allow my partner to spend the night” and “I have sexual intercourse with my partner.” These items are more sexually based. This is consistent with past research because unrestricted individuals have been found to have more sexual partners, and are more likely to engage in sexual intercourse before being emotionally invested (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). This portion of the hypothesis was also partially supported because items were not only significant for the “hooking-up” prime (e.g., showing the *least* commitment). “I kiss my partner” was only significant for the hooking-up prime, but the items, “I have sober sex with my partner,” “I allow my partner to spend the night” and “I have sexual intercourse with my partner” were significant across all three primes for unrestricted individuals. Past research suggests that both males and females place more importance on kissing long-term rather than short-term partners (Hughes, Harrison & Gallup, 2007). This helps explain why the “exclusive” and “boyfriend/girlfriend” primes did not produce significant results for the item, “I kiss my partner.” Unrestricted individuals are more likely to seek short-term relationships.

Conclusion

The present research shows that the terms used to describe relationships significantly influence individuals' perceptions of the relationship, and how individuals report they would behave towards their partner. These attitudes and perceptions seem to indicate what the rules/norms are for the three types of relationships. Participants seem to be indicating what *should* happen in each type of relationship.

Limitations

One potential limitation of this study is that the sample population was not diverse. For the most part, participants came from one school, which happens to be in a remote environment and is relatively homogenous. In addition, the majority of the sample was female. Perhaps the results would have been different if students from more diverse, urban populations were surveyed. If the population was larger, and more males participated, it is possible that there would have been more significant differences between males and females.

There are also some additional potential sampling biases. Since participation was voluntary, it is possible that only students interested in the topic (psychology students, friends, or "random" recruits) chose to complete the survey. This may have eliminated students who have no "interest" in the hook-up culture, or attracted students who find the hook-up culture interesting.

In addition, the survey did not ask participants about their race. Since past research suggests that African American women do not participate in the hook-up culture (Glenn & Marquardt, 2002, as cited by Cohen & Wade, 2012) as much as white women, it is possible that analyzing data by race would have created different results.

The hook-up culture is often influenced by alcohol consumption. This study did not account for students' thoughts and actions if they were intoxicated. It is likely that students would engage in different behaviors under the influence of alcohol. For example, they might drunkenly engage in certain sexual acts if they are "hooking-up" that they would not do if sober.

Finally, participants responded to the survey by saying what they *would* do. The responses to the survey were perceptions, not actual behavior. It is possible that participants would behave differently if they were actually in a certain type of labeled relationship, as opposed to just a hypothetical relationship.

Future Research and Significance

This research could be expanded by exploring whether personality influences a person's tendency towards a certain type of relationship. This could be done by using "The Big-5 Personality Test" (Norman, 1963). For example, are extraverted people more likely to engage in a "hooking-up" versus "boyfriend/girlfriend" relationship? The data received from this study could also be used to investigate whether a student's class year influences his or her tendency to be in a sexual relationship.

The present research can further our understanding of relationship dynamics among college students by differentiating between the various terms. We are able to better understand what behaviors people engage in at various stages of relationship seriousness. If we can understand what is “expected” to happen at each stage of a developing relationship, there will be less ambiguity for couples. This can hopefully lead to better partner treatment.

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Table 1 Study 1 Results

Relationship Label	Number of Times Listed
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Boyfriend/Girlfriend	46
Exclusive	37
Dating	36
Hooking up	29
Together	17
Committed	13
Friends with Benefits	8
Non-Exclusive	6
Facebook Official	5
Couple	5
Going Out	5

Table 2 Mean agreement with PDA actions across relationship primes

Item	Mean (SD)
------	-----------

(a) Meals in public (Hook-up)	3.66 ^{bc} (1.71)
(b) Meals in public (Exclusive)	5.99 ^a (1.17)
(c) Meals in public (BF/GF)	6.75 ^a (.61)
(d) Hold hand in public (Hook-up)	2.27 ^f (1.48)
(e) Hold hand in public (Exclusive)	4.63 (1.86)
(f) Hold hand in public (BF/GF)	6.14 ^d (1.18)
(g) Talk to partner in public (Hook-up)	5.56 (1.35)
(h) Talk to partner in public (Exclusive)	6.43 (.86)
(i) Talk to partner in public (BF/GF)	6.76 (.73)
(j) Tell people we're a couple (Hook-up)	2.15 ^l (1.40)
(k) Tell people we're a couple (Exclusive)	4.93 ^l (1.79)
(l) Tell people we're a couple (BF/GF)	6.68 ^{jk} (.66)
(m) Kiss partner in public (Hook-up)	3.83 ^o (1.74)
(n) Kiss partner in public (Exclusive)	5.60 (1.42)
(o) Kiss partner in public (BF/GF)	6.34 ^m (1.11)
(p) Introduce as partner – not just by name (Hook-up)	1.90 ^f (1.24)
(q) Introduce as partner – not just by name (Exclusive)	4.21 (1.99)
(r) Introduce as partner – not just by name (BF/GF)	6.12 ^p (1.18)

