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Want to Hookup?: Sex Differences in Short-term Mate Attraction Tactics

T. Joel Wade¹ · Maryanne L. Fisher² · Catherine Salmon³ · Carly Downs¹

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Abstract

While a great deal of psychological research has been conducted on sex-specific mate choice preferences, relatively little attention has been directed toward how heterosexual men and women solicit short-term sexual partners, and which acts are perceived to be the most effective. The present research relied on an act nomination methodology with the goal of determining which actions are used by men and women to solicit a short-term “hook-up” partner (study 1) and then determine which of these actions are perceived as most effective by men and women (study 2). Using sexual strategy theory, we hypothesized that actions that suggest sexual access would be nominated most often by women whereas actions that suggest a willingness to commit were expected to be nominated most often by men. Additionally, men and women were predicted to rate actions by men that suggest a willingness to commit as most effective and actions by women that suggest sexual access as most effective. The results were consistent with these hypotheses. These findings are discussed in the context of both short- and long-term mating strategies and mate solicitation. The relationship between motivation, sexual strategies, and sexual behavior are examined, along with the need for research on the hookup tactics and motivations of self-identifying gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals.

¹One of the most noteworthy sex differences that has been documented in the evolutionary psychological literature is men’s tendency to pursue short-term, primarily sexual relationships, while women are thought to preferentially pursue longer-term relationships with emotional commitment (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). There are various explanations for why this difference may exist, including mainly sex-specific strategies related to obligatory parental investment. According to parental investment theory, men are obligated to invest only gametes and therefore should be primarily concerned with access to mates given that a higher number of successful matings increase male overall reproductive success. Contrariwise, women have a far more significant obligation involving gametes, gestation, lactation, and post-partum childcare, given that infant and child survival is highly dependent on maternal

care (Hrdy, 1999; Keller & Chastiosis, 2007; Pavard et al., 2007). Consequently, evolutionary psychologists argue that women should be especially concerned with seeking quality mates who will invest in the raising of children, in addition to investing in a long-term committed relationship as a conduit for providing paternal care and resources (Buss, 1994; Thomas & Stewart-Williams, 2018; Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008). Of course, that women prefer committed, invested, quality mates indicates that men do engage in long-term mating, despite their interest in short-term opportunities (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Salmon, 2017). Sexual strategy theory, which builds on parental investment theory, emphasizes that human mating psychology includes between-sex differences as well as within-sex ones, particularly with regard to long-term and short-term mating psychology (Schmitt et al., 2001).

When it comes to short-term mating, both sexes tend to engage in hookups, which are defined as short-term uncommitted sexual relationships (Garcia & Reiber, 2008) “for which there is no future commitment” (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 123). Previously, researchers have documented that women report fewer hookups, fewer hookup partners, and

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a preference for dating over hookups than men (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Garneau et al., 2013; Katz & Schneider, 2013; but see Fisher et al., 2011 for similar rates between sexes).

Hookups are popular among young adults; one study documented that 53–80% of college students in the USA engage in hookups (Garcia et al., 2012; Stinson, 2010), with similar rates among university students in Canada (69% of men, 67% of women; Fisher et al., 2011). Despite this popularity, experiences within hookups are often not positive. Fisher et al. (2011) reported that in their sample of Canadian university students, 72% of men and 78% of women experienced regret, with higher-quality sex leading to less regret. In their qualitative examination, Paul and Hayes (2002) reported that the most common feelings following an uncommitted brief sexual interaction were ‘regret and disappointment’ (35%) followed distantly by ‘good or happy’ (20%). In their sample, women were significantly more likely to report feeling ‘regret and disappointment’ afterwards, whereas men were more likely to feel ‘satisfied’ (for a review, see Shepardson et al., 2016). This finding also echoes Roese et al.’s (2006) work on counterfactual thinking that suggests men regret missed sexual opportunities more while women’s regrets are more frequently focused on sex that they wish they had not had.

