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*Youth sexuality and social change*

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### Publication date

2017

### Document Version

Final published version

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### Citation for published version (APA):

Schuurmans, J. J. (2017). *Hookups: Youth sexuality and social change*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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# HOOKUPS

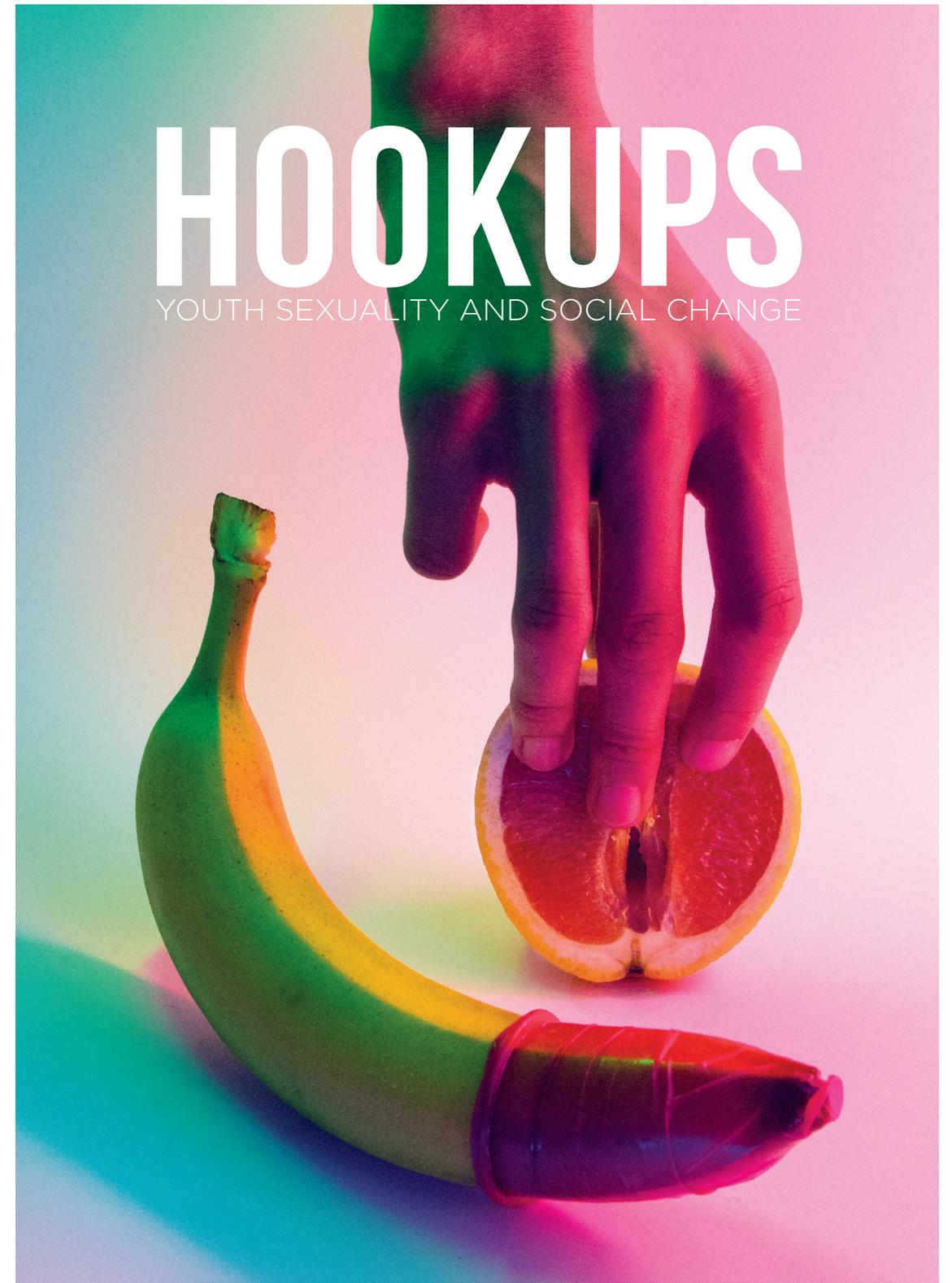
YOUTH SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A hookup is an ambiguous term. It can mean that a couple kissed, engaged in manual stimulation, oral sex or intercourse. Hooking up has emerged as a prevalent sexual script on American college campuses, but to what extent is it confined to this arena? Has hooking up also become a dominant norm of intimate coupling in the direct surroundings of college, for instance in urban nightlife? Is hooking up solely a script of American youth sexual culture, or, have youth outside of the US adopted it?

This research is based on a multi-sited qualitative study in California and Hong Kong that explores the conditions under which hookup culture emerged. Hooking up is the sexual regime of American residential colleges with a large and active social scene. Outside of the college arena, hooking up is not a prevalent script of heterosexual contact. Youth in Hong Kong are familiar with the hookup script but seldom enact it. Sexual norms have been a defining marker of youth culture in America since the start of the 20th century. In hookup culture, sex is recreational and devoid of expectations of commitment. This contrasts with the sexual norms of adulthood in which courtship is primed towards finding a committed relationship. In America, a youth sexual culture developed largely in autonomous enclaves of a residential campus, outside of the control of the older generation. In Hong Kong, the elder generation maintained a firm grip on college campus culture, and sexual norms of youth corresponded with those of adults.

HOOKUPS

JITSE JONNE SCHUURMANS



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YOUTH SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Jitse Jonne Schuurmans

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Designed by Jeroen Abels

This research is financially supported by  
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ISBN: 978-94-6332-244-7

Cover design: Jeroen Abels

Cover photography: Annemiek Gouwen

# HOOKUPS

YOUTH SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex

ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde

commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel

op dinsdag 19 december 2017, te 10:00 uur

door Jitse Jonne Schuurmans

geboren te Wageningen



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This project was as much about learning about sociology as it was about learning about myself. Without the help of the following people, this project would have probably not reached this stage.

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the people who contributed to this research. The students in San Francisco and Hong Kong who shared all these intimate details of their life with me, and the ‘game’ practitioners who welcomed me as an ethnographer of their lives. Many times I disagreed with you, but I will never forget the help you provided in this project. Many thanks.

I would also like to thank my promoters Jan Willem Duyvendak and Sebastien Chauvin for the countless hours they invested in reading my epistles and the support they gave to this project, especially, since my research interests only marginally related to their own. Many thanks for giving me this opportunity. I also would like to thank the coordinators of the bachelor program of anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. You have been extremely helpful and ever willing to plan my teaching schedule around my research.

My colleagues at the University of Amsterdam have been a great help. I would like to thank John Boy, Svetlana Kharchenkova, Robby Davidson, Thijs van Dooremalen, and Bert de Graaff for commenting on numerous chapters. Also, I would like to thank all my colleagues of rooms B.6.01 and B.6.22. The lunches together were always a welcome distraction. I would also like to thank my colleagues of the political sociology program group, who made my time at the University of Amsterdam inspiring and pleasant.

I would also like to thank Lydia Daniller and Rebecca Gould for being my American surrogate family. You have created a home for me away from home. Of course, my biological family have been of great support. Rene and Evelyn, thanks for always supporting and encouraging my studies.

Eva, thanks for all the fun, warmth, support and care. I am looking forward to writing the next chapter in our lives together.



# INTRODUCTION

---

Tony was a young man from Southern California, tall with sad and droopy eyes. He seemed to look straight through you, contemplative and a little reserved; many perceived him to be slightly mysterious. Tony, like most of the freshmen students I interviewed, came to the San Francisco Bay Area to attend college with the expectation of beginning a new phase in their lives. For the first time in his life, he lived away from his parents. He could uncompromisingly do what he wanted, make new friends, take interesting courses, explore life-style options, party and get drunk, and of course, experience sexual adventures with a variety of partners. Tony had his first college hookup at the beginning of the first semester.

*It was the first week in the dorms. That is kind of the week that everybody gets crazy, because it's like the first time that a lot of these people have ever been really... what is the right word? Independent, I guess? So, everybody was getting really, really drunk and that is when most hookups happened; at that point in the year. And my roommate and I met these two girls who lived together down the hall from us, and we kind of split up. We each went for one. We had them come over to our room and watch a movie together, and we hooked up (Tony).*

Narratives of college as an arena in which casual sexual adventures are extremely common are omnipresent in popular culture. From Tom Wolfe's bestsellers *Hooking Up* (2000) and *I am Charlotte Simmons* (2004), to MTV's series *Spring Break*, the lives of young men and women are depicted as a 'lurid carnival' (Wolfe, 2000) of seemingly uncommitted, free-for-all sex. The days of conventional dating have allegedly passed, and this extends beyond college. In series like *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, the protagonists had a seemingly never-ending string of flings and casual sex partners. From these cultural messages, audiences get the impression that this is the new norm of intimate relations for young Americans in the new millennium. At least a fraction of the American population seems to have this idea. A blossoming self-help industry

emerged that promised young men and women easy roadmaps for navigating this new sexual landscape. Some self-help literature (mostly aimed at women) showed readers how to find ‘Mr. Right’ within this environment of uncommitted liaisons; others (mostly aimed at men) propagated dubious interactional techniques to live the life of a modern-day Casanova. In his renowned 1992 book, *How to Get the Women You Desire into Bed*, Ross Jeffries explained to his worried audience:

*What I am about to show you will allow you to create very powerful feelings of being turned on and excited in almost any woman you can spend time with. You don't have to rely on luck, or that special "chemistry" or "spark." [I] will show you how to create that in about ten minutes time, with almost any woman you want, in almost any circumstances. Instead of dates that end up with a polite peck on the cheek, you'll end up taking it as far as you want to go, regardless of how the woman felt about you before you used these techniques on her (Jeffries, 1992).*

Hordes of young men were inspired by narratives like this and partook in what came to be known as ‘seduction communities’, loosely organized groups in which young men tried to learn the embodied competences of heterosexual flirtation and sexual escalation. While most men who were attracted to these communities only got briefly involved before realizing that reality did not quite match these lascivious expectations, some took it very seriously and dedicated years to them. Some of these men claimed that these communities filled the emptiness in their lives.

*There is definitely some tall tailing going on. But the other thing is that I've done a number of things, that when I talk to guys about it, they'll say it's impossible. Owen Cook [renowned "dating" coach] came up with this theory which he named the secret society, that is that only 1% of the population fucks 50% of the girls and I think there's some truth in this. I mean I had at least 130 one-night stands, and I can see other guys doing that as well (John).*

On the other side of the globe, Norton, a sophomore student at the University Hong Kong, like Tony, had a casual sexual adventure with a fellow student. By the end of his freshman year, he and a female friend had progressively become closer. Right before the summer break, before she planned to fly out for a year abroad, Norton and she were at his dorm. His roommates had returned to their family homes, and the couple sat in private, talking about their plans for the coming year. Norton liked her and found her attractive, but he also knew that a relationship between them would not work at this stage because a boyfriend in Hong Kong did

not align with her career plans. Nonetheless, things between them escalated that evening, and they had intercourse. Norton felt torn about the episode and struggled to find words to describe the encounter. 'We are not really friends, we are not... a couple, and yeah that's weird.' Norton tried to forget about it, and only confessed the incident to a few close friends. Even with a researcher, who could relate to his experience and expressed no moral objections to these episodes, Norton felt burdened to discuss the situation. 'Do we have to talk about this?' Norton asked, explaining, 'I don't like this kind of relationships, [...] because I think this is not good.'

Hong Kongese freshman student Sandy had a similar experience. Like Tony and Norton, she too came to college with the expectations that a new life phase had begun, marked by her eighteenth birthday. 'I didn't start going out till I was 18, which was when I got into university [...] and then I was like let's go out and explore.' Exploring for Sandy entailed going to the nightlife district of LKF, to party and drink, socialize to meet new people, and flirt and have sex.

*One [occasion] was with an exchange student from Texas. I met him through my friend who is a full-time student here [University Hong Kong –this is a pseudonym-] and she decided to bring him to the party in LKF [nightlife district], and then everybody was drinking and we were flirting around. And then we went back to his dorm and we had sex (Sandy).*

Sandy felt torn about this episode, as a result of conflicting cultural messages about what it meant to be a young woman at the start of the 21st century. Sandy spent most of her childhood in America and moved back to Hong Kong as an adolescent. She had many international students as friends, as well as local Hong Kong Chinese. She grew up amidst two traditions with different sexual norms.

*I wasn't too sure about how to feel. In Chinese tradition, you should always make sure that you have sex after marriage. I was always taught that, but when it [the pre-marital hook-up] happened I was really shocked. I was thinking "oh my God what happens now? What did I do?" So, I asked my mother for advice.*

Her mother reacted surprisingly understandingly, contrary to her expectations. She thought that her mother would be 'extremely mad', but instead she 'just sighed' and said 'okay, it happens'. However, this soft reaction did not mean that her mother approved of Sandy's experiences with casual sex. In the days and weeks following Sandy's confession, her mother kept a close check on her whereabouts. 'She would just ask me "who are you going out with? Where are you going? And how long?"

And she wanted to know all these details. “Is it a girl or is this a guy?” Although Sandy was annoyed by her mother’s interferences, especially since she seemed so understanding and had not judged her, they brought clarity to her perspective on sex and relationships. ‘Now I know myself a bit more. You have to experience these things to know what you are looking for. I wouldn’t do it casually anymore.’

‘Scripts’ of youth sexuality (Gagnon and Simon, 1973:20) travel through all corners of the world, and mass media and the transnational movement of people are important vehicles in this process. America’s global dominance in the entertainment industry is felt in nearly all places around the globe. Youth in Australia, Asia, Africa and Europe are exposed to the ‘lurid carnival’ of casual sexual relations among young adults that are depicted in American movies and TV shows. The question is whether these local audiences adopt these ideas about intimacy, relationships and sex, contest them, or creatively rework them in their own sexual cultures. In addition to mass media, people are vehicles for these tropes. A class of privileged, often highly educated denizens is increasingly geographically mobile, following work, leisure and educational opportunities around the globe. These individuals also bring with them cultural templates of intimacy, some of which include a decoupling of sex and relationships, and share these with interlocutors in their new places of residency. Through these interpersonal exchanges, tropes of youth sexuality travel, at times verbally and at times through intimate contact. While in some regions these templates might remain in the realm of ideas and fantasies, in others they might become models for practice.

Especially in East Asia, new templates of intimacy seem to find fertile ground. In recent decades, there have been drastic changes in intimate relationships throughout this region. The age of first marriage has risen dramatically, resulting in a prolonged period in which youth can explore intimate relationships relatively freed from former, adult expectations of finding a lifelong partner. At the same time, acceptance of premarital sex has risen, and an increasing number of young men and women explore their sexuality with different partners before committing to their future spouses (Davis and Friedman, 2014). Some studies suggest that in the urban centers throughout this region, sex is increasingly decoupled from intimate relationships for more and more of the ambitious, highly educated young professionals (Farrer, 2002; Moskowitz, 2008). A rapid increase in women’s autonomy and a reorientation of values, emphasizing personal fulfilment over social conformity, have been important factors in this change (Farrer, 2014:63; Yan, 2011). These developments parallel the social changes in America that have led to the emergence of a hookup culture across college campuses. It remains to be seen if these corresponding changes in East Asia have resulted in the emergence of hooking up as a dominant norm of intimate relationships among youth.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Of all the urban centers in East Asia, Hong Kong is among the cities with the most intense exposure to American tropes of youth sexuality. From its onset as a colony of the British crown, the city has always had a window open to the ‘west’. Although the city has a massive indigenous entertainment industry, the penetration of mass media productions originating in the western hemisphere has been much more severe than in other urban centers in the region. Through these media, narratives of seemingly hedonistic American youth sexual culture have found their way to the city. Furthermore, Hong Kong has long been a commercial hub, attracting entrepreneurial spirits from all regions of the world. These people have met in the city-state and exchanged ideas and practices, resulting in a true melting pot of traditions, both Chinese and Anglo-Saxon. Ideologies and practices of intimacy have been part of this enduring cultural exchange. Hong Kong continues to attract a large flow of professional expats, many of whom come from Anglo-Saxon countries. They work in the city, make friends locally, and at times forge intimate relationships with them. In addition to this flow of people from the western hemisphere, who introduce their culture and traditions to the city, a significant fraction of Hong Kongese youth have been introduced to western culture abroad, often through education in the United States, where they have been exposed to hookup culture. One question that this research addresses is whether this cultural exchange at home and abroad result in pronounced hookup practices among privileged Hong Kongese youth.