Note: Higher numbers mean the particular item was rated higher. Superscripts denote significant differences, $p < .05$, e.g. within the groups abc, def, ghi, jkl, mno, pqr. The means were compared and those means with the same superscript were significantly different. Different mean for row a, "Meals in Public (Hook-up)", is significantly different from means for rows that have an 'a' in their superscript, etc. Comparisons were Bonferroni corrected based on the number of comparisons made. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 3 Mean agreement with jealousy items across relationship primes

<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean (SD)</u>
-------------	------------------

(a) Talk about past romantic relationships (Hook-up)	3.44 (1.75)
(b) Talk about past romantic relationships (Exclusive)	4.70 (1.59)
(c) Talk about past romantic relationships (BF/GF)	5.28 (1.62)
(d) Talk about the opposite sex (Hook-up)	5.03 (1.39)
(e) Talk about the opposite sex (Exclusive)	5.24 (1.37)
(f) Talk about the opposite sex (BF/GF)	5.37 (1.50)
(g) Jealous if partner talks to the opposite sex (Hook-up)	3.27 (1.57)
(h) Jealous if partner talks to the opposite sex (Exclusive)	3.86 (1.61)
(i) Jealous if partner talks to the opposite sex (BF/GF)	3.81 (1.73)
(j) Jealous if partner talks about the opposite sex (Hook-up)	3.13 (1.61)
(k) Jealous if partner talks about the opposite sex (Exclusive)	3.74 (1.66)
(l) Jealous if partner talks about the opposite sex (BF/GF)	3.75 (1.71)

Note: Higher numbers mean the particular item was rated higher. The means were compared and none were significant. Comparisons were Bonferroni corrected based on the number of comparisons made. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 4 Mean agreement with commitment items for males and females

<u>Item</u>	<u>Male Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Female Mean (SD)</u>
(a) Only kiss when drunk (Hook-up)	3.88 (1.67)	4.50 (1.76)*

(b) Only kiss when drunk (Exclusive)	2.04 (1.23)	2.26 (1.51)
(c) Only kiss when drunk (BF/GF)	1.54 (1.27)	1.45 (1.27)
(d) Refer to partner as BF/GF (Hook-up)	2.16 (1.32)*	1.54 (.94)
(e) Refer to partner as BF/GF (Exclusive)	2.04 (1.25)	2.26 (1.51)
(f) Refer to partner as BF/GF (BF/GF)	6.60 (.76)	6.74 (.64)
(g) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (Hook-up)	3.63 (1.73)	4.30 (1.78)*
(h) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (Exclusive)	1.96 (1.28)	2.45 (1.68)*
(i) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (BF/GF)	1.42 (1.02)	1.56 (1.39)
(j) Consider us a couple (Hook-up)	2.70 (1.54)*	2.14 (1.28)
(k) Consider us a couple (Exclusive)	5.27 (1.48)	5.12 (1.74)
(l) Consider us a couple (BF/GF)	6.66 (.73)	6.81 (.51)
(m) Kiss when sober (Hook-up)	4.42 (1.63)	4.12 (1.70)
(n) Kiss when sober (Exclusive)	6.15 (1.12)	6.20 (1.17)
(o) Kiss when sober (BF/GF)	6.82 (.46)	6.86 (.45)
(p) Tell my partner "I love you" (Hook-up)	1.88 (1.29)*	1.36 (.79)
(q) Tell my partner "I love you" (Exclusive)	3.78 (2.04)	3.75 (2.25)
(r) Tell my partner "I love you" (BF/GF)	5.55 (1.56)	6.17 (1.21)*
(s) Kiss my partner (Hook-up)	5.70 (1.53)	6.10 (1.36)
(t) Kiss my partner (Exclusive)	6.31 (.96)	6.69 (.63)*
(u) Kiss my partner (BF/GF)	6.78 (.67)	6.87 (.50)
(v) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (Hook-up)	4.79 (1.68)*	4.06 (1.82)
(w) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (Exclusive)	6.16 (1.26)	6.08 (1.25)
(x) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (BF/GF)	6.64 (.95)	6.71 (.71)
(y) Allow my partner to sleep over (Hook-up)	5.87 (1.03)*	5.23 (1.68)
(z) Allow my partner to sleep over (Exclusive)	6.36 (1.00)	6.54 (.76)
(1) Allow my partner to sleep over (BF/GF)	6.82 (.49)	6.85 (.51)
(2) Sexual intercourse with partner (Hook-up)	5.91 (1.26)*	5.16 (1.87)
(3) Sexual intercourse with partner (Exclusive)	6.36 (1.12)	6.43 (1.00)
(4) Sexual intercourse with partner (BF/GF)	6.64 (1.04)	6.74 (.68)