Armstrong and Reissing (2015) report that women’s motivation for engaging in uncommitted sex is typically due to physical needs. This result echoes earlier findings, where Garcia and Reiber (2008) found that men and women have very similar motivations for participating in these behaviors including physical gratification (89%), emotional gratification (54%), to initiate a traditional romantic relationship (51%), it was unintentional (33%), others were doing it (8%), and peer pressure (4%).

In addition to these motivations, there may be sex-specific evolutionary reasoning for engaging in hookups. For example, women may be explicitly using hookups as a strategy that facilitates their access to resources or higher-value mates and in some cases may be using short-term sexual behavior in the pursuit of a long-term mating goal (e.g., Greer & Buss, 1994; Greiling, 1994; Greiling & Buss, 2000). In contrast, men’s pursuit of uncommitted sex is the presumable result of the reproductive success of men who were successful in locating short-term sexual relationships, likely in combination with long-term sexual strategies. There is evidence for these differences in motivation in terms of emotional response. For example, Salmon et al. (2016) reported that female college students had more negative emotional reactions to casual sex than male students, while a follow-up study (Hegman & Salmon, 2020) indicated that individuals’ motivation for engaging in casual sex, and the number of their casual sex partners contributed to the positive or negative nature of their response to casual sex experiences.

A number of studies have also examined factors influencing mating strategies, the majority of which have utilized

survey or budget allocation methodologies (Jonason et al., 2009, 2011; Perilloux et al., 2013). Various factors have emerged as relevant including, for females, physical attractiveness such that more attractive women (particularly in terms of body attractiveness) report more sexual experience and a less restricted sociosexual orientation (Perilloux et al., 2013). Others have focused on the role of the Dark Triad (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) in facilitating short-term mating strategies in men, showing that the relationship between Dark Triad traits and short-term mating behavior is stronger in men than women and that high Dark Triad individuals create opportunities for short-term mating by lowering mating standards (Jonason et al., 2011).

Given the popularity of hookups among college students, there must be an awareness of how to solicit a potential hookup partner, as well as which forms of solicitation will be the most effective. Past studies have used experimental paradigms (Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Hald & Høgh-Olesen, 2010) to examine sex differences in receptivity to sexual offers, demonstrating sex differences in the willingness to engage in casual sex with a stranger. Others have reported on journalistic methods to assess female receptivity (Voracek et al., 2005). However, sex differences or similarities in solicitation tactics remain largely unaddressed, although Greer and Buss (1994) have examined the most successful tactics for promoting sexual encounters, of which hookups may be one form. They report sex differences with women being most effective when employing signals indicating enhanced appearance and immediate sexual access. The most effective tactics for men in promoting a sexual encounter involved communicating love and commitment and investing time and attention in a woman. Greer and Buss also report that the sexes were very similar in what types of tactics they performed, despite the large differences in perceived effectiveness because women refrained from performing the most effective tactics for promoting sexual encounters due to concerns with appearing promiscuous.

One may wonder why women would solicit short-term sexual encounters given that they could incur reputational damage from doing so. Greer and Buss (1994), Greiling (1994), and Greiling and Buss (2000) report that women can receive benefits from engaging in short-term mating relationships such as receiving resources in the form of jewelry, money, free dinners, or clothing, advancing one’s career, becoming friends with high status people, clarifying long-term mate preferences, having someone to spend their free time with, testing out back-up mates, and protection. Additionally, de Jong et al. (2018) report that women engage in hookups for sex and pleasure reasons and due to a desire to make an emotional connection. Therefore, while women engage in casual sex at a lesser rate than men, doing so may be an adaptive strategy.