Tropes of youth sexuality do not only travel internationally but also within the nation. Youth across America are familiar with the campus hookup culture, either through personal experience, through media messages, or through tales of friends and acquaintances. However, it remains uncertain if this means that hooking up is a dominant norm of youth sexual relations outside of the campus arena. What we do know is that many students, especially women, hook up because they prioritize their own personal development during their college years and construe committed relationships as detrimental to their identity projects (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009; Wade, 2017). Relationships can be emotionally draining and demanding in terms of the time and energy invested in them, whereas hookups do not come with these costs and can still satisfy potent sexual needs. These explanations of hookup culture resemble the processes described in Giddens’ (1992) much-criticized work on the transformation of intimacy. He argues that increased female autonomy diminished dependencies within intimate relationships. Furthermore, the emerging pop-psychological ideologies of self-reflexivity –espoused within psychoanalyses and in much self-help literature- have been transposed to the domain of intimate rela-

tionships, fueling a culture of intimacy in which relationships are prolonged as long as they bring emotional and sexual satisfaction to partners (Giddens, 1992). While many scholars rightly criticized the sweeping generalizations contained in this work and, for instance, pinpointed the gendered material dependencies that persist in many intimate relationships (Jamieson, 1999), ‘a transformation of intimacy’ has indeed happened within the college arena. The question is whether this transformation is particular to these environments or transcends the campus arena and captures the relationship dynamics of young Americans outside of these institutions.

The rise of pop-psychological ideologies of self-reflexivity and related ideals of self-development are not universal processes. Scholars have therefore criticized Giddens’ work for being ethnocentric (Jackson et al., 2008). However, even within America, such a cultural shift has not occurred throughout the nation. It seems that Giddens was not thinking of religious communities in the Deep South when he wrote his seminal work on the transformation of intimacy. Rather, he might have thought of regions such as Northern California, where a self-help culture centered on personal growth and self-fulfillment is omnipresent. It is likely that in this region a large number of individuals prioritize self-development projects above the demands of a committed relationship and a hookup culture would emerge among young adults outside of the college arena. Hence, the San Francisco Bay Area seems like a logical site to study heterosexual hookup culture outside of college. In this dissertation, I ask if hookup culture is widespread within the campus arena and how predominant the norm of hooking up is in the intimate relationships of youth in the immediate surroundings of college campuses.

I am not claiming that the hookup script is new or that casual sex did not exist prior to the sexual revolution. The term ‘hooking up’ is relatively new and can refer to different sexual practices. A ‘hookup’ can mean the exchange of a kiss, engaging in oral sex, intercourse, or a combination of these activities. The phrase emerged at some point in the eighties (Murray, 1991), but the sexual script—the configuration of a sequence of sexual acts, and their social meaning (Gagnon and Simon 1973:20)—it denotes is much older (Reay, 2014). Sex without expectations of commitment, with little emotional intimacy, and undertaken for the sake of sexual pleasure, has been described in numerous studies. Commercial sex has often followed a sexual script that is similar to today’s hookup. Beyond the realm of prostitution, casual sex has appeared in ethnographies, for instance in Zorbaugh’s (1983)[1929] classical study on ‘furnished rooms’ in a working-class neighborhood in Chicago. This study considered an area with rooming houses where many unmarried working-class and bohemian youth lived independently from their families, where casual sexual affairs were allegedly common (1983[1929]:86). More has been written about casual sex

among men, for instance in public restrooms (Humphreys, 1970) and bathhouses (Weinberg and Williams, 1975). What is new is the emergence of casual sex as a dominant form of heterosexual intimate couplings among a significant fraction of the American student population. It is this new norm of heterosexual contact that is the focus of this research.

## RESEARCH ON HOOKUP CULTURE

A dominant theme in research on hooking up, particularly among gender scholars, is the deconstruction of persistent gender inequalities in the practice of hooking up. A number of scholars, for instance, write about the firm double standard of hookup culture (Allison and Risman, 2013; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009; Currier, 2013; Heldman and Wade, 2010; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011). Casual sexual experiences enhance the status of young men among peers, while women risk the 'whore stigma' (Pheterson, 1996). This label has severe social and psychological consequences for women. It damages women's reputation on campus; it constrains their sexual freedom (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009:598); it makes finding romantic partners more difficult (England, et al. 2008:538); it leads to social exclusion and feelings of marginalization (Armstrong et al., 2014:114-116); and, it increases risks of sexual violence, as men become more coercive in their pursuit, and female peers are less guarded (Armstrong et al., 2006:493). Another tenacious inequality of hookup culture pertains to the pleasure derived from the encounter. Both men and women, for instance, prioritize men's sexual pleasure (Currier, 2013:711). Men are more likely to receive oral sex than women (England et al., 2008:537; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:147), and men are also more likely to experience orgasm (England et al., 2008:535).

Another dominant theme within studies of hookup culture, especially in social psychology, is the exploration of its alleged social, physical and psychological 'risks'. A number of reoccurring strands can be observed within this research. Numerous scholars have investigated the possible adverse emotional effects of hooking up. Some argue that a substantial fraction of youth that hook up experiences shame, embarrassment, regret, anxiety, psychological distress, low self-esteem and depression after the encounter (Bachtel, 2013; Eshbaugh and Gute, 2008; Fielder and Carey, 2010:1116; Grello, et al. 2006; Lewis et al., 2012; Napper et al., 2016:772; Owen et al., 2010; Paul, et al. 2000:85; Paul and Hayes, 2002:657-658; Vrangalova, 2015). A number of researchers argue that women experience greater risks of negative psychological outcomes due to hooking up (Grello, et al. 2006;

Owen et al., 2010; Paul and Hayes, 2002). Another strand of research explores the potential social ‘risks’ of hooking up. Some authors found that hooking up can negatively affect the relationship with a hookup partner, for example by ending friendships (Bachtel, 2013; Napper et al., 2016:772), although the same can be said of love relationships. Others explored the potential physical ‘risks’ of hooking up. Hooking up is linked to excessive drinking (LaBrie et al., 2014; Paul, et al. 2000:85), and excessive drinking correlates with unprotected sex in hookups (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger, 2009; Olmstead et al., 2015:186), which increases the risks of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Bachtel, 2013; Fielder et al., 2014). There are also, though fewer studies that point to the potential positive effects of hooking up. This is especially striking since some research indicates that youth associate more positive than negative emotional reactions to hooking up (Owen and Fincham, 2011; Snapp et al., 2015). First and foremost, hookup culture enhances middle-class women’s career prospects by postponing committed relationships (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009). Second, hookups can be emotionally and physically pleasant. They can be emotionally satisfying, exciting and physically pleasurable (Bradshaw et al., 2010:666; Strokoff et al., 2015).

Research to the alleged ‘risks’ of casual sex for youth falls in a tradition of what Schalet (2011) calls a ‘dramatization’ of the sexuality of youth in America, whereby the difficulties and conflicts of youths’ sexual practices are emphasized (2011:17); a trend that seems to have amassed weight in the last two decades (Halperin, 2017:7). The development of youths’ sexuality is envisioned as a time in which uncontrollable biological forces potentially overpower individual’s moral imperatives. This can result in various detrimental health outcomes, such as unwanted pregnancies, STDs and a disregard of sexual consent. Furthermore, sexual relations among youth are envisioned as a battlefield in which young men pursue sex and young women want relationships (Schalet, 2011:17). Youths’ sexuality is seen as a genuine problem that needs to be studied as such, in order to formulate effective policy measures and recommendations to parents and educators on how to control their sexual expressions, thereby restricting their sexual agency (Halperin, 2017:7).

Why is youth sexuality equated with ‘risks’? This question is increasingly daunting considering the steady decrease of most problematic aspects of youths’ sexual practices. Teen pregnancy rates in America have been dropping for years, although they remain high in comparison to other developed economies (CDC, 2016; Schalet, 2011, 2011:4). Similarly, reported incidences of sexual assault have been declining in the last decades (BJS, 2014:3). Within the tradition of researching the ‘risks’ of youth sexuality, there is a large focus on college students. An example is the vast amount of research on college hookup culture. But why do college youth

attract so much attention from researchers? They do not experience the bulk of the most problematic aspects of sex. Rates of unwanted pregnancies and of reported sexual assault incidents are lower among college-going youth than among their peers outside of the academy (CDC, 2016; BJS, 2014:4). Part of the answer is likely that researchers tend to investigate phenomena that happen under their noses, and the sexual practices of students are an easily accessible domain. But this, I argue, is likely one side of the answer. Another is that the sexual culture of a large fraction of the college-going youth has, for a long time, contrasted the sexual norms of adults -including adult researchers. It is this contrast that fuels the interest of many.

Fewer scholars have tried to explain why hookup culture emerged, although a number of scholars have formulated tentative explanations. Some point to the rise of an imbalanced sex ratio on many campuses (Bogle, 2008; Heldman and Wade 2010:328; Kimmel 2008:202; Regnerus, 2012). Within this line of reasoning, concomitant with the 'dramatization' of youth sexuality (Schalet, 2011:17), sexual relations among youth are construed as a site of strife in which men and women want different things. Men want casual sex, and women want relationships. It follows that since men are in short demand on most campuses, they have the power to define the terms of these encounters. As a result, casual sex has become the norm on many campuses. A number of research findings complicate the 'battle of the sexes' argument. The sexual arena of youth is not a battlefield where men and women want different things; many women want to hookup just as much as men do (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009), and many men desperately want relationships. Others have also criticized the simplified perspective on human sexual and relational needs. Men and women alike have multiple sexual urges and relational needs, and both sexes want sexual excitement, commitment and emotional intimacy at the same time (Paik, 2013:177). Committed relationships, dates and hookups are templates for intimate behavior that coexist (England et al., 2008:540; Luff et al., 2016).

## FROM DATING TO HOOKING UP

Historically, the transition from dating to hooking up -which likely started in the late sixties but did not appear as a dominant norm on campuses until the eighties- seems to overlap with the trend that sex ratios on most campuses tilted towards a majority of women. However, the market narrative neglects the dramatic social and cultural changes that happened within the realm of gender relations in the second half of the 20th century. One major shift has been the relaxation of restrictions on female sexuality. In the preceding dating regime, light sexual activity, such as kiss-

ing and petting, was acceptable for women, but heavier practices were not. Men, on the other hand, did not face such restrictions; thus, women were responsible for the safeguarding of sexual boundaries when dating. The accomplishments of second-wave feminism have, amongst others, resulted in a gradual lifting of these restrictions on the sexuality of young, unmarried women. As a result, premarital sex became acceptable for both men and women.

‘The accomplishments of second-wave feminism’ is a rather concealing phrase to denote a whole range of changes in the realm of gender relations. One major change has been the astonishing increase in the number of women that found paid employment from the early sixties onwards. The lifting of marriage bars opened up career trajectories for married women. In the following decades, many women found paid employment, giving women unprecedented financial autonomy and access to an important source of self-respect and emotional fulfillment that was previously restricted to men. Additionally, an increasingly large number of young women found their way towards tertiary education, enhancing future career prospects. Furthermore, there were massive ruptures within the realm of intimate relations. Laws against sexual abuse and harassment were put in place, which gave a clear signal that physical violence within intimate affairs was unacceptable. Birth control became generally available, enabling more women to plan their careers and eliminating the risk of unwanted pregnancies from sexual experimentation. In combination, these dramatic social changes enabled women to chart the courses of their own lives.

Many young women seized these opportunities and prioritized their own development above the ‘emotion work’ of committed relationships. In previous decades, a dominant culture of romance on campus pressured female students into committed relationships, and within these affairs the career ambitions of women eroded (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990). Currently, college has become a time to pursue one’s own interests for many ambitious young women. This cultural shift was augmented by the changing economic tide of the seventies. Economic conditions deteriorated, and youth faced more precarious and financially insecure futures than prior generations. The following decade of Reaganomics did little to change this situation. On the contrary, a new wave of neoliberal policies washed over the country, reducing social welfare expenditures and deregulating and privatizing important industries. An ideology of economic individualism rose to prominence as a rationale for directing and evaluating life options. There was a cultural shift in campus culture that social historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (1987) calls the rise of ‘grim professionalism’—a term first used by former Yale president, Kinsman Brewster (Horowitz, 1987:245). College, first and foremost, became a place to secure middle-class careers, rather than a place to develop a political conscience or formulate idealistic

aspirations for the betterment of society, as was a key goal of students of the preceding error (1987:251). This greater focus on learning vocational skills did not mean that students forwent the social scene on campus and dedicated all their time and effort to studying. College was still a place for meeting new people, having fun and exploring sexual options, now within a context of relaxed restrictions on female sexuality.

Within these environments, hooking up emerged as a script of the intimate coupling of youth. In the following decades, it emerged as a dominant norm on some college campuses. A question remains about the extent to which hookup culture is confined to these particular environments. Some authors suggest that the infrastructural arrangements of residential colleges are necessary conditions for the emergence of an omnipresent culture of casual sex (Allison and Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Ray and Rosow, 2010). On these campuses, youth of around the same age live in close proximity to each other, outside of the controlling gazes of parents, at an age when most are unmarried and sexually active (Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:140). These college environments are generally perceived as safe havens in which youth feel a general sense of familiarity with each other because they have similar aspirations and because they are in a similar place in their lives (Bogle, 2007:781-782). College campuses are tightly integrated communities in which friend groups are entwined, and even strangers often share mutual acquaintances. Socializing with peers often happens at alcohol-infused get-togethers in a state of careless fun. It remains questionable if these conditions are necessary for the emergence of hooking up as a dominant norm of intimate coupling among youth. In any case, this 'infrastructural argument' cannot explain the emergence of hookup culture, since these infrastructural arrangements have been present for around a century, and hooking up only recently became a dominant sexual norm on college campuses.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

I start my exploration of the conditions under which hookup culture emerged with a historical analysis. This exploration starts at the turn of the 20th century. This time roughly corresponds with the origin of youth as a distinct life phase and a general group with its own culture and distinct sexual norms, in the upper and middle-classes. These new sexual norms emphasized an arrangement of what came to be known as 'dating', a form of youth courtship that was separate from the adult expectations of finding a marriage partner. From that point onwards, I delineate the larger social and

cultural transformations in which the shift from dating to hooking up occurred.

The second chapter researches intimate relationships at Bay Area University – pseudonym-, a commuter college in the greater San Francisco region, in order to explore the infrastructural argument in depth. If the particular spatial, social and cultural arrangements of residential colleges are necessary conditions for the emergence of hookup culture, does a different sexual culture or norm emerge on commuter college campuses? To what extent is there a hookup culture at Bay Area University? I argue that hooking up is confined to particular niches of college life and is not central to the college experience at BAU. The campus arena is fissured by the social grid of class, gender, race and age, and the complex intersection of these structures means that only a particular fraction of the student population hookup, predominantly White (upper)middle-class students in their freshman and sophomore years. Within this chapter, I describe how this structuring works, and how gender shapes the hookup experience.

In the third and fourth chapters, I explore the extent to which hooking up is a frequently enacted sexual script in intimate encounters of youth outside of the campus arena in the Bay Area. My focus is on ‘seduction communities’ of ‘game’ practitioners. These practitioners are men who study, practice and teach heterosexual flirtation and sexual escalation. This men’s movement entered the mainstream after the international bestseller *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* (2005), in which *New York Times* journalist Neil Strauss describes his years of involvement with this community and his fantastic transformation from a man with little sexual options to a renowned *pickup artist*. I find this self-label rather complacent and prefer to use the term ‘game’ practitioner. I follow a group of these men in their efforts to initiate sexual encounters with women in the ‘urban erotic contact zone’ of San Francisco, comprised of bars, clubs, cafes, shopping malls and high streets. I have loosely modelled this concept on Nagel’s (2003) ‘ethnosexual contact zone’ to describe urban spaces in which flirtatious interactions between strangers are relatively common. In the third chapter, I ethnographically explore the pedagogical path of ‘game’ practitioners. I argue that as neophytes become players of the ‘game’, their immediate goal of finding sexual partners is suspended, and a focus on the acquisition of heterosexual competences takes priority. In their unique realm, in which flirtatious and sexual interactions with women are construed as a ‘game’, players accrue status through an ostentatious demonstration of heterosexual skills, and hooking up frequently is a powerful narrative of expertise. Players of the ‘game’ present an extreme case for investigating the existence of a hookup culture in the domains immediately surrounding college. If hookup culture exists outside of the college arena, I would expect to find it among these men. In the fourth

chapter, I explore the sexual scripts that competent players of the ‘game’ in the Bay Area enact through a focus on their rituals, techniques and tactics of heterosexual contact. Despite their devoted efforts to live the life of a modern-day Casanova, their sexual adventurousness is the exception rather than the rule, and sex within the ‘game’ is not always casual. Hookup culture outside of the campus arena is a myth rather than reality, but that does not stop hordes of young men from dedicating the best years of their lives to a seemingly futile quest of the ‘game’.

The global diffusion of the hookup script will be the theme in the second part of the dissertation. My focus will be on Hong Kong, a region that has, on the surface, seen many similar changes in gender and intimate relationships as America. Chapter five explores the larger social and cultural transformation within the city-state in which changes in youth sexual cultures are embedded. Privileged women in Hong Kong also venture towards higher education *en masse* and pursue outstanding careers after college. At the same time, intimate relationships have changed dramatically, premarital sex has become more acceptable and the age of first marriage has risen (Davis and Friedman, 2014). As a result, young men and women experience a prolonged period of relatively unencumbered experimentation with sex, intimacy and relationships. Subsequent chapters focus on whether they do this within dating, hooking up or other intimate arrangements.