Note: Asterisks indicate that the given sex is rating this item higher than the other sex. Asterisk next to female in row a, "Only kiss when drunk (Hook-up)", means that females rated that item higher than males. Higher numbers mean the particular item was rated higher. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 5 Mean agreement with commitment items across relationship primes

Item	Mean (SD)
(a) Only kiss when drunk (Hook-up)	4.31 ^c (1.74)

(b) Only kiss when drunk (Exclusive)

2.18 (1.42)

Item	Facet	Hook-up	Exclusive	BF/GF
I only kiss my	Behavior			

(c) Only kiss when drunk (BF/GF)

1.48^a (1.23)

(d) Refer to partner as BF/GF (Hook-up)	1.77 ^f (1.13)
(e) Refer to partner as BF/GF (Exclusive)	4.43 (2.13)
(f) Refer to partner as BF/GF (BF/GF)	6.69 ^d (.69)
(g) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (Hook-up)	4.07 (1.77)
(h) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (Exclusive)	2.27 (1.56)
(i) Only have sexual intercourse when drunk (BF/GF)	1.51 (1.23)
(j) Consider us a couple (Hook-up)	2.35 ^l (1.40)
(k) Consider us a couple (Exclusive)	5.16 ^l (1.65)
(l) Consider us a couple (BF/GF)	6.76 ^{jk} (.60)
(m) Kiss when sober (Hook-up)	4.24 ^{no} (1.67)
(n) Kiss when sober (Exclusive)	6.18 ^m (1.14)
(o) Kiss when sober (BF/GF)	6.85 ^m (.45)
(p) Tell my partner "I love you" (Hook-up)	1.54 ^f (1.02)
(q) Tell my partner "I love you" (Exclusive)	3.75 (2.17)
(r) Tell my partner "I love you" (BF/GF)	5.95 (1.37)
(s) Kiss my partner (Hook-up)	5.98 (1.38)
(t) Kiss my partner (Exclusive)	6.56 (.78)
(u) Kiss my partner (BF/GF)	6.84 (.57)
(v) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (Hook-up)	4.34 (1.79)
(w) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (Exclusive)	6.12 (1.25)
(x) Sober sexual intercourse with partner (BF/GF)	6.69 (.80)
(y) Allow my partner to sleep over (Hook-up)	5.48 (1.48)
(z) Allow my partner to sleep over (Exclusive)	6.48 (.85)
(1) Allow my partner to sleep over (BF/GF)	6.84 (.50)
(2) Sexual intercourse with partner (Hook-up)	5.46 (1.69)
(3) Sexual intercourse with partner (Exclusive)	6.41 (1.04)
(4) Sexual intercourse with partner (BF/GF)	6.70 (.82)

Note: Higher numbers mean the particular item was rated higher. Superscripts denote significant differences, $p < .05$, e.g. within the groups abc, def, ghi, jkl, mno, pqr, stu, vwx, yz1, 234. The means were compared and those means with the same superscript were significant. Different mean for row a, "Only kiss when drunk (Hook-up)", is significantly different from means for rows that have an 'a' in their superscript, etc. Comparisons were Bonferroni corrected based on the number of comparisons made. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Table 6 Pearson r Correlations for Commitment and Sociosexuality

partner when I	Attitude			
----------------	----------	--	--	--

am drunk	Desire			
I refer to my	Behavior		-0.153*	
partner as my	Attitude			
BF or GF	Desire			-0.151*
Only have	Behavior			
sex when	Attitude			
I'm drunk	Desire			
Consider my	Behavior	-0.186*	-0.161*	
partner and I	Attitude	-0.161*	-0.14*	
to be a couple	Desire		-0.167*	
Kiss my partner	Behavior			
when I'm sober	Attitude			
	Desire			
I tell my	Behavior	-0.155*	-0.255*	-0.186*
partner that	Attitude		-0.223*	-0.228*
I love him/her	Desire		-0.167*	-0.296*
I kiss my	Behavior			
partner	Attitude	0.251*		
	Desire	0.167*		
I have sober	Behavior	0.197*		0.176*
sex with my	Attitude	0.343*	0.247*	0.273*
partner	Desire	0.165*		
I allow my	Behavior	0.24*		
partner to spend	Attitude	0.336*	0.184*	0.151*
the night	Desire	0.299*		
I have sexual	Behavior	0.453*	0.284*	0.205*
intercourse with	Attitude	0.56*	0.406*	0.284*
my partner	Desire	0.394*	0.226*	

Note: Positive numbers mean that individuals are *unrestricted*, and therefore received a high SOI inventory score. Negative numbers mean that individuals are *restricted*, and therefore received a low SOI inventory score. Only statistically significant data is displayed on this chart (as indicated by asterisks). Any "missing" numbers means that the data were not significant.