Table 1 Consensus hookup tactics for men and women

Most frequently used male behaviors	Freq.	Most frequently used female behaviors	Freq.
“He dances with her”	17	“She dances with him”	51
“He converses with her”	15	“She texts him”	26
“He texts her”	15	“She flirts with him”	24
“He gets drunk”	12	“She touches him, in general”	19
“He flirts with her”	9	“She kisses him”	19
“He tries to impress her”	9	“She smiles at him”	15
“He makes body contact with her”	7	“She goes home with him”	12
“He asks her to dance or to kiss”	7	“She makes eye contact with him”	10
“He asks to walk her home”	7	“She gets a drink with him”	8
“He asks to buy her a drink”	6	“She has a friend introduce her to him”	8
“He asks her out to a dinner or movie”	6	“She exchanges numbers with him”	8
		“She dances near him”	7
		“She laughs at his jokes”	6
		“She drunk texts him”	6
		“She teases and jokes around with him”	5
		“She engages in conversation/chats with him”	5
		“She gets drunk”	5
		“She dresses revealingly”	5

However, no research has examined which tactics are used to solicit a hookup and which hookup solicitation tactics are perceived as most effective. The present research addresses these issues in two studies. Study 1 focuses on ascertaining the tactics used to solicit a hookup and study 2 focuses on the perceived effectiveness of those tactics.

Hypotheses

Based on prior research, men were expected to nominate acts that suggest they are interested in commitment and women were expected to nominate acts that suggest they are interested in having sex. These acts were also expected to be rated as most effective.

Method

Study 1

Participants

Study 1 included 217 participants (69 men, 148 women, aged 18–22 years). A total of 96% of the participants identified as heterosexual, 2% identified as other, and 2% identified as gay/lesbian; the final sample was limited to those self-reporting as heterosexual. Additionally, 89.4% of the sample self-identified as Caucasian, 4.7% as Asian, 1.9% as Black, and 1.6% as Hispanic. We also found that 61.2% of the sample reported being single, 32.2% said they were in

a romantic relationship, and 6.6% reported being unsure of their current relationship status. All were first and second year undergraduate students at a private University in the Northeastern USA who received an email research participation invitation and chose to take part in the research.

Procedure

Participants were presented with an online questionnaire, prompting them to think back to experiences or observations where they wanted to hookup with someone. They were asked to list up to five different acts or behaviors they would use to do so.

Participants were told that they should be able to answer the questions: “Did you ever do this?” and “How often have you done this?” Table 1 shows the consensus hookup solicitation acts for men and women from study 1.

Results

There were 399 actions or behaviors nominated by participants. These acts or behaviors were grouped according to similarity of content, and then acts nominated 5 times or more were considered consensus nominated acts consistent with prior research (see Buss, 2016; Wade et al., 2009; Wade & Slemm, 2015; Moran et al., 2020). Ultimately, the act nominations revealed 11 consensus behaviors or acts men would use to solicit hookups, and 18 consensus behaviors or acts that women would use.

Method

Study 2

Participants

There were 201 participants (81 men, 120 women, aged 18–77 years). In terms of self-identified race, 85.6% reported themselves as Caucasian, 5% as Asian, 3.5% as Black, 2%, as Hispanic, and Native American 0.5%, with 3.5% selecting “Other”. A total of 91.5% of participants reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual while 4% reported being gay/lesbian, and 4% said they were “Other.” Due to the nature of the study, we only included heterosexual individuals. While most participants were first or second year students, a smaller number were third or fourth year undergraduate students from a private university in the Northeastern USA who received an email research participation invitation. Some participants were solicited via a Campus Message Center where they received a research participation invitation. No individuals took part in both study 1 and study 2.

Participants in study 2 received an online questionnaire and were asked to rate the consensus acts from study 1 in terms of their effectiveness using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = ineffective to 7 = most effective). A 10-item version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972) was also included in order to control for social desirability biases.

Results

Cronbach’s alpha revealed that the 18 hookup solicitation tactics for women were reliable, $\alpha = .89$, and the 11 hookup solicitation tactics for men were reliable, $\alpha = .84$. Mixed model repeated measures ANCOVAs were computed for the male tactics and for the female tactics. The Social Desirability measure was summed and was included as the covariate in each analysis. A 2 (sex) \times 18 (tactics) Mixed Model Repeated Measures ANCOVA revealed a significant effect for tactics for the female tactics, $F(17, 169) = 10.18, p < .0001, \eta^2 = 0.51$. Also, a 2 (sex) \times 11 (tactics) Mixed Model Repeated Measures ANCOVA revealed a significant effect for tactics for the male tactics, $F(10, 185) = 42.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$, see Tables 2 and 3. Comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed that male tactics rated as most effective were: “He asks her out to dinner or a movie”, “he converses with her”, “he flirts with her”, “he asks her to dance or kiss”, and “he asks to walk her home”. Also, comparisons with Bonferroni corrections revealed that female tactics rated as most effective were “she goes home with him”, “she kisses him”, “she flirts with him”, “she dances with him”, and “she gets a drink with him”.