Chapter six empirically explores the sexual culture on a largely residential college campus in Hong Kong. At UHK – pseudonym-, hooking up is a known, but seldom enacted script; it is the practice of distant others, of foreign students that occurs on other campuses around the world. Students at UHK have a distinct dating arrangement called *ceot pool* – 出 (ceot1) pool-. The last empirical chapter explores dominant sexual mores within another domain frequented by youth in Hong Kong, the urban erotic contact zone, comprising bars, nightclubs, cafes, restaurants and high streets. Once again, the focus of this chapter will be on ‘game’ practitioners. These mainly include expat men from Europe, America and Australia along with Hong Kong Chinese men who have spent their formative years in Anglo-Saxon countries and are thus primed towards casual sexual encounters with Hong Kong Chinese women. Again, if heterosexual hookup culture existed in the nighttime arena in Hong Kong, I would expect that ‘game’ practitioners would experience most of it. The question is whether their interactions in the nightlife follow a hookup script. At this point, the answer will not be surprising. Players of the ‘game’ seldom engaged in hooking up, and most of their intimate interactions followed a different sexual script, despite efforts to forge casual sexual relations.

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# 1

## **GENDER, SEX AND CHANGE IN THE BAY AREA**

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Modern day college “romance” looks quite different from the customary ‘dinner and a date’ of the mid-20th century, let alone from the formal courtship regime of ‘calling’ that preceded dating (Bailey, 1988:15-16; Weigel, 2016:15-16; Wouters, 2012:294-297). In the 19th century, a young woman would not contact a potential suitor herself. The etiquette was that her family sent invitations –calling cards- to potential partners to pay the young lady a visit. Suitors were invited for a small feast at the woman’s family home, where they socialized under the auspices of a chaperone. Even if the couple liked each other and continued to see each other frequently, a chaperone needed to be present at least until the couple was married. Sexual contact prior to marriage could seriously jeopardize women’s reputations. Chaperones made sure that nothing sexual happened between the courting couple, or at least gave the impression to the outside world that the sexuality of youth was strictly monitored and controlled (Post, 1922:288-298).

One may wonder to what extent middle-class youth followed these prescribed etiquettes. Calling and chaperonage were the etiquettes of the upper classes (Rothman, 1987; Wouters, 2012), and little is known about the extent that other strata of society abided by these rules. However, even elites did not always adhere to the prescriptions of courtship etiquettes. Historical evidence drawn from letters and diaries suggests that chaperonage, for instance, might have been less common than is often thought, and regardless of this, courting couples had considerable privacy (Lystra, 1989:164; Rothman, 1987:209).

Most social historians agree that courtship, at that time, was a period in which a young couple got to know each other intimately and decided whether they would make a good marriage match. After the courtship phase, the couple would get engaged, and the altar was their final destination. Lovers went to great lengths to test each other’s commitment in the courtship phase, for instance by questioning the other’s suitability as a partner. Moments of ‘crisis’ that prompted self-disclosure marked the courtship process, as well as mutual introspection and reconciliation,

which brought the couples emotionally closer (Lystra, 1989:190). Etiquettes precluded any type of sexual activity in courtship, and maintaining these norms was the responsibility of women (Rothman, 1987:231). These regulations might have been too strict for some lovers, but most of the couples refrained from pre-marital sexual activity. Norms shifted in the beginning of the 20th century, and it became increasingly accepted that an engaged couple had sex before marriage (Fass, 1977:268; Rothman, 1987:242). As sexual compatibility arose as a marriage ideal, premarital sex, although solely in engagements, became the norm.

Dating was originally a practice of the lower classes who lacked the space at home for private conversation and thus went out in public to get acquainted with a potential partner (Bailey, 1988:17). While scholars unanimously agree that dating originated in these echelons of society, debate surrounds the question of how dating became the dominant form of courtship in America. A number of social historians note that dating came to the middle-classes via bohemian upper-class city youth that adopted this practice from the working class (Bailey, 1988:17; Erenberg, 1981:86). Elite women in urban centers in America most prominently rebelled against the strict moral codes of the elder generation. Erenberg (1981), in a historical study of the New York nightlife, notes that these elite women in the early 20th century started to participate in the amusements of the lower classes, whereby the sexes mixed in an atmosphere of joyous fun and flirtatious play. Wouters (2012), on the other hand, by drawing on etiquette books, suggests that dating was adopted from the working classes by the middle classes (2012: 296). He suggests that this was driven by a middle-class antagonism towards elites and a feeling that dating was liberation from the formal and rigid codes of the upper classes. Although his analyses of changes in dominant courtship regimes in America is original and sophisticated, this reading of the transition from 'calling' to 'dating' as a class struggle needs to be treated with care, as the historical evidence he presents is less thorough and less convincing than that of the aforementioned authors.

In explaining the transition from the calling to the dating regime, I follow the argument of Beth Bailey (1988), drawing on Kett (1977), who points to the emergence of 'youth' as a distinct life phase between childhood and adulthood at the turn of the 19th century (Bailey 1988:9; Kett, 1977:6). Prior to the 20th century, adulthood and youth were loosely applied categories, referring to people of different ages, at different stages of physiological development, among whom there was frequent contact between the different age groups (Bailey, 1988:9; Kett, 1977:5). At the beginning of the 20th century, young people in America became increasingly physically segregated from adults. Rapid industrialization and growing prosperity meant that, for many American families, the labor of children was no longer a ne-

cessity. At the same time, demographic patterns within the family shifted markedly. Not only did fertility rates drop, but births were also spaced closer to one another (Kett, 1977:216). As a result, for the first time in history, most young people grew up in families with brothers and sisters in the same age group. Additionally, the rapid industrialization of America at the time demanded a more skilled labor force in which educational attainments were important. The number of college students grew rapidly, not only among boys, but among girls as well. A large fraction of these colleges were residential, and students often lived in coed facilities surrounded with peers of the same age. For the first time in their lives, many young Americans lived away from home for a period of their lives, beyond the direct control of their families and home communities. In these autonomous spaces, a distinct youth culture could develop.

At the turn of the 19th century, scientists started to write about 'youth' as a distinct life phase with a unique psychology and developmental trajectory (Bailey, 1988:9-10; Kett, 1977:215, Lesko, 2001:51). Of these specialists, Stanley Hall was probably the most famous and influential person. His work on adolescence –as a distinct life phase with a specific psychology- influenced a whole generation of parents and educators (Kett, 1977:221; Lesko, 2001:51). Increasingly, Americans came to think of youngsters as a distinct age group with its own norms, roles, psychic make up, obligations and trials and tribulations; 'youth', in turn, acted upon this and developed their own culture in which sex and sexuality were central. 'Youth' embraced courtship, but without the implied adult expectation of finding a spouse. In this 'new' life phase, courtship was mainly recreational and a means to accrue peer status (Bailey, 1988:10; Fass, 1977:263; Mead, 1949:285; Waller, 1937:328). Dating emerged as the dominant sexual regime of middle-class youth and became a pivotal identity practice for young Americans in the 20th century.

College campuses functioned as incubators of youth culture, and the codes and etiquettes of dating that emerged within this arena became a model for intimate relationships of middle-class youth all over the country. Social scientists who had taken on the role of courtship specialists were an important vector in this process. They produced numerous etiquette books and published columns in national magazines, describing dating, inspired by what they saw within the campus arena (Bailey, 1989:8). These guides were read by a wide audience, including youth and parents with no connection to campus life, and helped to establish the etiquettes of dating as the dominant arrangement of intimate life of middle-class youth in America.

College campuses had a particular social ecology in which a distinct youth culture could flourish. Most of the colleges were tightly integrated communities with stark social control and homogeneous social norms. Dating was pivotal to

the college experience, and there was no way that students could escape from this peer culture (Horowitz, 1987:127). Students had to date, and students had to pet, and peers made sure that they did. The sexual code on campus was tenacious and dominant, as shown by a study from that era that found that 92% of college women petted at some time in their student years (Fass, 1977:265). Petting was essential for popularity in dating, and dating was central to college culture, especially on campuses dominated by Greek organizations (Horowitz, 1987:138). The homogeneous sexual code and the stark social control on campuses also appeared in the public ritual of 'petting parties' at colleges, in which groups of youth engaged in some light sexual activity (Bailey, 1988:80; Fass, 1977:265). As rigorously as petting was enforced as a social norm by college students, there was an equally strong imperative that coitus was confined to marriage or relationships that would soon evolve into marriage. Premarital sex only became the norm after the 1960s, suggesting that most students adhered to this code (Bailey, 1988:80).

The dating regime had two distinct forms, a non-exclusive variant -immortalized in Willard Waller's (1937) classic study 'the rating and dating complex'- and a 'going steady' arrangement. In the former, the norm was to date a variety of different partners. 'Dating and rating' was a highly competitive status game in which participants vied for popularity (Waller, 1937; Mead, 1949). In this game, both men and women could gain status by dating many different partners of similar or higher popularity. On the other hand, dating people of less popularity or 'getting stuck' with one partner could jeopardize one's standing (Waller, 1937:730-731). The latter arrangement of going steady entailed that youth dated exclusively with one partner for an extensive period. This, however, did not mean that these affairs were seen as a vestibule for a marriage. On the contrary, college youth in particular did not expect to marry these long-term partners (Herman, 1955:39).

A number of scholars sketch a seemingly linear historical development in these sexual regimes, where 'dating and rating' was the dominant arrangement from roughly the 1920s until the Second World War, and 'going steady' prevalent from the end of the war until the 1960s, when the regime started changing altogether (Bailey, 1988; Bogle, 2008:20; Wade, 2017:59-61; Weigel, 2016). This conceptualization, however, is problematic and neglects the diversity within dating regimes on campus. Already in 1937, Waller wrote that different campuses had different arrangements; at some the norm was to 'go steady', while at others competitive dating was the norm (Waller, 1937:732). There were even colleges where the dominant norms differed throughout the years of enrollment, where competitive dating was the practice of mainly freshmen and sophomores, and going steady was the arrangement of upperclassman (Waller, 1937:731; Herman, 1955:37).

Rather than a linear historical development where competitive dating was replaced by going steady, both dating arrangements coexisted and were part of the developmental trajectory of intimate relationships throughout life. Competitive dating was the dominant arrangement of youth who just started dating, while 'going steady' was the dominant arrangement amongst elder youth, which most youth transitioned into after a few years of competitive dating. It is, however, likely that the dominant dating regime on many college campuses shifted towards a 'going steady' arrangement after the Second World War, as Bailey argues (1988:26). However, this coincided with a broader trend of earlier marriages and concomitantly a shift in the dating trajectory of youth. Whyte (1990), in a representative intergenerational case study of dating and marriage in Detroit, found that the generation of women who married between 1925-1944 –roughly corresponding to the era of competitive dating- started dating around the age of sixteen. On average, they had their first 'steady' at the age of eighteen, and they married at the age of twenty-one. Women who married between 1945-1964 –the era of the 'going steady' arrangement- also started dating at the age of sixteen, but they had their first steady earlier in life, at seventeen, and married around their twentieth birthday (Whyte, 1990:27). By the time that most women who married after WWII were at college-going age, they had transitioned into a 'going steady' arrangement. Competitive dating still happened, but in the younger years. Once youth were of college-going age, most had transitioned towards a 'going steady' arrangement.

Many of the dating rituals and gendered role patterns in both arrangements were similar. A man had to ask a woman on a date, pick her up –preferably in his own car- and treat her to a night on the town (Mead, 1949:285). Dates happened in public spaces, crowded by peers of similar ages. In both regimes, dating was a game in which popularity was at stake, and one needed an audience to confirm status. On the date, there would be numerous gendered rituals. For example, the man would open doors, see a girl to her seat, order drinks and meals and taxi the girl home at the end of the date (Bailey, 1988:110). The night likely ended with some light sexual activity, called 'petting', which could be anything from a tender kiss, to more intense caressing and fondling (Fass, 1977:266). Sexual intercourse, however, was mostly off limits for both dating regimes and was confined to marriage or engagements that would soon move to the altar (Bailey, 1988; Fass, 1977:266; Mead, 1949:290).

In the 1960s, campus culture changed dramatically as did the etiquettes of intimate relations between the sexes. Campus culture had, up to the sixties, been predominantly politically conservative, but a new liberal wind blew over many colleges. It was the era of large-scale student protests, relaying against political elites and the perceived social injustices of American society. This student rebellion also

pertained to the established social etiquettes among the sexes on campus. The codes of dating were rejected, the clear-cut gender roles of the old sexual culture were unequal, limiting and confining for both men and women. The sexual norms that limited sexual activity to kissing and petting hampered a full expression of human sexuality (Horowitz, 1987:228). Dating was the sexual regime of the past that needed to be replaced. An 'informalization' of contact between men and women happened within the college arena (Wouters, 2012:104). This applied to general sociability between the sexes and to intimate arrangements. The separate gendered spheres that marked college life in previous eras dissolved. Before the 1960s, the interactions between men and women on campus were mainly restricted to what happened in classrooms and, of course, in dating. Casual socializing of students increasingly happened in mixed gender groups in informal social gatherings (Bogle, 2008:20-21; D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988:338). At the same time, intimate arrangements between students became increasingly informal. Courtship no longer abided by fixed social etiquettes, so a more flexible handling of role patterns and norms and expectations of sex and relationships became feasible. Students gained the autonomy to navigate their intimate life according to their own preferences, and dating lost its stronghold as the quintessential script of intimate relationships on campus.

## SOCIAL CHANGE AND MIDDLE-CLASS INTIMATE CULTURE

This informalization of contact between the sexes on campus was embedded in larger structural changes in the power balance between men and women. The harbingers of this change were already noticeable in the 1950s, the golden age of the male breadwinner family, in which the male supported the family financially and the female was the homemaker. Relatively few women went to college, and the number of jobs that were open to women was severely limited, especially after marriage. Nevertheless, in the fifties, researchers had already noted that few married women found the traditional division of labor in the family fulfilling, and many wished for a different family arrangement for their children (Coontz, 2005:251). They hoped that their daughters would pursue an education and postpone marriage to later in life.

In the golden age of the male breadwinner family, many women worked but mainly before marriage. Women were most often employed in lower-paid clerical positions, as secretaries, in sales and in service professions. Furthermore, following government regulations, they had to leave the workforce once in wedlock (Coontz,

2005:252-253). This arrangement came under pressure during the economic boom of the 1950s. Demand for low-skilled service workers grew rapidly, and the legal barriers that existed against the employment of married women made it increasingly difficult to find sufficient, competent employees in these white-collar professions (Coontz, 2005:253). The U.S. government relaxed restrictions on the employment of married women, and, as a result, the labor-force participation rate of women rose (BLS, 2015). In 1950, the epoch of the conventional family model with a bread-winning father and a homemaking mother, the labor force participation rate of women in the US stood at 33.9%, while this was at 86.4% for men. By 1970, labor force participation had risen to 43.3% of women, while that of men had decreased to 79.7% (BLS, 2015). Women increasingly joined the workforce, initially with women with less than college education filling the demands for low-skilled service workers. As the sixties progressed, more women with higher educational attainments joined the workforce and were increasingly employed in better-paid positions (Goldin, 2006:9).

In the following decades, the labor force participation rates of women continued to rise, and this was spurred by structural changes in the American economy. In the early seventies, the U.S. economy transitioned from its heavy reliance on manufacturing to more dependence on service industries (Cooper, 2014:36). As a result, many relatively well-paid manufacturing jobs disappeared in the seventies, and the number of jobs in the service industry grew significantly. These new service jobs largely fell into two categories: low-skilled and low-paid jobs at the bottom and highly-skilled and well-paid jobs at the top (Cooper, 2014:36). Income disparity in America started to rise, with the higher class increasingly earning a larger share of GDP, while the lower class and large portions of the middle class saw their real wages decline. This spurred many married women, especially from the lower- and middle classes, to seek paid employment, and labor force participation rates continued to rise throughout the seventies and eighties, shrinking the gap between men and women. In 1980, the labor-force participation rate of women had risen to 51.5% and in 1990 to 57.5%, while the labor-force participation rate of men slightly declined from 77.4% in 1980 to 76.4% in 1990 (BLS, 2015). The labor force participation rate of women continued to rise until the Great Recession in 2008 and then dropped markedly. In 2015, 56.7% of women participated in the labor force, compared to 69.1% of men (BLS, 2015). While many women joined the labor force to generate additional family income, a large proportion of women in the mid-seventies reported that they would continue working even if they did not need the money (Coontz, 2005:259). Many women found employment more fulfilling than fulltime homemaking.

As an increasing number of women became financially independent from the 1960s onward, intimate relationships changed. Augmented social welfare provisions gave women with little chances on the labor market financial autonomy outside of wedlock, which lessened the financial dependency on marriage. This, however, did not result in less marriages and more marriage dissolutions (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler, 1996:63; Moffitt, 1992:29). The rise of paid employment among women and changes within divorce laws had a greater impact on marriage dissolutions. The system changed from an at-fault to a no-fault system. In the former, one of the partners had to prove a breach of marriage vows before a divorce was granted. In the latter system, a divorce was granted if requested by one of the partners. Between 1950 and the mid-1960s in America, the divorce rate, the ratio of divorces granted for every hundred marriages in one year, changed little and wavered around 10 %. From the mid-sixties onward, divorce rates rose rapidly. In 1970, it rose to 33% and continued to rise throughout the next two decades. In the early 1990s, over 50% of marriages ended in a divorce, and this rate marginally declined over the next decades (Fischer et al., 2006:70). Expectations of intimate relationships also changed with women's increased financial independence. Surveys from 1950 to 1970 showed a landslide change in attitudes towards committed relationships, with a rising importance given to emotional satisfaction, intimacy and fairness within relationships (Coontz, 2005:258).