Appendix A: Demographic Survey

Sex: (Please circle your response)

Male Female Other

Age: _____

Class Year: _____

Sexual Orientation: (Please circle your response)

Heterosexual Homosexual Other

Relationship Status: (Please circle your response)

Are you currently in a relationship?

Yes No Unsure

Sexual Intercourse History: (Please circle your response)

For this study, virginity is determined by vaginal or anal intercourse.

Virgin Non-Virgin

Appendix B: Revised Sociosexuality Inventory

1. With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months?

0 1 2 3 4 5–6 7–9 10–19 20+

2. With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse on *one and only one* occasion?

0 1 2 3 4 5–6 7–9 10–19 20+

3. With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse without having an interest in a long-term committed relationship with this person?

0 1 2 3 4 5–6 7–9 10–19 20+

4. Sex without love is OK.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

5. I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying “casual” sex with different partners.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

6. I do *not* want to have sex with a person until I am sure that we will have a long-term, serious relationship.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

7. How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do *not* have a committed romantic relationship?

- 1 – never
- 2 – very seldom
- 3 – about once every two or three months
- 4 – about once a month
- 5 – about once every two weeks
- 6 – about once a week
- 7 – several times per week
- 8 – nearly every day
- 9 – at least once a day

8. How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with someone with whom you do *not* have a committed romantic relationship?

- 1 – never
- 2 – very seldom
- 3 – about once every two or three months
- 4 – about once a month
- 5 – about once every two weeks
- 6 – about once a week
- 7 – several times per week
- 8 – nearly every day
- 9 – at least once a day

9. In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?

- 1 – never
- 2 – very seldom
- 3 – about once every two or three months
- 4 – about once a month
- 5 – about once every two weeks
- 6 – about once a week
- 7 – several times per week
- 8 – nearly every day
- 9 – at least once a day

Appendix C: List of 26 Behaviors

Please rate the following based on how likely you would be to engage in these behaviors if you were [INSERT TERM HERE] with your partner:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Likely			Neutral	Very Likely		

- 1) I eat meals alone with my partner in public.
- 2) I hold hands with my partner in public.
- 3) I introduce my partner to others as my partner (not just by name).
- 4) I tell other people that my partner and I are a couple.
- 5) I would consider me and my partner to be a couple.
- 6) I refer to my partner as my boyfriend or girlfriend.
- 7) I talk to my partner in front of other people.
- 8) I talk about the opposite sex.
- 9) I talk about past romantic relationships.
- 10) I get jealous if my partner talks to members of the opposite sex.
- 11) I get jealous if my partner talks about the opposite sex.
- 12) I kiss my partner.
- 13) I kiss my partner in public.
- 14) I kiss my partner when I'm sober.
- 15) I only kiss my partner when I'm drunk.
- 16) I think it is allowed for me to kiss other people.
- 17) I consider it cheating if I kiss someone else.
- 18) I consider it cheating if my partner kisses someone else.
- 19) I have sexual intercourse with my partner.
- 20) I have sexual intercourse with my partner when I'm sober.
- 21) I only have sexual intercourse with my partner when I'm drunk.
- 22) I think it is allowed for me to have sexual intercourse with other people.
- 23) I allow my partner to spend the night.
- 24) I consider it cheating if I have sexual intercourse with someone else.
- 25) I consider it cheating if my partner has sexual intercourse with someone else.
- 26) I tell my partner I love him/her.

Appendix D: Tables from Oral Presentation

Commitment Interaction:

Male mean is higher for the “hooking-up” prime	Female mean is higher for the “hooking-up” prime
I refer to my partner as my boyfriend or girlfriend	I only have sex with my partner when I’m drunk
I consider my partner and I to be a couple	I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk
I tell my partner “I love you”	
I have sober sex with my partner	
I allow my partner to spend the night	
I have sex with my partner	

Commitment Interaction: female means higher for both primes

“Exclusive” prime	“Boyfriend/Girlfriend” prime
I only have sex with my partner when I’m drunk	I tell my partner “I love you”
I kiss my partner	

Commitment main effect:

Means highest for “hooking-up” prime	Means highest for “boyfriend/girlfriend” prime
I only have sex with my partner when I’m drunk	I kiss my partner when I’m sober
I only kiss my partner when I’m drunk	I tell my partner “I love you”
	I consider us to be a couple