Significant interaction effects for sex and tactics also occurred for female tactics, $F(17, 172) = 2.94, p < .0001, \eta^2 = 0.23$, and for male tactics, $F(10, 185) = 6.76, p < 0.0001, \eta^2 = 0.27$, see means in bold in Tables 2 and 3. *t* tests with Bonferroni corrections for the female tactics revealed that men rated the tactics “she touches him in general” ($t(182)$

Table 2 Most effective female hookup solicitation tactics

Tactic	Overall mean (SD)	Male mean (SD)	Female mean (SD)
(a) She goes home with him	6.31 ^a (.98)	6.43(.85)	6.23(1.05)
(b) She kisses him	5.93 ^{ab} (1.08)	6.16(1.14)	5.78(1.02)
(c) She flirts with him	5.48 ^{abc} (1.08)	5.67(1.00)	5.36(1.12)
(d) She dances with him	5.38 ^{abc} (1.27)	5.54(1.22)	5.27(1.29)
(e) She gets a drink with him	5.18 ^{abc} (1.22)	5.09(1.24)	5.23(1.22)
She teases and jokes around with him	5.07 ^{ab} (1.15)	5.21(1.15)	4.98(1.14)
She touches him in general	5.02 ^{abc} (1.23)	5.28(1.16)	4.85(1.25)
She exchanges numbers with him	5.02 ^{abc} (1.20)	5.04(1.23)	5.00(1.19)
She texts him	4.82 ^{abcd} (1.32)	5.00(1.28)	4.70(1.34)
She chats with him	4.74 ^{abcde} (1.31)	4.91(1.56)	4.63(1.35)
She dresses revealingly	4.71 ^{abcde} (1.47)	4.68(1.49)	4.73(1.46)
She laughs at his jokes	4.66 ^{abcde} (1.35)	4.83(1.27)	4.55(1.39)
She drunk texts him	4.50 ^{abcde} (1.62)	4.91(1.56)	4.23(1.60)
She makes eye contact with him	4.49 ^{abcde} (1.40)	4.39(1.44)	4.56(1.37)
She has a friend introduce her to him	4.39 ^{abcde} (1.34)	4.53(1.33)	4.30(1.34)
She smiles at him	4.34 ^{abcde} (1.41)	4.50(1.49)	4.23(1.35)
She gets drunk	4.21 ^{abcde} (1.68)	3.88(1.67)	4.43(1.66)
She dances near him	3.88 ^{abcde} (1.38)	3.70(1.52)	4.00(1.27)

Higher numbers mean more effective

Bold = sex difference, $p < .05$. The means were compared, with Bonferroni corrections, and means with the same superscripts were significantly different (not all comparisons are reported in this table)

Table 3 Most effective male hookup solicitation tactics

Tactic	Overall mean (SD)	Male mean (SD)	Female mean (SD)
(a) He asks her out to dinner or movie	5.21(1.49)	4.37(1.52)	5.78(1.19)
(b) He converses with her	5.10(1.31)	4.95(1.29)	5.20(1.33)
(c) He flirts with her	5.09(1.22)	5.05(1.21)	5.12(1.24)
(d) He asks her to dance or to kiss	4.90(1.37)	4.95(1.27)	4.86(1.43)
(e) He asks to walk her home	4.85(1.46)	4.83(1.39)	4.85(1.51)
He dances with her	4.72 ^{abc} (1.35)	4.91(1.25)	4.59(1.40)
He texts her	4.45 ^{abcde} (1.55)	3.99(1.51)	4.76(1.51)
He makes body contact with her	4.38 ^{abcde} (1.48)	4.27(1.47)	4.46(1.48)
He buys her a drink	3.99 ^{abcde} (1.39)	3.90(1.35)	4.05(1.41)
He tries to impress her	3.96 ^{abcde} (1.32)	3.76(1.14)	4.10(1.41)
He gets drunk	3.11 ^{abcde} (1.63)	3.56(1.63)	2.83(1.60)