Women's increased financial independence changed the evaluation criteria for the attractiveness of a potential suitor. In the dating era, men were highly valued for their wealth and spending power, while women were predominantly valued for their beauty and capacity to embody the stereotypical feminine role. Men's abilities and willingness to spend money on dates greatly affected their status in the dating regime. The marriage market functioned according to a similar logic; it was common for young women to marry older and wealthy men (Coontz, 2005:285). Women's financial independence changed this profoundly. From the sixties onward, socio-economic homophily rose sharply; women with high educational attainments and high income tended to match with high income and highly-educated men of the same age (Graf and Schwartz, 2010:3). A similar change occurred in the sexual arena on college campuses. Qualities like physical attractiveness, cultural capital and charisma became more important than financial capabilities for men's and women's status in the sexual arena.

The change from a manufacturing economy to one heavily reliant on service industries resulted in a surge in the demand for a highly educated and skilled workforce and increased the relevance of a college education for a financially secure future. Women, especially, spurred the growth of higher education. More and

more women followed the advice of their mothers and made their way to college. This translated into a drastic expansion of higher education in the U.S. In 1960, 54.0% of recent male high school graduates enrolled in college, compared to 37.9% of women (NCES, 2015). By the end of the decade, this had risen to 60.1% of men and 47.2% of women. Over the following decades, men's enrollment rates stalled, while progressively more women enrolled in college (NCES, 2015). In the late eighties, women's college enrollment rates started to rise above that of men and continued to be higher throughout the following decades. In 2014, 64 % of male recent high school graduates enrolled in college, compared to 72.6% of women (NCES, 2015).

The surging number of women that went to college translated into a rise of the age of first marriage and extended the period of relatively unencumbered experimentation with sex and relationships. In their college years, many women prioritized their education above finding a spouse, and an increasingly large number of women postponed marriage until after college. This translated into a rising median age of first marriage. Between 1950 and 1970, the age of first marriage changed little for men and hovered around 24. As more and more women found their way into college in the sixties, the age of first marriage increased. In the 1950-1960 period, the median age of first marriage for women hovered around 20.3, but in the mid-1960s, it started to increase. It rose to 20.8 by 1970 and to 22.0 by 1980, continuing to rise thereafter (USCB, 2004). This also meant that many young Americans experienced a prolonged period in which they could experiment with sex, dates and relationships, without the immediate need to find a spouse.

By the early 1970s, there was a noticeable shift in college culture. Students were less encumbered by political concerns and increasingly focused on personal success. The new wave of students were largely concerned with their personal development, prioritizing their attainment of the qualifications that would land them a high-paying job after graduation. Their concerns about their futures were understandable in relation to the economy. In the 1970s, economic conditions deteriorated, unemployment rose and real wages declined in many professions. High marks in college became more relevant for securing relatively scarce employment opportunities. At the same time, the increasing complexity of the economy demanded a highly skilled workforce. Educational attainment became a necessary condition for securing a well-paying job. A new generation of young men and women came to college, driven by goals of personal achievement.

As the age of first marriage rose, and the years of relatively unencumbered sexual experimentation expanded, many youth remained 'single' for longer. They often moved to the city independently. Free from family obligations, they had abundant

leisure time and spending power and a lifestyle in which recreation enmeshed with consumption. A 'singles culture' emerged in urban America from the sixties onward, with its own institutions, like bars and nightclubs (D' Emilio and Freedman, 1988:305). A large constituency of bachelors in urban centers was nothing new, especially the late 19th century, when a large group of unmarried men lived outside of the parental home in American cities (Chudacoff, 1999:48-55). However, in the first half of the 20th century, young Americans entered marriage earlier, decreasing the number of single men in urban centers. In the 1960s, the number of bachelors in metropolitan areas began to rise steadily and became publicly visible to a degree that was unprecedented. Coincidentally, there was an unprecedented share of women among them and emerging sexual mores in which premarital sex became acceptable for men and women (Chudacoff, 1999:258-264; D' Emilio and Freedman, 1988:304). *Cosmopolitan* columnist Helen Brown illustrated this new zeitgeist and advised her readers that marriage 'is insurance for the worst years of your life. During your best years you don't need a husband. You do need a man of course every step of the way, and they are often cheaper emotionally and a lot more fun by the dozen (Brown, 1962).'

While the advice of Helen Brown was probably too radical for most women at the time, sexual mores did change in the 1960s and the following decades, especially among women. Until the late 1950s, a majority of young men and women disapproved of premarital sex. Researchers found that in the late 1950s, 12% of young women, age twelve to twenty-seven, approved of premarital sex, compared to 40% of young men. By the early 1970s, this had risen to approximately 70% of young women and 80% of young men (Wells et al., 2005:256). Along with changing sexual attitudes among youth over that period, there was altered sexual behavior. In 1950, approximately 13% of teenage girls and unmarried young adult women reported being sexually active, compared to 64% of young men. By the early 1970s, this had risen to approximately 40% of unmarried young women and 55% of unmarried young men (Wells, et al., 2005:254). Two simultaneous trends were occurring: young people were increasingly more tolerant towards premarital sex, and sexual attitudes and behaviors of women became more like those of men. In the previous eras, sexual experimentation often came with the risk of pregnancy, but this was eliminated with introduction of the contraception pill in the early sixties. Women engaging in premarital sex no longer risked childbirth outside of wedlock, which was highly stigmatized at the time. While this technological innovation likely contributed to a growth in the number of women experimenting with premarital sex, other changes also impacted sexual mores of youth. Women increasingly gained autonomy and power and demanded equality in work, education, intimate relationships and sexual mores.

## SAN FRANCISCO: 'A WIDE OPEN TOWN'

The demographic changes in the urban landscape of the 1960s had a distinct flavor in San Francisco. Already in the 1960s, the city saw an economic restructuring similar to what most of the American economy experienced in the following decade. Prior to the 1960s, San Francisco was an industrial city with predominantly blue-collar employment. This rapidly changed to an economy reliant on finance industries and tourism in the following decades (Armstrong, 2002:124). Shipbuilding and the harbor had employed a significant part of the population in the first half of the 20th century. Already in the fifties, and particularly in the latter half of the sixties, much of this activity moved across the Bay to Oakland. In that same period, many warehouses in the SOMA area –South of Market Street- which hosted blue-collar jobs, disappeared (Armstrong, 2002:124). The city's demographics changed in accordance, with many blue-collar workers following the industries and leaving the city, and there was an influx of young, college educated individuals, including many bachelors, into the city (Armstrong, 2002:124). The traditional working-class neighborhoods of Eureka Valley and The Haight-Ashbury, in particular, experienced a pronounced demographic transition. Young people moved into the residential neighborhoods, bringing with them unconventional sexual tastes. Hippies largely populated the Haight-Ashbury, and homosexual men and women moved to The Castro.

The visible presence of a distinct homosexual and hippie community within the city reaffirmed San Francisco's reputation as a 'wide open town' (Boyd, 2003) and spurred its fame across the globe. From the onset, San Francisco had hosted a bustling and diverse sexual entertainment zone, but only after the Second World War did diverse groups of 'sexual radicals' (Sides, 2009:7) migrate to the city en masse. In their wake, tourists from all over the world poured in, fascinated by the supposed sexual bohemianism of its residents. The area of North Beach had briefly been the home of famous Beat artists. With the rise of their fame in the late 1950s, the district became a magnet for youth in search of the hedonistic lifestyle that was immortalized by their predecessors and prolonged by tourists' brief glimpses of the sexual splendor of the 'Barbary Coast' (Sides, 2009:46). In the early sixties, quite a few Beats migrated across town to the Haight-Ashbury and laid the ground for what later became the 'hippie' movement. This movement was notorious for its ideology of 'free love', which amongst other things meant a celebration of unconventional sexual practices and non-exclusive sexuality. While most of the hippie movement had died out by the early seventies, tourists and young vagabonds from all over the United States and beyond continued to be drawn to the neighborhood because of its

association with the counter culture of the sixties. In addition to the hippies, other sexual radicals also found a new home in the city. A large flow of homosexual men and women flocked to the Castro, finding a safe haven in the neighborhood. In the words of Duyvendak (2011), the Castro became a 'symbol of home for gays and lesbians around the world' (2011:80).

While the city bolsters a reputation for sexual liberalism, the truth is that people with unconventional sexual tastes were often ill received. Throughout San Francisco's history, local bureaucrats repeatedly attempted to close the sexual entertainment industry on the Barbary Coast and the Tenderloin, succeeding in some instances. The Beats that flocked the streets of North Beach in the late fifties were periodically harassed by the local law enforcement (Sides, 2009:69). Their successors, the hippies in the Haight-Ashbury, encountered fierce criticism from long-term residents, complaining about the public visibility of sex in the neighborhood (Sides, 2009:74). Moreover, the gay men and women moving into the city were not always treated with respect and dignity in their new home and were occasionally victims of hate crimes. Nonetheless, San Francisco, at least in the sixties and seventies, was a home for people whose sexual attitudes and behaviors deviated from those of mainstream America.

In the years after the counter-culture movement of the sixties, San Francisco's reputation for sexual liberalism remained. However, according to sociologist Margot Weiss, this has become a 'postcard' image (Weiss, 2011:35). Beats and hippies have long left the city and at the time of writing are mere labels used within the tourist industry to lure visitors to the North Beach and the Haight-Ashbury neighborhoods. While the Castro remains the gay mecca, many of the most radical outlets of gay sexual culture have disappeared from the city, such as the leather bars and the bathhouses of SOMA (Sides, 2009: 178-180). On the other hand, San Francisco remains the city in the United States with the highest percentage of LGBTs in its population (Weiss, 2011:45). Furthermore, the city remains a birthplace and a stronghold for alternative sexual cultures such as the BDSM community (Weiss, 2011) and sex positive lesbians (Sides, 2009:216-221).

The technological 'gold rush' of recent decades has had a tremendous impact on the city's economy. The area south of San Francisco has long since transformed into a large industrial center for technologies. From the early 1980s, San Francisco started to experience firsthand the effects of the booming technology industry in the Silicon Valley region. The city became a financial hub, tying the technology industries of Santa Clara to national and global capital. Large areas of SOMA and the downtown area were redeveloped, and almost nine million square feet of office space was added to the city between 1985-1988 (Sides, 2009:207). From the nineties

onward, technology companies also settled in the city, especially in the ‘Multimedia Gulch’ in SOMA (Weiss, 2007:41). As a result of this boost in economic activity, median household incomes rose rapidly from \$55,221 in 2000 to \$92,094 in 2015 (USCB, 2000a; 2015a). At the same time, real estate prices in the city rose, making the city increasingly unaffordable for less affluent parts of the population. In 2000, the median rent for a housing unit in San Francisco was \$928, and in 2014 the median rent in San Francisco had risen to \$1,533 (USCB, 2000b; 2014). The city is constantly ranked among the most expensive places in America to live, with annual necessities for a four-person family costing \$91,785 (EPI 2015).

The economic boom of the post 1990 period attracted many young and highly educated professionals to the city. Between 1990 and 2000, the city grew by about 20,000 people, while 140,000 people had moved to the city in that same period (Sides, 2009:209). This meant that the migration into the city was largely offset by similar numbers of people moving out of the city. The vast majority of the new San Franciscans that moved in between 1990 and 2000 were White (66%), with a lesser, yet significant percentage of Asians (16%) (Sides, 2009:209). Between 2000 and 2015, the Asian population in San Francisco, in particular, grew rapidly (by 70,577), followed by Whites (30,728) and Latino’s (22,610), while the Black population decreased (by 13,806).<sup>1</sup> Many of the people that moved to San Francisco were highly educated. In 2015, for instance, about 75% of the New San Franciscans had a bachelor degree or higher (USCB, 2015b). Between 2000 and 2015, the share of highly educated people, with a bachelor degree or higher, age twenty-five and above, rose from 40% to 55% (USCB, 2000c; 2015b). The people that flocked to San Francisco in the dotcom period were mainly higher educated, middle class and from White and Asian backgrounds.

## TRENDS IN YOUTH SEXUALITY

For many new San Franciscans in recent decades, the freedom to express an unconventional sexuality might have been a less important factor in their decision to settle in the city than it had been for the young people in the sixties and seventies. However, it is likely that these new San Franciscans had more liberal sexual attitudes than most of its pre-sexual revolution denizens. Attitudes towards sex in America as a whole have become more liberal in the last decades. The generations born after 1965 have become much more accepting of premarital sex and sex between people of the same gender. In the early 1970s, 29% of the population found premarital sex ‘not wrong at all’. This continued to rise in the eighties, leveled out in the nineties

and increased again from 2000 onward, to around 55% in 2010 (Twenge et al., 2015:2277). Most of this increase is explained by the more accepting attitudes of younger generations (Twenge et al., 2015:2279). Acceptance of same-sex sex hovered around 13% in the 1970s and rose to 44% in 2012 (Twenge et al., 2015:2277-2278). As people became more accepting of premarital and same sex-sex, the acceptance of extramarital sex decreased. 4% of the population found this acceptable in 1973, and only 1% in 2012, although around three times as many men found this acceptable than women (Twenge et al., 2015:2277).

While attitudes towards sex became more liberal, actual sexual behaviors tell a different story. The number of sexual partners rose steadily from the start of the 20th century onward and peaked with the generation born in the early sixties. The number of sexual partners declined slightly for those born in later eras (Twenge et al., 2015:2280). Millennials, born between 1982 and 1999, for instance, reported less sexual partners than Baby Boomers –with an average of 8.26 versus 11.68 (Twenge et al., 2015:2280). Contrary to many popular media reports on an omnipresent and free-for-all sexual culture of youth, most research shows another picture. The current generation of adolescents is less sexually active than previous generations. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey that started being administered from the early nineties shows that the percentage of adolescents in America, grade nine to twelve, age fourteen to eighteen, who had sexual intercourse decreased throughout the last decades. In 1991, 37.5% of the high school students were sexually active, meaning they had had sex within the last three months of administering the survey. In 2015, this had dropped to 30.1% (Kann et al., 2015:27). Similarly, the number of high school students who have ever had sex decreased from 54.1% in 1991 to 41.2% in 2015 (Kann et al., 2015:26). Within San Francisco, the percentage of high school youth who have ever had sex and those that are sexually active is far below the national average. Only 18.7% of the high school students in the district of San Francisco were sexually active, and 25.9% ever had sex (Kann et al. 2015:121, 123). These low figures for San Francisco are largely due to its demographics. Middle- and upper-middle-class children are over represented, and this group tends to have their first sexual experiences later than working-class youth.

It is possible that teenagers are postponing sex until young adulthood, when they make up for the lack of sexual activity earlier in life. However, research indicates that this is not the case. The percentage of youth age twenty to twenty-four who had not had sex since their eighteenth birthday progressively increased from the sixties onward. Among those born between 1965-1969, 6.31% of youth were sexually inactive in young adulthood, and this increased to around 11.5% for the generation born between 1970-1989 and surged to 15.17% for Millennials born

in the nineties (Twenge et al., 2016:4). However, this trend of increased sexual inactivity did not apply to college students, whose rates of sexual inactivity remained the same throughout the second half of the 20th century (Twenge et al., 2016:4). This indicates that national trends in youth sexuality do not necessarily parallel the development of college students' sexuality.

Within America, and also within other developed economies, two trends in youth sexuality are happening at the same time. There is a sexualization of the bodies of young men and women in popular media. On the internet, a spectacle of luring, splendid, hypersexual bodies are just a few clicks away. In film, Hollywood produces one blockbuster after another with scantily clad and sexually enticing action heroes trying to save the world. At the same, the actual behavior of youth is desexualizing, with the age of first intercourse rising and an increasingly large portion of youth who refrain from sex until a higher age (Twenge, et al., 2016). The question is whether these trends are related. My hunch is that they are not. Enticing images awaken desires and might help in boosting sales and revenues, but sexual desires do not necessarily translate within actual sexual practices. The desexualization of youth coincides with a shift in the power balance between men and women, and these trends are likely connected. As women gained power vis-à-vis men, more attention has gone to issues of sexual consent. Even in the early nineties, a good 25% of American women reported that their first sexual encounter was unwanted (Laumann et al., 1994:329). Young American men and women increasingly live by the principle that they should engage in sexual practices only when they explicitly desire to do so, and that any form of coercion and maybe even adamant persuasion is not acceptable in sex. With this form of consent being the norm among most American youth, less are having sex.