Higher numbers mean more effective

Bold = sex difference, $p < .05$. The means were compared, with Bonferroni corrections, and means with the same superscripts were significantly different (not all comparisons are reported in this table)

= -2.68 , $p < .008$) as more effective than men did while women rated the tactic “she gets drunk” ($t(182) = 2.68$, $p < .008$) as more effective than men did. t tests with Bonferroni corrections for the male tactics revealed that women rated the tactics “he asks her out to dinner or a movie” ($t(181) = 7.01$, $p < .0001$) as more effective than men did and men rated the tactic “he gets drunk” ($t(181) = -2.75$, $p < .007$) as more effective than women did.

Additional mixed model repeated measures ANCOVAs, using the Social Desirability score as a covariate, comparing effectiveness ratings across the demographic variables for the female tactics revealed no significant effects for Birth Control Usage, Current Relationship Status, Sexual Experience, and Prior Relationship Experience.

Additional mixed model repeated measures ANCOVAs with the Social Desirability score as the covariate for the male tactics revealed no effect for Birth Control usage by women, or Current Relationship Status. However, a 2 (Sex) \times 2 (Sexual Relationship Experience) \times 11 (Tactics) Mixed Model repeated measures ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction effect for sexual experience and tactics, $F(10,166) = 2.35$, $p < .013$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Further, t tests with Bonferroni corrections revealed that participants with sexual relationship experience rated the item “he texts her” as more effective than participants without sexual relationship experience ($t(180) = 2.71$, $p < .007$; $M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.44$ vs. $M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.52$ for sexual relationship experience and no sexual relationship experience, respectively). Also, a 2 (Sex) \times 2 (Relationship experience) \times 11 (Tactics) revealed a significant effect interaction for relationship experience and tactics, $F(10,163) = 1.98$, $p < .04$. The t tests with Bonferroni corrections revealed that individuals with relationship experience rated the item “he asks her to dance or to kiss” as less effective than participants with no relationship experience ($t(178) = -2.95$, $p < .004$; $M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.37$

vs. $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.14$, for relationship experience and no relationship experience, respectively).

The age range for study 1 (18–22) differed from the age range for study 2 (18–77) so we computed separate multiple regressions for the male and female hookup solicitation tactics with age as the dependent variable and the hookup solicitations tactics as the independent variables to see if age of participants mattered in study 2. The regression models were not significant.

Discussion

The results were consistent with the hypotheses. Men’s behaviors that were considered most effective by women are related to investment and long-term interest, in that it involves invitations to dinner and movies, or spending time with her presumably to get to know her, while women’s most effective behaviors according to men involve behaving in a manner that promotes or suggests sexual accessibility. These actions were perceived as most effective because they are consistent with female and male sexual strategies. For example, our finding comports with Schmitt and Buss’s (1996) research showing that men display immediate investment of resources as a means of strategic self-promotion to attract short-term mates, whereas women display sexual availability to attract short-term mates.

They also align with the hypothesis that women often engage in short-term mating in the pursuit of long-term mate acquisition goals and as a result, are more responsive to men’s tactics associated with women’s long-term mate preferences. Specific explanations for the perceived effectiveness of the highest rated tactics are as follows.

The male tactic of asking her out to dinner or a movie may be perceived as most effective due to such action conveying a willingness to immediately invest resources, and

being related to altruistic actions. A man asking a woman out to dinner or a movie leads to an assumption that he is going to pay for the dinner or movie (Paynter & Leaper, 2016), i.e., he is giving her some of his resources. Schmitt and Buss (1996) report that giving a woman resources is an effective way for a man to attract a short-term mate. Also, women are attracted to, and prefer, male mates who are altruistic (Phillips et al., 2008). A man who pays for dinner or a movie may be perceived as altruistic. Additionally, a dinner date allows for courtship feeding which can enhance attraction (Alley et al., 2013; Morris, 1994). Lastly, a dinner or movie date request could suggest that, deceptively in this case, the man is willing to spend time with the woman which may suggest he is interested in more than short-term mating even though in this instance his goal is to secure a hookup.