Alongside the aforementioned changes, there is another significant change in youth sexuality that is occurring. Increasingly, sex happens in casual relations, devoid of expectations of commitment. This, however, does not mean that youth are having more sex, nor that dating and committed relationships have disappeared as scripts for intimate life. It means that hooking up is an increasingly common sexual script among youth. Monto and Carey (2014) compared two cohorts of college students, aged eighteen to twenty-five: those at college from 1988-1996 and those at college from 2004-2012. They found that the number of sexual partners of students since they turned eighteen, the frequency of sex, and the number of sexual partners in the last year did not significantly change (with the average number of declared sexual partners hovering around 6.5 for men and 3.5 for women). What did change was the context in which sexual activity occurred, with the current cohort reporting more sex outside of a romantic relationship. Of the current generation, 78.2%

reported that one of their sexual partners was a romantic partner, while this was reported by 84.5% of the older cohort (Monto and Carey, 2014:612). Of those who had sex with a person other than a lover, 71% of the current cohort reported it to be a friend, compared to 55.7% of the previous cohort. Sex with a casual date was reported by 44.9% of the recent generation and 35.4% of the former (Monto and Carey, 2014:612). These findings resonate with data on changes in sexual behavior of the general population of American youth, with increasingly more young adults reporting sex with a casual date or a pickup (Twenge et al., 2015:2278). What this data suggest is that hooking up is an increasingly common practice among youth.

Sexual scripts often comprise a set of sexual techniques that can have a seemingly unique configuration. Compared to the amount of sex that occurs within a relationship context, there is a low degree of sexual activity in hookups. In their most recent hookups, a little over 30% of college students reported limiting their sexual activity to kissing and non-genital touching (Armstrong et al., 2012:442; England et al., 2008:533). Over 10% of the hookups included oral sex, but not vaginal intercourse, and around 40% included the latter (Armstrong et al., 2012:442; England et al., 2008:533). Within a relationship context, vaginal intercourse is much more frequently enacted. Armstrong et al. (2012) found that 80% of the reported sex within a relationship context of students included vaginal intercourse. Correspondingly, Laumann et al. (1994), in a nationally representative study, found that around 95% of the last sex events included vaginal intercourse, and the vast majority of these sexual encounters happened within a relationship context (Laumann et al., 1994:100). While hooking up is becoming more common among youth, we see that it frequently involves lighter sexual practices than those typically seen in the context of a relationship.

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## 2

# 'IT'S ALWAYS A LITTLE AWKWARD': HOOKING UP AND COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS ON BAU

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It was one of my last weeks of fieldwork. Sophomore student Nate and I sat outside the library overlooking the lush campus. He mentioned his hookup with Rebecca on previous occasions, but he had not told me the full story. That afternoon, I felt we finally established the rapport to break through decorum. 'The first time that we hooked up, it was so bad... this is how bad I am with girls, so it was clear that we liked each other. She liked me. She was over at our place'. Nate shared an apartment with his best friend Simon. They had invited a number of friends for drinks on a Friday night. His flatmate thought it was obvious that Rebecca and Nate liked each other. 'My friend Simon locked me in the room with her, and I was drunk and she wasn't. I came in to kiss her and then I freaked out'. Nate had recently broken up with his girlfriend Nicky. It had been a painful experience, and Nate still had feelings for her. He, however, liked Rebecca too and felt attracted to her. He was confused about his feelings. 'I fell on the ground, and she was on the bed, and I was just talking to her (Rebecca) about Nicky, and then I was asking her, "Should I try to get back with Nicky?" and obviously that pissed her for off'. Rebecca was taken aback by this sudden change of heart. Did he want to hookup with her, or not? She left the room, and so did Nate. Feeling embarrassed about the situation, he left his house to find solace with another friend. However, he could not get Rebecca out of his mind, and she was still thinking about him too. 'I knew she [Rebecca] was pissed at me, and then she texted me or something'. Rebecca asked Nate if he wanted to come to her room. 'I went over to her dorm room, and then I talked to her for a bit and I was like "I don't know what I was doing" and eventually she came back to my place'. They hooked up and had sex. It was fun, but it undeniably changed the dynamic between them and within their group of friends.

*It was kind of weird, because Rebecca was really good friends with Simon, Erik, Hannah [Nate's friends]. So, she was always over, so after we hooked up I would still see her. We would hang out, but after the first time we weren't going out or anything, but it was a little weird, it is always a little weird.*

One evening, a couple of weeks after their hookup, Nate and Rebecca were at a party. They felt the tension between them. How were they to behave towards each other? Aided by alcohol, they had 'the talk'. 'We were both pretty drunk, and we were both in the bathroom, and we were talking about it. That's when we both said that we wanted to have a relationship. That's how things started I guess'.

Allegedly, Nate, as the proponents of the battle of the sexes theorem suggests, had the power to impose his will to casually hookup with Rebecca. This, however, is not the impression I got when listening to Nate's story. Nate, like many other men I interviewed, hardly resembled the powerful agent who is knowledgeable about his supposedly high erotic status in the sexual bargaining game with Rebecca. Instead, he was a shy young man and rather gawky in matters of the heart, and if either of the two had more power to enforce their will in the interaction, it would have been Rebecca and not Nate.

Recently, a number of researchers have started questioning the assumptions of the 'battle of the sexes' perspective on sexual relations on campus. Hamilton and Armstrong (2009), for example, argue that many college women want to hookup and consciously withhold committed relationships until after college. College is a time to focus on their personal development. Committed relationships can demand too much time and energy and pose a potential threat to these development projects. Further, meeting a romantic partner on campus can jeopardize a smooth launch of their careers. Who is going to follow whom after graduation? By withholding committed relationships until after college, until after settling into a career, young women at least do not risk a career interruption. Hooking up can thus be a delay tactic for ambitious young women.

Much less is known about the social processes that effect young men's decision to hookup. Their longing for casual sex is often thought of as natural and not warranting an explanation. A number of scholars argue that hookups, especially those with women of high erotic status, are a means to prove one's masculinity among peers (Sweeney, 2014; Kimmel, 2008). This suggests that young men prefer to have casual sex with many than to have a committed relationship with one woman. However, we do not actually know if this is the case. As Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) point out, little is known about how college men feel towards committed relationships, how they experience these affairs, and whether, as is the case for ambitious young women, they construe these as a potential threat to their self-development project in college (2009:611). These are among the most important questions I explore within this chapter.

The battle of the sexes reasoning suggests that the campus sexual arena is marked by strife and conflict, and that men ultimately dominate sexual interactions within

this realm. ‘Sex on campus remains “guys’ sex”. Women are welcome to act upon their desires, but guys run the scene’ (Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:138). While this undisguised wording might overstate male dominance within the sexual scene on campus, much research shows that the playing field is highly gendered and at times uneven. The hookup script abides by gendered role patterns such as the fact that men often initiate sexual activity (England et al., 2008:535; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:144; Ronen, 2010:367). These relatively fixed gender roles might mean that women have less freedom, compared to men, to act upon their sexual desires. Many hookups happen at fraternity parties where men control the supply of alcohol, the flow of people and the dress code for women (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:87). Women have to be flirtatious and sexually enticing at these parties to enjoy the fun of drinking and attracting male attention. If they do not play by these rules, they risk being disparaged (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:88). The sexual activity within the hookup script is also highly gendered. Men, for instance, are more likely to receive oral sex in hookups than woman (England et al., 2008:537). Gender inequalities are also found in the pleasure derived from hookups. Men are, for instance, more likely to orgasm in hookups than women (England et al. 2008:535; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:147), and both men and women prioritize male sexual pleasure above women’s (Armstrong et al., 2012:456; Currier, 2013:717). This double standard extends to the reputational consequences of hooking up. Men accrue status among peers through casual sexual encounters, while women risk the slut stigma (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009:598; England et al., 2008:538-539; Heldman and Wade 2010:326; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:145). During fieldwork, I had the opportunity to visit a number of college parties and observe some of the interactional dynamics of hooking up. My interest, akin to the aforementioned studies, concerned the gendered dynamics of hooking up and the inequalities it fosters. This chapter will report on these findings.

Among scholars, there seems to be a consensus that hooking up is the dominant norm in intimate contacts on current college campuses, while the extent to which other sexual scripts are part of the sexual repertoire of students is debated. At the far end of the spectrum are authors that claim that hooking up ‘is the only game in town’ (Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:144). Others see a variety of sexual scripts within the sexual arena of college, such as dates, committed relationships and hookups, without one being the dominant form of intimate coupling (Luff et al., 2016:76-77). Furthermore, they acknowledge that one sexual script can easily flow into another –as it did between Nate and Rebecca. The centrality of hooking up in the college experience seems to be related to the presence of an active party scene on campus, in which hookups are a frequent occurrence. Armstrong and Hamilton

(2013), in their ethnography on peer culture in a student dorm, note that a majority of the women in their research partook in the party scene, and those that did not were isolated and had difficulty in forging friendships (2013:84-85). Hooking up was thus almost a necessity for young women in order to take part in the social scene and not feel marginal and excluded on campus. Hooking up, however, is not omnipresent and central to all college experiences. Allison and Risman's (2014) research at a commuter college shows that many students, especially those living off campus, did not flock to the party scene, either because they were too busy with work and school, or because they lacked the social connections to grant them access. Other scholars mention that an active Greek life on campus fuels a lively party and hookup scene (Bogle, 2008:61). Infrastructural arrangements on campus thus seem to play an important role in facilitating hookup culture. The question is if particular infrastructural arrangements are necessary for the emergence of hooking up as a dominant norm of intimate relations on campus. BAU is a commuter college with only a fraction of the student population, around 11%, living on campus and with a marginal Greek community. Another question explored in this chapter is how these infrastructural conditions effect the party and hookup scene.

## CASE AND METHODS

BAU is a state college, located within the greater Bay Area. Roughly three student career trajectories exist at BAU: students who do their complete four-year bachelor education at this college, transfer students who enroll at BAU after doing their undergraduate—or part of their undergraduate—at another college (often a community college), and international students who do part of their undergraduate or a graduate program at BAU (5% of the total student population). As in most US colleges, female students (58.3%) outnumber male (41.7%), and undergraduates (25,279) form the bulk of the total student body (29,541). BAU is a commuter school, and only a small fraction of its student population lives on campus, approximately 3000 students,<sup>2</sup> around 65% of the all freshmen, and roughly 11% of the total student population. An additional unknown, but presumably significant, number of students live in the neighborhoods adjacent to BAU. The general pattern in student residency is that mainly freshmen, few sophomore and very few juniors live on campus. During their student career, more and more students move from campus accommodation to the adjacent neighborhoods and increasingly further into the city of San Francisco.

During the five months of fieldwork, I had hundreds of conversations with students. With fifty-four male students, I had more extensive and often multiple

conversations over time. I asked students whether I could record the conversations or whether they preferred me taking notes. Forty-three students preferred the latter option, eleven the former. I did my utmost to quote verbatim what I considered the most important phrases; stories, explanations, opinions and attitudes were captured within written vignettes. With eleven male students, I conducted recorded interviews, which were fully transcribed. I collected general background data from all the interviewees, including place of birth, profession of parents, religious background, housing arrangement, family situation, income, work, extra-curricular activities, and number of sex partners and other information that might be relevant. All the names of respondents have been anonymized.

During fieldwork, I got to know three different groups of friends who were so kind to welcome me, as an ethnographer, into their social life. I accompanied these students to a variety of social events, such as parties, music shows and dinners. One group was comprised mainly of freshmen students, while another was mainly sophomores, and the last included junior and senior transfer students from the greater Bay Area. The freshmen group lived mostly on campus, albeit some in the surrounding neighborhoods of BAU. Most individuals within this group came from outside of the Bay Area, and it was their first time living away from their parents. This also applied to the sophomore group, most of whom had lived on campus in their freshman year but recently moved off campus to the surrounding neighborhoods of BAU. None of the respondents in the junior/senior group lived on campus or had lived on campus. Most were born and raised within the greater Bay Area and did their freshmen and/or sophomore year at a nearby community college. They had recently transferred to BAU and lived within inner-city neighborhoods of San Francisco. Besides students, I also interviewed staff from the BAU housing bureau, representatives of student organizations, representatives of Greek societies and people from the San Francisco urban planning department. These interviews gave valuable information on the institutional infrastructure at BAU.

Of the fifty-four respondents, thirty lived independently in the greater Bay Area, fourteen lived on campus and ten lived in their parents' homes. Thirty-three respondents identified as White, fourteen as Asian, five as Latino and two as Black. Ten of the students had working-class backgrounds, forty-one students came from middle-class families and three from upper-middle-class families. This sample mirrored the BAU student population poorly. Nearly 25% of my respondents lived on campus, while approximately 11% of the total student body resided in campus housing. Asian and Latino students were underrepresented in my sample in comparison with the ethnic and racial diversity of the total student population. The extent that my sample mirrored the distribution among social class of the total

student population is difficult to tell because BAU does not collect information on students' class background.<sup>3</sup> The students' ages ranged from eighteen to thirty, with an average of twenty-two and a median and modus of twenty-one. This meant that many of the students I interacted with were technically seen as minors in the local context, where minors are individuals who are under twenty-one. Four students in my sample were freshmen, six were sophomores, nineteen were juniors, nine seniors and six graduate students.

## HOOKING UP AS 'THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN?'

*[...] It (hooking up) is kind of an ambiguous term. I know it freaks out parents a little bit. I know in high school a lot of parents were, 'oh, they are hooking up', and it kind of has this connotation that it's sex, but everybody doesn't really think of it like that. It's just like 'hey, they got together', 'they did something sexual' (Martin, sophomore student).*

Martin is right that many American parents are 'freaked out' by hookup culture. Fueled by apocalyptic narratives of sex at college, parents get the impression that casual sex is omnipresent and the dominant form of intimate contact among students. But to what extent is this image correct? This will be explored within the following section, in which I will focus on BAU and relate my findings to research done at other campuses. As Martin suggests, part of parents' anxiety seems to stem from their unfamiliarity with the term and practice. They do not know exactly what it means if their children 'hooked up' and might assume that it implies intercourse, but this is not necessarily the case.

A variety of different sexual practices can be part of a hookup script. It might include kissing, petting, manual stimulation, oral sex and anal and vaginal intercourse. While this umbrella term might cause some misunderstandings for parents, among students these multiple meanings of the term were common knowledge. In their view, 'hookups' could be single as well as serial sexual encounters. The relationships in which they were embedded could be undefined or a friendship. What made a sexual episode a 'hookup' was primarily the understanding that expectations of commitment were not part of the script, and the depth of emotional intimacy should remain shallow. Further, expectations of sexual exclusivity were not part of the contract. This does not mean that students continuously oscillated between different hookup partners. Many of the hookups students at BAU described were exclusive in practice. In many ways, a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship was the antonym of a hookup, where the former implied commitment, a move towards deeper emotional intimacy and expectations

of exclusivity. In practice, these two sexual scripts were not diametrically opposed. Hookups could develop into committed relationships and at times, although this did not happen often, committed relationships evolved into hookups.

A number of scholars have found that at the colleges they researched, or among the fraction of the student population they focused on, hooking up was a dominant norm of intimate coupling (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:85-87; Bogle, 2008:184; Kimmel and Kalish, 2011:144). At BAU, this dominance of the hookup script was not evident. Fifty-two students reported on their hookup and relationship experiences in the academic year 2013-2014. Less than half, twenty-five students, did not hookup at all that year, and twenty-seven students hooked up at least once that year, but they did not do so at great frequency. On average, students that hooked up did so three times a year. A number of outliers raised this number, hence the modus (two hookups) is slightly lower. This relatively low number of hookups among students in my research corresponds to findings of the large-scale survey among college students conducted by Paula England and collaborators. They found that by their senior year, students on average had seven hookups (median is five) (England et al., 2008:533). Although these figures do not lend themselves to a good comparison, since they report on hookups in different time frames, it is relatively safe to say that hooking up at BAU did not happen that often, as is the case for most college students in America.

Part of the reason why not that many students hooked up regularly at BAU was because it is a commuter college. BAU attracted quite a large number of students that continued to live in their parents' homes all through college, and these individuals were less likely to hookup than their peers living independently. Only three out of ten students that lived in the parents' homes hooked up in the year of my research (with an average of two), compared to nine of the fifteen students living on campus (average of two) and fifteen from twenty-nine students (average is three) living off campus independently. Living at home with parents hampered hookup culture, and there were a couple of reasons for this. Students living in their parents' homes had trouble accessing the college party scene, mainly because these social events happened around campus and were often organized ad hoc. Students thus needed to live on and around campus to have good access to these gatherings. Second, half of the students living off-campus with family came from working-class families, compared to 11% of those living independently, and for reasons that will be explained later, had less interest in the hookup scene. Even when these students managed to find their way to college parties and were interested in hooking up, they seldom went all the way. It all depended on the residential situation of their partner, since taking a hookup partner back to their parents' homes was highly unusual. In America, having sex in the parental home comes close to a cardinal sin (Schalet, 2011).

A sexual regime comprises an ordering of 'sexual scripts' (Gagnon and Simon, 1973:20). These are interactional templates of sexual behavior that are hierarchically structured. This resembles what Gayle Rubin calls 'the sexual value system' (1984:13), in which sexual acts are hierarchically ordered, and a clear line is drawn between good and normal sex- acts that are within 'the charmed circle' (1984:13)- and bad and abnormal acts. This ordering of sexual scripts is enmeshed with, and structured by, different ideologies and social arrangements. In hookup culture, the self-development imperative, which will be delineated in the follow section, is a clear example of such a constituting ideology. Gender and class are examples of social arrangements that structure a sexual regime. In a hookup regime, casual sex is the dominant template for intimate encounters. However, other sexual scripts, like committed relationships and dates, exist and can still be within the 'charmed circle' of sexual acts that are considered legitimate expressions of sexuality within a particular regime (Rubin, 1984:13).

A 'dominant' hookup regime implies that expectations of relationships of students are formed and shaped by hookup culture, and some research indicates this. Allison and Risman (2014) found that nearly all students in their research saw hooking up as an important 'cultural scenario' in their college lives (2014:102), even though not all engaged in it. Some students partook in the party scene and hooked up regularly, while others wished they could do the same but were restrained by residential patterns –living with family- and/or a lack of financial resources. In contrast, not all male student I got acquainted with were interested in partying and hooking up. This was even the case for freshman students, who are often most interested in the hookup scene. Seven students continued their relationships with their high school sweethearts throughout their freshmen year.

Whereas at some college campuses committed relationships are seen as 'social liabilities' that can hamper the development of peer status accumulated through flirting and hooking up, in the party scene, none of my male interviewees framed committed relationships as such (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:86). Some, like freshman student Josh, partook actively in the party scene, together with his girlfriend Stacey. He, however, did not feel like he was missing out, nor did he feel unwelcome at these parties because of his committed and exclusive affair. Such an inclusive party scene is not present at all college campuses. Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) note that women in their study felt an imperative to flirt and be sexually enticing to men at parties, at the risk of being scorned or excluded from the fun when not abiding to this norm (2013:88). Male students at BAU with committed relationships were not at the periphery of social life, even within the party scene.

Committed relationships were as central to college life at BAU as hooking up. An indicator of this was the large number of students that were in committed rela-

tionships or had been in one. Twenty of the fifty-four student I interviewed had a monogamous relationship of three months or longer at the time of fieldwork, and only two out of fifty-four students had never had a long-term, committed relationship (over three months) in college. Both sexual scripts were omnipresent, and both were an important part of students' social lives.

Although I question the extent to which hooking up was the dominant norm of intimate relationships at BAU, it did seem to be an intimate arrangement that was particularly frequent at college in relation to other domains of youth. Prior to college, students were aware of parties and hooking up on campus, through what they heard from peers and through the media, but a number of men said that they had to be socialized within the practice. Senior student Thomas, for instance, mentioned that his first hookup happened at the beginning of his freshman year. As a 'rooky' in the party scene, he had hoped that this encounter would evolve into a romance, but his hopes were idle. The woman he hooked up with, like many college women, did not want a relationship; instead, she wanted 'freedom and parties'. Like other students, Thomas had to learn the hard way that commitments did not flow automatically from the hookup script.

Hooking up was a practice foreign to most international students at BAU. French exchange student Jacques contrasted his experiences in the college party scene to what he was familiar with in France. A few weeks prior to our interview, he had celebrated his birthday at a house party with fellow students. At midnight, the attendees congratulated him. A friend mentioned a birthday gift and called on a girl nearby. She came over, placed her hands on his face and asked if he wanted to have sex. Jacques never experienced such directness at home and was 'freaked out' by her approach. Hooking up often implied a very straightforward, sexualized encounter, and many students had not experienced this script firsthand prior to enrolling in an American college.

## THE DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE AND THE COSTS OF RELATIONSHIPS

In 1990, Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A. Eisenhart wrote that many young women entered college with high ambitions, but this gradually lessened in the subsequent years. A dominant peer culture of romance existed on campus, in which finding a potential spouse was more valued than high educational attainments for women, and many acquiesced to these norms. Much has changed since then; many young women currently remain ambitious throughout their college years. They experience a stringent self-development imperative on campus, in which 'in-

dividual achievement and personal growth' take priority (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009:602). College is a time to invest in education and to develop life-skills, to forge friendships and have fun. Romance is something for after graduation. During college, many women prefer to hookup and keep committed relationships at bay (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009). To what extent do men also harbor these expectations of college and relationships?

I found a similar development imperative among the middle-class male students I interviewed. College was a time to be uncompromisingly selfish and do what you want and not to waste time in a committed relationship. One male student remarked that 'it's [college] probably the only time in your life that you can do whatever you want'. This did not necessarily mean that my interviewees were dedicated students who devoted all their time and energy to education. Their self-development projects included much more. It implied, amongst other things, taking interesting courses, playing sports, making music, film, partying and socializing and experimenting with drugs and sexuality. Students had busy schedules, combining these extracurricular activities with their studies and often with work. Many privileged male students saw an intimate committed relationship as inherently making concessions, in which they had to navigate between investing time in activities they wanted to do and those prioritized by their partner. Many middle-class male students thus consciously withheld committed relationships and instead opted for hookups, similar to many contemporary female students. 'Based on my own experience [...], this new sexual paradigm has given women the freedom to focus on their lives and careers' a young woman told Lisa Wade (2017:68). Other research shows that there are many more women like her that feel the same (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009).

A tenacious gender belief is that women naturally want relationships. This is also present within the college arena. As a result, women experience peer pressure to get into relationships and to maintain them, despite, at times, preferring to be single (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009:599-600). When I asked my male interviewees whether they experienced expectations from peers or family to find a girlfriend in college, all of them said no. No relationship imperative existed for my interviewees in the college arena and beyond. This changed, however, after they graduated and settled down with a career. A number of men anticipated that they might feel societal expectations to forge a committed relationship and start a family one day, but this lay somewhere in an indeterminate future. While women might feel social pressure to settle within a relationship at college, there was no such pressure felt by men.

Upon entering college, freshmen are faced with the belief that the coming years are important for forging deep and lifelong friendships. This imperative to be social and make friends at college conflicted with the demands of a committed relation-

ship and was an important reason for students to keep romance at bay and instead opt for hookups. This was especially eminent in the first semester, when students freshly arrived on campus. 'I think when students first get here, they are making a lot of new friends, a lot of energy, it is a time that everybody is really social', one of my interviewees remarked. A number of students (six out of fifty-four) had girlfriends upon enrolling in college and decided to end these affairs because they did not want to feel restrained in the quest to meet peers. This is understandable, since they had experienced that relationships demand dedication and commitment, time and energy, which could not be invested in making new social connections. Sophomore student Paul, for instance, had just broken up with his girlfriend when I interviewed him. While in a relationship, Paul spent most evenings at home with his girlfriend and he felt that he was missing out: 'I wasn't meeting as many people as I wanted'. His expectations of new friendships were formed in relation to the imperative that college is a time to be social and make new friends. Now that he was single, Paul felt that he could pursue the social life that a college student ought to have. Paul currently spent most of his time 'partying and hanging out with friends' and finally living up to the expectations he had of himself in college. This understanding of the college years as a time to make new friends is by no means restricted to men. A young woman quoted by Hamilton and Armstrong reflected on a past relationship: 'We were together every day... It was the critical time of making friends and meeting people, [and] I wasn't there' (2009:603). Both men and women understood college as a time to be social and build a network of friends and acquaintances and felt that committed relationships could jeopardize this project.

Students also resisted committed relationships because they experienced that these could be demanding and emotionally draining. One interviewee spoke about a girlfriend threatening suicide in the case of a breakup, and after his affair with her ended—she did not kill herself—chose to remain single for at least a little while. Committed relationships could also lead to other unforeseen costs. Sophomore student Nate got into a committed relationship in the second semester of his freshman year and moved into an apartment with his then girlfriend. It was his first experience with a serious relationship, and he was sincerely convinced that 'she was the one'. His hopes were idle. They often quarreled, and this escalated on one occasion. The argument started about a triviality and soon erupted into a roar. Nate lost his temper and pushed her. 'I didn't know what I was doing' (Nate). It meant the end of their time together. She moved back to her parents' home in another state, owing Nate \$1100, which he took out from his student loan. After such unfortunate experiences with relationships, many students did not want to commit to anyone for a period and opted for the hookup scene.

College is believed to be a time of hedonist partying and unlimited sexual possibilities and this informed students' stance towards relationships. All interviewees were familiar with the popular narrative of college as a time for free-for-all casual sex. 'College is a time for sexual experimentation', said freshman student Jason. Especially middle-class male freshmen were excited about the prospect of hooking up at college and consciously withheld committed relationships. They expected that a relationship demanded sexual exclusivity and hence restricted their ability to partake in the hookup scene. Many freshmen, however, did not find what they were looking for. A number of students thought that this was particular to BAU, which lacked the wild college parties, at which everybody hooked up, that they had heard about on other campuses. Other students did find the sexual experimentation on BAU that they wishfully expected. One interviewee joyfully recounted an episode in which three women had asked him to join in group sex. Another man reported about a party in which the patrons played a sexual version of 'truth or dare', which ended with a few couples copulating on the floor. The expectation that college boasted a large variety of sexual adventures meant that many freshmen initially had little interest in committed relationships.

Broadly speaking, there were a number of periods in their college careers in which students withheld committed relationships and opted for hookups instead. The imperative of college as a time to experiment and to meet new people was especially prominent among freshmen and sophomore students. Upperclassmen had had their 'wild streak', had established many new friendships, grew out of the hookup scene and were more inclined to forge committed intimate relationships. This 'maturity' was not a permanent state. Students who had recently ended a committed relationship - especially in which they experienced its costs - often dived back into the hookup scene. Additionally, at the end of college, a number of students kept committed relationships at bay and opted for hookups instead. Senior student Tim, for instance, hooked up regularly with his flatmate at the start of the second semester of his final year at BAU. They did not have a relationship but '[...] she will get upset when she hears this'. The two hooked up regularly but never talked about the status of their affair. Both Tim and his partner were graduating soon, and this probably entailed relocating to different cities. Tim realized that in today's gender relations, women were not going to follow their lovers regardless, jeopardizing their own careers in the process. With this foresight, it seemed better not to commit to each other.

Not all students partook in the party and hookup scene. Hooking up is the sexual culture of middle-class and upper-middle-class students (Allison and Risman, 2014; Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009). This was also noticeable at BAU, where only two out of ten students with a working-class background participated (or had

participated) in the college party and hookup scene. Part of the explanation for this pattern rests in the spatial location of working-class students; underprivileged students were more likely to reside in their parents' homes than middle-class students. Five out of ten working-class students lived in their parents' homes, compared to five out of forty-four of the privileged students. Further, underprivileged students often lacked the social and economic resources to access the party scene. Aside from these conditions, working-class students also felt alien in a peer culture of partying and casual sex. Mark, for instance, was a sophomore student from a poor, working-class family. He was the first person in his family to go to college. Two of his six sisters were teenage mothers, with partners that contributed little - or nothing at all - to their upbringing. Mark's parents were teenagers too when he was born and, with only a high school education, struggled to make ends meet. Mark, a very strong-willed and focused young man, had no interest in college parties and focused on his education in the hope of securing a stable job in law enforcement. Mark saw himself as an overly romantic person, primed towards committed relationships and felt that this orientation limited his intimate options at college.

*[...] girls my age want to hook up, they want guys that are players, and whatnot, and I am a very serious guy and I take life seriously, and I don't think a lot of girls my age do, that's what I think (Mark, sophomore student).*

There were more students like Mark, children who came from working-class backgrounds, who understood college as a time to acquire educational attainments in the hope of securing a stable financial position later in life, who also felt alien in the college hookup scene. They did not see an inherent conflict, as privileged students did, between a development imperative of college and the demands of a committed relationship.

Few underprivileged students participated in the college party and hookup scene at BAU. This pattern has also been found on other campuses (Allison and Risman, 2014; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). The reasons for this are contested. Allison and Risman (2014) found that the working-class students in their research desired to hookup but felt restrained by a lack of financial resources and by their residency in their parents' homes. In contrast, most of my male underprivileged respondents did not desire a college experience that included partying and casual sex, concomitant with the working-class female students interviewed by Armstrong and Hamilton (2013). These students had a different relation to cultural capital and relationships. Then again, as noted by Allison and Risman (2014), students' spatial locations impacted their access to the party and hookup scene, and this intersected

with class, with working-class students more often living with their parents. Social class thus divided the campus sexual arena in multiple ways, through its intersection with residency patterns and through its intersection with subjectivities.

The subjectivities that inform students' strategic choices for hookups are remarkably similar for college men and women (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009), albeit with gendered nuances. Thus, it is problematic to understand hookup culture as a battle between the sexes. Both a part of the male and female student populations want hookups instead of committed relationships. The self-development imperative, the expectations surrounding college about sex and friendships and the costs of relationships are all experienced by men and women alike. However, contrary to college men, women experience a relationship imperative on campus. This relationship imperative can have far-reaching consequences, in that college women might feel more pressure to commit to relationships even if these affairs are harmful to their development projects. Nevertheless, to call this a battle of the sexes is an exaggeration and is inaccurate.

## INFRASTRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS MATTER

The connections between hookup culture and an active party scene is often noted (Allison and Risman, 2014; Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009:605; Wade, 2017: 29-30). Hookups are frequently initiated at parties, where at least the first steps of the physical escalation sequence occur. A number of conditions fuel hooking up at these gatherings. The most obvious condition is the relatively large presence of male and female peers wanting to socialize, flirt and be sexual. Furthermore, the plentiful consumption of alcohol reduces students' inhibitions and suspends 'reality', establishing a condition in which students feel less accountable for their actions and those of others. Within this realm, sexual experimentation becomes 'insignificant', diminishing the adverse reputational consequences that sexual experimentation might have (Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:141; Wade, 2017:41-43).

Unsurprisingly, most hookups of the men I interviewed were physically initiated at parties. Of the thirty-five first encounter hookups students told me about, twenty-seven got physical at a larger social gathering, such as a house party or at a bar. Light sexual activity frequently happened at these parties, but oral sex, manual stimulation and intercourse nearly always happened at a more private setting, often students' rooms. Five hookups started in or around the dorms, and four started at different locations such as a car or park. In thirty of these first encounter hookups, alcohol was involved but often in moderate amounts and seldom to a state of obliv-

ion. In two cases, students did not drink but used other substances (marijuana and XTC). Solely three hookups of a total of thirty-five occurred in a sober state. Parties, alcohol and hookups are intrinsically linked. Hookup culture flourishes in a lively and active party scene.

The extent to which a university is a party college depends on infrastructural arrangements, for instance dorm policies, an active Greek scene, a large residential community and nighttime venues in the surrounding area (Allison and Risman, 2014; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). These arrangements, or the lack of them, had an impact on the social life of the students in my research. BAU is primarily a commuter college (only around 11% of the total student population and 65% of the freshmen resided on campus) and is remarkably quiet after college hours. Similarly, the adjacent neighborhoods, where many of the students live, are quiet residential zones with little institutionalized nightlife. Greek societies, often the nexus of the college party scene, were a marginal force at BAU. They were not present on campus, and there were no official fraternity and sorority houses in the surrounding neighborhoods. Strictly enforced dorm policies hampered the development of parties on these premises. Students told me countless tales of Residence Assistants (RAs) terminating gatherings in students' rooms. As a consequence of these infrastructural arrangements, the social scene on and around campus was not geared towards partying, and students often complained about the dearth of opportunities to socialize with peers at BAU.

Students primed to party flocked to informal house gatherings organized by fellow students or, if age permitted, to the bar scene within the city of San Francisco. These informal house parties, often organized by sophomores and upperclassmen, gave students under the legal drinking age, mostly freshmen and sophomores, the possibility to enact their college experience of carefree fun. Access to these parties was nearly always invite only, as hosts were understandably anxious about inviting herds of unknown faces into their homes. Hence, students' ability to participate in the party and hookup scene was determined by their talents for making new friends and acquaintances. These skills were likely even more relevant at BAU than at other colleges, since it lacked an organized social scene, due to the small presence of Greek societies. Most upperclassmen opted for the bar scene in the city instead of house parties. When their age permitted it, they could access a whole new world of nighttime adventure, and this was infinitely more exciting than the house parties most of them were familiar with by now. In sweeping generalizations, freshmen, at least in the first semester, lacked the social connections to get access to the party scene, and these gatherings were frequented by sophomores. Upperclassmen primed to party re-directed their gaze to the downtown bar scene and hence visited these house parties less frequently.

Particularly at the start of the first semester, freshmen wanted to socialize and have fun and were anxiously looking for parties. For male sophomores and upperclassmen, this offered an opportunity to hook up with freshmen students, and hosting house parties was a viable tactic to facilitate this. Hosts were reluctant to advertise these parties publically on social media because they wanted to control access. Most invites occurred through word of mouth. Hosts first invited groups of young women to their parties, and when they did not know that many, they could always ask students who were better connected. Freshman student Jason was such a node for connecting different friend groups. On an afternoon, while sitting in the DSA –designated smoking area- Jason got a phone call from a fellow male student. This man was hosting a party that evening and inquired if Jason could bring guests, with the explicit request that two thirds should be women. Hosting parties offered an opportunity for young men to meet women with whom they could potentially hookup.