The male tactic of conversing with her may be very effective because it could indicate a willingness to get to know the woman. Such an action may indicate more than a desire to have short-term sex. This explanation is supported by Garcia and Reiber's (2008) and Shukusky and Wade's (2012) research on hookups which shows that both men and women who engage in hookups hope the hookup will turn into a long-term relationship.

The male tactic "he flirts with her" is highly effective, possibly because it signals other characteristics, such as emotionality. For example, prior research shows that men who indicate a willingness to commit emotionally are most effective at flirting (Apostolou & Christoforou, 2020; Wade & Feldman, 2016; Wade & Slemm, 2015).

The male tactic of asking her to dance or kiss may be very effective because women rate men who can dance as warmer and less dominant than men who cannot dance (Wade et al., 2015) and women find men who are overly masculine unappealing (Johnston et al., 2001). This tactic may also be very effective due to kissing playing a role in mate assessment. Hughes et al. (2007) and Wlodarski and Dunbar (2013) report that women use kissing to perform a chemosensory analysis of men's genetic fitness. Thus, if a woman consents to give a male a kiss she may be able to make a more informed decision about the male's genetic quality possibly removing any doubts she may have about this man's genetic fitness. Men, being more opportunistic maters, can use kissing to stimulate a woman's libido via the introduction of additional testosterone into her system (Hughes et al., 2007; Wlodarski & Dunbar, 2013). Additionally, both sexes use kissing to facilitate bonding with mates since oxytocin is released during kissing (Hughes et al., 2007; Wlodarski & Dunbar, 2013). It is possible that a woman may view a man who asks for a kiss as being respectful since he is asking rather than just taking the kiss, which often occurs in hookup contexts (see Flack et al., 2007), and perceived as warm, which women usually find appealing (Buss, 1989; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

The male tactic of asking to walk her home may be effective because it comports with research indicating that a male's ability to protect a woman from physical harm is desirable (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Li, 2007; Li & Kenrick, 2006). Additionally, a man may assume that going to a woman's home increases the likelihood that sex will occur, a possibility supported by Clark and Hatfield (1989). Related to that explanation, in a systematic replication of that classic research, Hald and Høgh-Olesen (2010) found that both men and women equally acquiesced to the "come to my place" request from a stranger.

Participants with sexual relationship experience may have rated the male tactic of "he texts her" as more effective than the participants without sexual relationship experience due to having more experience texting women to solicit sex. Those individuals may also have had more success with using texts to solicit sex than participants without sexual relationship experience. Conversely, participants without relationship experience may have rated the male tactic of asking her to dance or for a kiss as more effective than participants with relationship experience due to having had less experience with this tactic, i.e., they may be skeptical. Additional research is necessary to ascertain the validity of these explanations.

The female tactic of going home with him may have been rated as very effective because participants assume that sex is more likely to occur if she goes home with him. This finding is similar to Hald and Høgh-Olesen (2010) who found that both men and women equally acquiesce to a request to go home with a requestor.

The female tactic of kissing him may have been rated as very effective due to kissing being a mate assessment tool and sexual stimulation tool, as previously discussed. Thus, because both sexes can use kissing to facilitate sexual communion it is perceived as a very effective hookup solicitation tactic.

The female tactic of "she flirts with him" may have been rated as very effective because prior research shows that the female flirtatious behaviors that are most effective involve actions that suggest sexual accessibility (see Apostolou & Christoforou, 2020; Wade & Feldman, 2016; Wade & Slemm, 2015), and sexual accessibility is very important for the selection of female short-term mates (Schmitt & Buss, 1996).

The female tactic "she dances with him" may be rated as very effective due to the information dancing communicates to others. Dance can communicate courtship attraction (Hanna, 2010) and information about health and sexual attractiveness (Hanna, 1988; Wade et al., 2015).