Greeks often tend to dominate the social scene on campus, and fraternities on many campuses seem to have what comes close to a monopoly on student parties. Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) noted that fraternity brothers stringently controlled access to these gatherings and almost exclusively selected the more attractive women (2013:88). This control of the flow of people to parties obviously demands manpower and a corporate group working towards the same end, for example with some men performing taxi services and others controlling the doors at the venue. At the parties I attended, hosts also tried to control access but never too successfully. I, for instance, visited a party hosted by Jason. During the night, he and a young woman had some intimate moments of kissing and fondling in the kitchen. Later that evening, I observed a small argument between the two. The young woman wanted to invite a friend and asked Jason for permission. Jason inquired about the sex of the guest. It was a boy.

*'Fuck you,' Jason smirked half-jokingly, but with an undeniably serious undertone. 'I don't want more guys here. He is not coming to my party.'* Later that evening the guest came to the party, only to leave with Jason's flirt right after his arrival. Jason later explained that he wanted to hook up with her and that the unwanted guest was her regular hookup partner.

The hosts of the vast majority of parties at BAU were always individuals or flatmates, and quite a number of male hosts tried to regulate access to these parties in order to select a crowd of young, attractive women they could potentially hookup with; however, this control was not very successful. They lacked the power of numbers

and a closely collaborating corporate group needed to invite, select and regulate the flow of people. As a result, these parties were quite inclusive. Hosts did not manage to select solely the beautiful women, nor did they manage to bar other men from their parties.

These informal house parties came in different shapes and sizes. I visited gatherings of less than twenty people - which were most common - as well as ones with over fifty attendees. One should not overdramatize these parties. At a fairly representative gathering, a group of students congregated around the television screen and played video games, while a dozen lingered in the kitchen, drinking beer, smoking weed and chatting about typical youthful interests. The host later told me that three couples hooked up that night at or after the party, although I cannot verify this. While parties hosted by fraternities often have a dress code and thus control women's attire, making sure that they wear sexually enticing uniforms (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:88), this was not enforced at a single party I attended, and a number of interviewees acknowledged that this seldom occurred. Women are often expected to flirt with men at fraternity parties, a code rigorously enforced by men through disparaging and ridiculing women that do not abide by these norms (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:88). At the parties I attended, most conversations were rather convivial, and ostentatious flirting and fondling happened but not on a *quid pro quo* basis. I did not observe hosts reproaching female guests because they failed to acquiesce to male advances. Men had limited control over female bodies and interactional dynamics at these parties.

The lack of institutionalized male control over the college party scene meant that more was asked of men's individual charismatic qualities and heterosexual competences in order to hookup. Two interviewees mentioned that they had not had casual sex, despite regularly visiting college parties and their desire to hookup. Numerous others mentioned that they had not hooked up as much as they had hoped to. Male students' success in the hookup scene depended on, of course, their physical appearance and the extent that they embodied a contextually attractive masculinity. In the context of my fieldwork, this centered on markers such as 'wittiness', 'artistic expressiveness' and a capacity for fun and adventure. Stories about legendary womanziners circulated in the friend groups I socialized with. The stories about these individuals had elements of risk-taking behavior, for instance, one featured a sophomore student who in an intoxicated state, in the midst of the night, climbed a construction crane, photographed himself on top and posted these images on Facebook. Another story featured a young man at the Burning Man music festival, who carried a jetpack and flew around the festival terrain, while tripping on LSD. Notwithstanding the truthfulness of these accounts, these stories enhanced the popularity of the protago-

nists of the tales among young women. Yet, a reputation for fun and adventure was not enough; male students also had to rely on their skills in captivating audiences.

I call these performances 'audience games'. They were a prominent interaction dynamic at parties and were nearly always initiated by men. Within these, men competed with each other for the attention, entertainment and appreciation of spectators, particularly women. Amusing audiences by telling stories was a common variant of the 'audience games' performed by young adult men. At one party, I joined students in a round of storytelling, where each man aimed to outcompete his peers in terms of delivery, suspense and captivation. At another party, a number of young men spontaneously engaged in a hip-hop battle, vying with each other in terms of irony and wit. At again another gathering, young men initiated a drinking game, in which they competed for the title of 'wizard' and set to drink their own height in beer cans. This particular occasion ended less than flattering for the 'wizard', who passed out on the concrete floor in his own vomit. Young men felt -rightfully so- that performing well in the 'audience games' and entertaining and captivating their spectators enhanced their chances of hooking up.

Hookup culture has a competitive dynamic similar to dating, in which status is determined by one's desirability as a hookup/date in the sexual arena (Waller, 1937). Hooking up with a person of similar or higher status enhances one's standing, while a sexual encounter with a less popular mate can have the opposite effect. These competitive status games need an attentive audience, and an interaction dynamic existed in which some sexual practices were enacted in public. At the petting parties in the dating era, this was limited to kissing and fondling. At contemporary hookup parties, this includes grinding –a dance where one person (usually a man) rubs his/her crotch against the behind of the other person (usually a woman)-, kissing and fondling and occasionally heavier sexual activity. Sophomore student Nate, for instance, showed me a video on his smartphone, which he recorded at a party. It revealed a young couple having sex on the table in what looked like a brightly-lit basement, in front of a small audience, observing them from the other side of the room. According to Nate, the couple was well aware of the filming and photographing onlookers but 'just didn't care'. Nate and others posted the video and photos on Twitter and Facebook. To my surprise, the post got thumbs up from other men, highlighting the male status dynamic of sexual voyeurism. However, as Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) note, a similar dynamic also exists among women. Female students also gained status among peers from hooking up with high-status men. These hookups, 'particularly when initiated in the public social venue of the party scene, are more amenable to the type of visibility and quick turnover necessary for the pursuit of status' (2013:86). This interaction dynamic of sexual

voyeurism is not new within the college arena, but the sexual norms have changed. This means that different sexual practices are enacted in public now, in comparison with the dating era.

Not all parties had the kind of public sexual activity that Nate showed on his smartphone; in fact, most parties did not. At all the parties that I attended, the public sexual practices remained limited to grinding, kissing and fondling. Often, sexual norms expanded during the night, as the party progressed, and patrons got more intoxicated. Over the course of the night, public sexual acts became more common, and gradually heavier practices were enacted. Earlier in the evening, or at gatherings that remained rather conventionally social, students with a sexual interest in each other established private spheres in which to become physical. This often entailed a physical separation from the group. While I and most other patrons witnessed the hip-hop battle described earlier, host Jason stood intimately entwined with a fellow student at the far end of the room. Later that night, he disappeared with her, leaving his own party. I spotted them again when leaving. They were in the courtyard, kissing and caressing each other and - as far as I could see - remained completely dressed. Two interaction dynamics existed at parties, one of sexual voyeurism and one of sexual privacy. The sexual norms at the party, along with the sliding scale of these throughout the night, determined which practices were suited to voyeurism and which should be conducted privately.

Much has been written about the different reputational consequences of hooking up for young men and women (Bogle, 2008:103-115; Currier 2013; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009:598; Kalish and Kimmel 2011:144-146). Some authors argue that engaging in casual sex does not have negative reputational consequences for men, while it can for women (Bogle, 2008:105-105; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:144-146). Others present a more complex picture. Young women gain status among peers in the party scene through male's erotic attention, and this entails at least some hooking up. However, they also risk the slut stigma when they hook up too much (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:89). Others argue that high erotic prestige within the sexual arena can somewhat safeguard women from the slut stigma (Holla, 2013). The men I interviewed indeed unanimously agreed that men gained status among peers when they hooked up with women of high erotic status. Hooking up with women of lower erotic prestige, however, could lower their standing. There were additional negative reputational consequences of hookups that men might experience. One of my male interviewees reported that a female hookup partner spread rumors about his sexual incompetence and inability to please her sexually, which became a source of hilarity among his peers and affected his status among them. For both men and women alike, hooking up can enhance as well as lower their status amongst

peers, and both can become objects of gendered gossip about their sexual defects, although these defects are gendered.

The infrastructural arrangements at BAU hampered an omnipresent party and hookup scene. Even students wanting to party and hookup had trouble finding locations where they could do so. A small residential community, rigidly enforced dorm policies, the lack of a nearby bar scene and the absence of a buzzing Greek community meant that the party scene was small and scattered. Despite the limitations, hooking up did happen. Infrastructural arrangements can impede the development of a clearly visible and omnipresent hookup culture on campus but cannot completely obviate the occurrence of casual sex among students. The party and hookup scene at BAU was a relatively even playing field for men and women. Presumably, this is partly because Greeks were largely absent from campus, and fraternities did not dominate the social scene as occurs at many American colleges. All male organizations, such as fraternities, through their function as a corporate group, collectively work to advance male privileges, creating a highly uneven sexual playing field. Hookups on BAU were of course gendered, such as the audience games and the reputational consequences of sex and created distinct gendered challenges for men and women.

## SEX, EMOTION WORK AND HOOKING UP

Sexual scripts have ‘framing rules’, ‘rules according to which we ascribe definitions or meanings to situations’ and ‘feeling rules’, or guidelines on how we should feel about a particular situation (Hochschild, 1979:566). Within the hookup script, the framing rules indicate that sex is for physical pleasure and perhaps an affirmation of attractiveness, but it does not imply emotional intimacy. The feeling rules make emotions such as sexual arousal, validation and confidence, and maybe even shame, viable but preclude a sense of vulnerability and emotional dependency on a hookup partner. Actors aim to achieve these sensations prescribed by the feeling rules through ‘emotion work’, ‘the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling’ (Hochschild, 1979: 561). Different interaction rituals and strategies were part of the hookup script to aid actors in their emotion work, and from the stories told by my interviewees, these were utilized by both men and women.

One such strategy was to avoid physical and sexual practices that might signal emotional closeness. A number of students mentioned that cuddling, especially after release, was inappropriate within the context of a hookup. Sophomore student Nate, for instance, reported that his current hookup partner was ‘getting cuddly’, and this was a sign that she might want more from the relationship. Other students mentioned that

giving cunnilingus was too intimate for a hookup and hence should be avoided, which resonates with the findings of Backstrom et al. (2012). They found that 35% of the women in their research considered receiving oral sex to be too intimate for a hookup, whereas fewer women held such negative attitudes towards receiving oral sex within a relationship context (2012:5). This corresponds with researchers' finding of a larger orgasm gap in hookups between men and women than in committed relationships (Armstrong et al., 2012). The immediate period after release was especially delicate in hookups because in committed relationships, this is often a time to be tender and caring and exchange thoughts and feelings that can bring partners closer emotionally. Senior student Tim reported that after release, his current hookup partner immediately got out of bed and showered, avoiding the post-intercourse intimacy. He asked her numerous times if she wanted to cuddle up with him after the deed, 'but she didn't'.

Many students found it difficult to abide by the feeling rules of a hookup. They fell in love with their hookup partners and became emotionally dependent on them. These 'risks' were especially pronounced within serial casual encounters, thus many students limited the number of times they would hookup with one single partner. Sophomore student Paul, for instance, mentioned that his serial hookups never spanned more than three encounters because expectations of a committed affair would potentially arise.

Reinitiating contact after a hookup was a particularly delicate matter since this could obviously be construed as wanting more. Most re-engagements happened via smartphone texting, and students abided by certain rules to avoid running the risk of raising suspicions that they might be emotionally involved. It was common for my interviewees to wait a certain number of days before reinitiating contact after a hookup. This waiting period should be 'at least ten days', according to senior student Ramon. The unfolding texting should be rather business like, limiting the information exchanged and the questions to the bare minimum necessary to make arrangements.

*JJS: Do you keep in contact after the hookup?*

*M: Really loosely, I try to avoid it for a few days, maybe a week, just so they don't think that anything is going to evolve out of it, or that I wanted anything more at the time.*

*JJS: And then after a week what do you do?*

*M: Just say 'what's up?', 'what are they doing?', if they want to grab a beer or go to a show, do something, nothing date wise, no dinner and a movie or anything, because that can be construed in a completely different manner than you want it to be (Martin, sophomore student).*

Any clue within the texting exchange that could hint at dating or a committed relationship script was to be avoided. The safest strategy was to immediately come with a plan for an encounter, for instance to meet at a particular party, a music show or a bar or to ‘watch a movie together’ at one of their residences. Surprisingly, none of my interviewees explicitly invited their partner to meet for sex. Such invites were always shrouded in the aforementioned metaphors; explicated references to sex were construed as inappropriate. Texting that went beyond the minimum conversation needed to make arrangements for the next meeting was suspicious. Similarly, writing long messages or responding swiftly was too eager and signaled emotional involvement. Ramon mentioned being on his guard when a hookup partner sent a message ‘containing over 120 characters’ and responded immediately to his text. ‘An hour’ was a safe interval, but anything sooner signaled too much interest.

When meeting after a hookup, one should not signal a romantic interest. One strategy for avoiding such signals is to immediately become sexual and not waste much time on conversation. Numerous students mentioned that watching a movie or series together was a safe bet for a follow-up hookup. No conversation was needed, and sexual escalation was easy when they were already sitting next to each other while looking at a screen. Discussion on follow-up hookups should remain superficial, and certain topics were off limits. ‘I don’t talk about things that can bring you closer emotionally’, Jade said. There was no discussion of personal lives or histories and no talk about existential dilemmas and insecurities. After the sex, there was no need to spend time together. Sophomore student Nate, for instance, reported that he nearly always left his hookup partner’s room after release.

Students frequently turned cold towards a hookup partner after the initial sexual encounter. Often, this meant ghosting the other, by ignoring him/her presence or paying marginal attention to his/her existence. Sophomore student Marten reported that he would greet his hookup partner when running into her on campus and make small conversation but would not become more amicable. ‘I don’t hit her up to hang out or anything, but if I see her I will definitely stop and talk with her’. Other students were more adamant about ignoring their partners completely, even when running into them. An easy way to ignore a hookup partner was to avoid him/her completely. Freshman student Devon reported that he avoided those areas on campus where he risked running into his hookup partner. ‘So, it became this cat and mouse game of trying to avoid her’. Like Devon, most students were careful to avoid those places where they could potentially bump into their hookup partners.

‘Emotion work’ in hookup culture and the concomitant strategies caused fragility in the bonds between partners. Serial hookups could end suddenly, even when both partners were happy with the arrangement. Sophomore student Martin

had such an experience. In his freshman year, he had a series of hookups with a young woman. One night, Martin sent her a message, asking if she 'would like to hang out' in his room. She came over and seemed stressed and was not up for sex. Instead of hooking up, they talked about college and about their friends. Nothing sexual happened between the two that night, and she left his room at three am. Martin thought that his hookup partner needed space. He did not contact her again for that reason. She did not contact him either. Coincidentally, they ran into each other again a year later at the medical clinic on campus. They talked about their previous affair, learning that neither had wanted a committed relationship at the time, but neither wanted to end the hookup arrangement either. Neither had instigated contact after that particular evening out of fear that it might be construed as a claim towards commitment. The interaction codes of hookup culture meant that contact between partners could easily dissolve, even when they had no interest in this occurring.

Far more often, serial hookup arrangements ended because one of the two developed feelings for the other. Nearly all interviewees who had had serial hookup relationships told stories of such situations. It could have been them or their partners, but almost inevitably, one of the two would become emotionally attached. Most of the times, this resulted in claims of commitment by one of the partners, and this was often a reason to break off their affair completely. I expected to find situations in which an imbalance in the emotional investment of each hookup partner gave rise to power discrepancies that could become exploitive; however, I did not find this in my research.

Of the thirty-five hookups - both serial and single encounters - I was told about in detail, ten ended in an avoidance relationship. The nature of this avoidance varied between a temporal shunning to a more dramatic separating of friend groups. Hookups seldom (two of thirty-five) happened between strangers (also noted by McClintock 2010). In most cases, partners were acquaintances who had seen each other around campus, and occasionally hookups happened between friends. When hookups of the latter sort turned into avoidance relationships, this could potentially cause fissures within the groups of friends. Sophomore student Nate, for instance, hooked up with his friend Jenny at the end of the first semester of his freshman year. They had a series of hookups, which ended because Nate sensed that the affair was moving towards a more committed relationship, which he did not want. The ending of their affair resulted in an avoidance relationship that caused schisms in their friend circle. Jenny and her best friend not only avoided Nate, but they also drifted apart from Nate's close circle of friends. The two young women teamed up with another group and ultimately stopped interactions with Nate's group of

friends all together. I counted three of such fissures in his extended group of friends that year. In contrast with Levi-Strauss' (1969)[1949] axiom that marital sexual relations establish bonds between groups, hookups between friends on campus pushed groups away from each other.