The female tactic of "she gets a drink with him" may be perceived as very effective because a woman who drinks can be perceived as engaging in risky behavior, which may be used a cue of potential sexual exploitability by men (Goetz,

et al., 2012) facilitating a man's short-term sexual strategy. Additionally, this action may be perceived as effective by women because women who consume more alcohol rate themselves as more attractive (Brenman & Wade, 2020) and men favor attractive women for sex. This action may be effective because individuals who drink have a stronger intention of having sex than those who do not drink (Cooper, 2002; LaBrie et al., 2014; Maisto et al., 2004).

In the future, researchers may opt to provide definitions to examine hookups relative to other forms of casual short-term sexual relationships such as friends with benefits and back-burner relationships. Dibble et al. (2019) report that in their study of these relationship types, participants seem to make less categorical distinctions and behave more fluidly than researchers often acknowledge. However, if provided with clear definitions (i.e., a back-burner relationship is someone that may be a potential sexual or romantic partner with whom one is not yet involved), distinctions may appear. Hookups are encounters that occur only once (akin to a so-called one-night stand) or more than once (i.e., "booty call") and may or may not include intercourse (see Dibble et al., 2019, for a review). Some hookups may be entered into with the assumption that it will be of limited involvement, while other hookups may be retrospectively labeled that way. This 'after-the-fact' labeling may occur simply because the relationship did not continue, or perhaps because the relationships are associated with regret or other negative emotions (Hehman & Salmon, 2020; Kennair et al., 2016).

The motivations for seeking different types of encounters may play a role in shaping the choice of tactics one uses to solicit hookups, particularly if some types are expected to more readily lead to potential committed relationships. Future studies should explore how people solicit potential partners for specific encounters in light of the different expectations with regard to motivation and relationship duration. Along those lines, Jonason and Buss (2012) report that individuals use specific tactics to avoid becoming entangled in a long-term commitment when seeking a short-term mate. However, some individuals who engage in hookups have been reported to actually hope the hookup will turn into a long-term commitment (Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Shukusky & Wade, 2012). Future research should endeavor to determine if there are specific tactics employed by men and women to engender a long-term commitment from their hookup partner. Moreover, researchers may opt to examine whom men and women are hooking up with most often, and relatedly, the effectiveness of tactics for hooking up with different types of individuals. Fielder and Carey (2010) document that college women engage in sexual activity most often with friends (47%), followed by acquaintances (23%) and then strangers (23%), which leads to the prediction that solicitation for hookups should vary accordingly.

There are limitations with the current research. For example, the samples were composed of college students. Therefore, additional research examining whether or not these findings generalize to older populations and non-college aged populations is needed, including research among non-WEIRD societies. Indeed, some of the tactics listed by women in particular would be culturally inappropriate, due to societal restrictions on their ability to be with men, drinking alcohol, or engaging in public displays of physical intimacy. Further, the samples were largely biased in favor of those who identify as heterosexual. It would be highly interesting to determine how the tactics identified in this research map onto gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, and whether the tactics documented here are as effective in soliciting hookups.

Finding a suitable mate to engage in a short-term sexual relationship has presumably been a problem over evolutionary time. Although significant strides have been made in our understanding of mating in relation to preferences, there has been a dearth of information when it comes to how one solicits hookup partners, and which acts are perceived to be the most effective. In the current studies, we relied on sexual strategy theory and hypothesized that actions that suggest sexual access would be nominated most often by women whereas actions that suggest a willingness to commit were expected to be nominated most often by men. This prediction was supported. Moreover, men and women were hypothesized to rate actions by men that suggest a willingness to commit as most effective and actions by women that suggest sexual access as most effective; this hypothesis was also supported.

Author Contribution T. Joel Wade did the data analyses for this research. T. Joel Wade, Maryanne Fisher, Catherine Salmon, and Carly Downs wrote the manuscript. Data collection was done by Carly Downs.

Declarations

Ethics Approval Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Bucknell University. The procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent to Participate Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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