## CONCLUSION

A number of scholars argue that specific infrastructural arrangements on campus fuel hookup culture (Allison and Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007: 781-782; Kimmel, 2008:194). The residential proximity of a large number of likeminded peers, most of whom are sexually active and single, creates an environment of myriad sexual opportunities, and this is enhanced by a buzzing social scene, often fueled by Greek organizations. The tightly integrated communities on campus facilitate familiarity and trust and a rather homogeneous sexual culture. BAU lacked most of these infrastructural arrangements, and this affected the extent that hooking up was a dominant and omnipresent phenomenon on campus. BAU had a relatively small residential community of students, limiting the pool of potential suitors. A stringently enforced dorm policy that prohibited the use of alcohol and drugs as well as loud noises on the premises, crushed medium-sized gatherings that could potentially evolve into much sought after parties. The lack of Greek organizations on and around campus, and the absence of a nearby bar scene, meant that students had to flock to informal house parties hosted by peers to find the style of sociability they were looking for. Hookups did happen, and most of these happened at parties, but since parties were sparse, small and often exclusive, they were limited to those students with a lot of social connections. Did a hookup culture exist at BAU? It did not in the sense that it was 'the only game in town' (Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:144). Hookups and committed relationships existed alongside each other. Nor was hooking up an omnipresent phenomenon on campus or a practice in which students felt they had to partake in order to take part in student life. On the other hand, hookups happened frequently at college parties, as a form of sexual experimentation without expectations of commitment, at least initially.

The sexual arena on campus is not characterized by a battle of the sexes. On the contrary, there is a remarkable correspondence between the motivations of young men and women to eschew committed relationships and opt for hookups, and similar social processes influence their decisions. The young men at BAU also felt a stringent self-development imperative, akin to the young women interviewed by Hamilton and Armstrong (2009). College, for middle-class students, was a time to

be uncompromisingly 'selfish', to explore lifestyle options, acquire educational attainments and vocational skills, and to be social and make new friends. Experiences with committed relationships affected male students' decisions to opt for hookups. Committed relationships could be avaricious in terms of the time and energy invested in them. Some men felt that a committed relationship hampered their ability to make friends on campus; instead of going out socializing with peers, they would have to spend time with a significant other. Moreover, committed relationships had other costs, and some men found them confining, limiting their ability to do what they wanted when they wanted. Relationships could also be emotionally demanding, sources of constant strife that gobbled energy that could otherwise be invested in other projects. It was not gender that determined what individuals wanted from intimate relationships, but instead, social class affected young men's approaches towards relationships. A majority of the working-class students I interviewed felt uneasy with hookups and instead preferred committed relationships. Their self-development imperative included a focus on educational attainments and vocational skills and lacked the middle-class understanding of exploring life-style options and making new friends in college.

The uniformity of the social processes that affected young men's and women's orientations towards intimate relationships does not negate the gendered aspects of sexuality on campus. Men and women had different strategies within the sexual arena on BAU. Young men, for instance, hosted the majority of parties, which were often, at least partially, motivated by the ambition to hookup. This, however, marginally created power imbalances between men and women. Men tried to control the flow of people into these parties, which actually hampered other men's access to these gatherings more than women's. Furthermore, their ability to control these environments and enforce their desires was limited. At these parties, at least the ones that I attended, women were not excluded or scorned if they did not flirt and sexually entice hosts, nor were they forced to drink or respond to ongoing sexual advances. Specific hookup rituals enacted at these gatherings were gendered, for instance the "audience games" that men performed to entice women. However, it can hardly be said that these gendered differences established an uneven playing field. There was even ambiguity surrounding the effects of the double sexual standard. Both men and women accrued peer status through erotic attention from the other sex, and both risked reputational damage due to hookups. For women, this resulted from hooking up too much, while for men, it occurred through rumors about their inadequate sexual performances. The extent to which this established inequalities between men and women remains a topic for further consideration.

Sexual scripts have 'feeling rules', delineating what should be felt during and

after the encounter. Actors try to manage their emotions in accordance with these rules (Hochschild, 1979). Within the hookup script, these rules precluded feelings of emotional intimacy and commitment, and students did the necessary 'emotion work' to achieve this. A number of interactional codes were endorsed to thwart the development of feelings of emotional intimacy. One of these codes was to avoid contact with a hookup partner for a certain amount of time after the initial sexual encounter. This meant that students often avoided those areas where they risked running into their hookup partner. Initiating contact after the hookup was a delicate ordeal and could easily be construed as wanting more. Hence, students often waited a certain number of days, or even weeks, to reinitiate contact. Texting exchanges between hookup partners were limited to making arrangements for a subsequent meeting. This subsequent get together should happen at a party or within the privacy of a home, and activities that hinted at a conventional date were precluded. When meeting, hookup partners' conversations should remain superficial and not touch upon vulnerabilities and deeply felt emotions. Even sexual activities were regulated by the principle of avoiding emotional involvement. Practices such as cuddling and, for some, cunnilingus, though not fellatio, were too intimate for many and therefore avoided. Hooking up demanded the labor of avoiding relationships.

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# 3

## SEDUCTION COMMUNITIES: YOUNG MEN'S RESPONSE TO HOOKUP CULTURE

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In hookup culture, relative to traditional dating, restrictions for women to engage in casual sex have diminished, although research shows that a tenacious sexual double standard exists (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009; Allison and Risman, 2013). Within hookup culture, the new norm is that men and women alike engage in sex outside of a relationship context. On the surface, such a sexual culture corresponds with a prevailing male fantasy of an abundance of sexually available young women. However, research indicates that only a small fraction of young men hookup (England et al., 2008; see also chapter three). In contrast to the prevalent myth that casual sex with young attractive women is available to all (Kimmel, 2008:172), most young men find that their own sexual experiences fall dramatically short of this cultural fantasy. The sexual opportunities within hookup culture are not equal but depend on sojourners' relative erotic status.

Studies on heterosexual young men show that sexual relations with women are quintessential to performing a 'competent' masculine identity (Kimmel, 2008: 205-208; Sweeney, 2014). This construction of manhood gives rise to new challenges for young adult men. Within the context of hookup culture, young men can no longer hide behind the adage that women are sexually unavailable, and thus, they need to have sex with women in order to prove their masculinity. Young heterosexual men have reacted in diverse ways to these new challenges of hookup culture. Within the college arena, for instance, young men join fraternities, which enforce men's interests by controlling the social scene on campus and impose a 'definition of the situation' (Goffman, 1990[1959]:21) of college parties that foregrounds casual sexual coupling in a state of severe intoxication (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013:88; Harris and Schmalz, 2016; Wade, 2017:2012). Other men retreat from this dominant masculinity and form alternative constructions of manhood, for instance evangelical Christians and Goths (Wilkins, 2009). Others try to individually heighten their erotic status in the sexual marketplace through physical workouts and self-help.

The 'seduction community' is precisely such an arena in which men aim to heighten their positions in the erotic game through the meticulous practice and study of heterosexual competences. 'Seduction communities' are both horizontally structured, as a network of men that assist one another in the 'game', and vertically structured, as an industry in which (semi-)professional 'pickup' coaches teach their clientele about sex and relationships with women. These communities are found around the world and were brought to mainstream attention by Neil Strauss' bestselling *The Game* (2005). In this novel, which is framed as an autobiography, Strauss reports on his fantastic transformation from a man with limited sexual options to a renowned *pickup artist*.

My research interest in 'seduction communities' concerns whether participants learn the heterosexual competences necessary for successfully navigating the challenges of young manhood within hookup culture. The answer to the question will be split in parts. Within this chapter, I explore what sort of sexual relations 'game' practitioners seek. Do they actually want to hookup? Or, do they prefer different intimate arrangements? In the following chapter, my focus will be on the tactics and techniques that 'game' practitioners learn and enact. A discussion of these practices will give insight into the commonly enacted sexual script of 'game' practitioners within urban erotic contact zones.

A number of social scientists have recently studied the peculiar male subculture of the 'game'. Almog and Kaplan (2015) argue that the 'worldview' of 'seduction communities' resonates with the logic of (video-)games. 'Courtship is construed as a 'standardized, rule-governed social skill' (2015:1). This conceptualization of heterosexual flirtation and sexual escalation appeals to 'geeky' men, and this worldview dehumanizes all participants and 'suspends moral considerations' (Almog and Kaplan, 2015:1). Others argue that 'seduction communities', concomitant to much other self-help, combine hedonistic aspirations with an 'inner-worldly asceticism', and that as participants get more immersed in the 'game', the goals of self-improvement win over the immediate aspirations of sex with women (Hendriks, 2012). I argue that the immediate goals of forging sexual relations with women indeed are suspended when neophytes become 'game' practitioners, but their arising aspirations are about the acquisition of heterosexual competences. Moreover, the 'game' is a competitive field in which status, honor and money can be won through an ostentatious display of 'pickup' skills, which can be done through an enactment of the hookup script. This professionalization of heterosexuality results in a reconfiguration of the relation between manhood and sex.

## CASE AND METHODS

The first internet news group on 'pickup' in the Bay Area allegedly emerged in the early nineties, as was the case in many other American metropolitan areas. This platform was started by a group of men who had met on a seminar hosted in the South Bay by a self-proclaimed 'pickup' coach called Ross Jeffries. They used this Yahoo group to stay in contact with each other and discuss the heterosexual competences that they had learned at the event, as well as their experiences enacting these within the 'field'. Years later, one of my informants, Terry, took over the administration and changed the newsgroup into a forum called the 'San Francisco Seduction Community' –this is a pseudonym- and recruited a group of volunteers to run it. This group hosted a monthly outing in the urban erotic contact zone of San Francisco on which men practiced the 'game' together as well as seminars at which professional players from all over the US –and later from all over the world– lectured an attentive audience on heterosexual skills. Additionally, practitioners met regularly to discuss 'challenges' within the 'game', which was often followed up by an 'in the field' practice session. When I started researching this community in 2008, it comprised over 6000 participants, of which approximately three-hundred were active users. In the subsequent years, much of this original infrastructure disappeared, but other online communities directed at 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area emerged. Some of these were aligned with commercial 'pickup' instructors and included forums on which practitioners discussed the 'game' and met fellow players. Others comprised non-commercial groups on Facebook, Meetup and WhatsApp and were run by volunteers and directed at men that wanted to learn the 'game'.

The communities of 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area were hierarchically structured on the basis of heterosexual skills –like in other 'seduction communities'- with a large group of neophytes at the bottom and a small group of 'experts' at the top of the pyramid. Many of this latter group worked as professional 'pickup' coaches. For some, this was their main source of income, while for others, it was a part-time venture. Despite the hard-pressed myth within 'seduction communities' that anyone can excel in the 'game', the truth is that only a tiny fraction of neophytes become skillful players (of the eighty-three players I met in total, eight had consistent sexual adventures).<sup>4</sup> Dedicated ascetic labor is not enough to excel in the 'game'. Appearance is a decisive factor for achieving success in this specialized field. According to one of the moderators of the 'Bay Area Seduction Community', ninety percent of its members were software engineers. Although this estimate seems inflated, many of the men I met during fieldwork worked as engineers in the burgeoning

software industry. Moreover, ten of the twenty-two men who I conducted formal interviews with worked as programmers. Part of this heavy involvement of software engineers is specific to the Bay Area, with its large tech workforce. Another part of the story is that the worldview of ‘seduction communities’, in which sexualized interactions are envisioned as a rule-governed environment where success depends on the knowledge of the codes and skills to bend these rules to one’s advantage, resonates with a particular fraction of the knowledge workforce, and specifically with engineers. Additionally, most men that flock towards ‘seduction communities’ have very little heterosexual experience and most have had relatively few opportunities to meet women via conventional channels, such as classes/college and work. As one of my interviewees explained, the large presence of software engineers was: ‘Because they need it most, man. Our whole life is software, keyboards, so few human interactions’.

The ‘seduction communities’ in San Francisco comprised mostly men identifying as Asian or White. Nine of my interviewees identified as White, nine identified as Asian, and four as Latino. During fieldwork, in which I attended many of the offline events hosted by ‘seduction communities’ in the Bay Area, I met eighty-three practitioners in total. Forty-three identified as White, thirty as Asians, nine as Latino and only one as African (not African-American).

Playing the ‘game’ is a pursuit of young, middle-class adult men. Most dedicated players I met were between twenty-five and thirty-five (with eighteen to forty-five being the total age range of all ‘game’ practitioners I met), college educated, white-collar professionals (and not college students as Almog and Kaplan (2015) suggest). In the ‘game’, players aimed to accumulate heterosexual competences’, which in most cases demanded much practice. Playing the ‘game’ is a middle-class endeavor, open to those with the resources to have an abundance of leisure time. This is illustrated by the number of interviewees with a middle-class background. Of the twenty-two men I conducted formal interviews with, three had a working-class background, nineteen others were from the middle class. I made this classification on the basis of their parents’ professions and their own professional attainment.

I spent a total of ten months researching ‘game’ practitioners in the greater Bay Area, over three different periods of fieldwork between 2008 and 2014. I conducted formal interviews with twenty-two ‘game’ practitioners, with whom I conducted between one and five interviews. Of these interviewees, four worked as professional ‘pickup’ coaches at the time of the interviews, two men moderated the forum and had worked as coaches on the side, seven men were dedicated ‘game’ practitioners who had been involved for between one and three years, and nine men were neo-

phytes of the 'game'. The names of respondents have been anonymized.

Fieldwork consisted of attending the aforementioned events hosted by the 'San Francisco Seduction Community' as well as accompanying key informants on their 'pickup' sessions. During these 'in the field' sessions, I made observations of their 'pickup' attempts and the techniques and tactics they used within interactions. The events hosted by the community of 'game' practitioners allowed me to meet a large group of players, which resulted in countless informal conversations, which I documented and which also inform my analysis. Fieldwork, at times, also entailed a mimicry of the more accomplished players, some of whom were (semi-) professional 'pickup' instructors. Additionally, I attended five commercial 'pickup' boot camps. I visited three key informants at work regularly, in order to get a better understanding of their work environment and their professions. I also accompanied these informants on leisure activities, such as dinners and travels. This allowed me to get a better understanding of their social life outside of the context of work and the 'game'. Some of my informants also wrote extensive posts on the 'San Francisco Seduction Community'. These posts were an additional source of data. I also read many of the self-help books that my informants recommended, which helped me to get a better understanding of their worldview and the information that informed it.

## PICKUP AS A BODILY CRAFT

'Pickup', according to players of the 'game', is a technical, skilled craft, comprising: body movements, the positioning of bodies in space and in relation to other bodies, vocal tonality and pacing, glances, verbal scripts –banter, stories, questions, games– and interactional strategies and 'emotion work' (Hochschild, 1979). 'Pickup', according to players of the 'game', is primarily a bodily craft, learned in the interaction order through myriad approaches and is only secondarily a bookish trade, cultivated through learning scripts, pop-psychology theories and interactional gambits. This challenges the impression that the industry of professional 'pickup' coaches helps to foster through capitalizing on sales of 'how-to guides' and upholding the idea that the 'game' can be learned via meticulous study. The 'game', as with other bodily crafts, is learned within practice (Desmond, 2006; Spencer, 2009; Wacquant, 2004). Embodying the sexual competences of flirtation, according to 'game' practitioners, takes strenuous and repetitive practice; through the repetitive performance of *routines* of the 'game', hundreds or even thousands of times, these slowly become habits of the body and the mind.

*If you learn to walk is that natural? Yeah, once you can. But if you really break it down, what is it? Bend your knee, stretch your leg, etc. It's a process and just because it comes naturally it doesn't make it less of a process. [...] Whatever method you use, there has to be a certain structure to it. Somehow you have to get the girl interested in you and then you have to be that guy she wants to talk to next week. It is all these steps you have to go through and just because it's natural it doesn't mean the process is not there (Nathan).*

The common ritualistic pursuit of women by men in the nighttime arena is most often performed for an attentive audience of onlookers to signal a competent heterosexual identity to a public (Grazian, 2007). However, the immediate presence of other men in the 'game' is primarily to benefit the 'pickup' pedagogy.

*I was going out with a couple of guys that I met there [at a 'pickup' boot camp] first, and I was trying to bring the guys that I met in the Meetup group, who were going out at night, to the daytime, but surprisingly they were extremely uncomfortable with daytime [...]. After a couple of weekends with wingmen, I realized that I was better by myself, because they were not at all that motivating [...] and I was freer and more fluid by myself. I could go anywhere I wanted, and I'm sort of adventurous. I felt this surprising comfort being by myself and just navigating through my day, you know, it was almost like 'work', more like practice, almost in a professional sense (Matz).*

Players of the 'game' often practice their trade collectively, but their relation is primarily instrumental. It can be about multiple things, such as assisting a player as a *wingman* in his 'pickup' attempt, scrutinizing his efforts and giving him valuable feedback, holding him accountable to set targets, offering emotional support, or showing sexual competences to an attentive public. For a 'pickup' apprentice, the goal of finding sexual partners is suspended, and the acquisition of heterosexual competences takes priority.

Although some 'players' practice the 'game' alone, the 'pickup' pedagogy remains quintessentially collective. Even the 'lone wolves' mirror their 'pickup' attempts on those of accomplished players, often coaches, who post an abundance of seemingly authentic videos online to show 'in the field' footage of them in action. Most of the 'pickup' pedagogy, however, happens within small groups of practitioners. This happens on the occasional, formal 'in the field' outings of 'seduction communities' in which practitioners meet up to 'play the field' collectively. And, more often, it occurs in informal gatherings of practitioners who come to practice the 'game' together. Nearly every day, calls were posted on the 'San Francisco Seduction Community'

forum to meetup and practice ‘game’ with other apprentices. On the weekends, a number of groups of ‘game’ practitioners would flock to the downtown area, and I would encounter groups of them practicing their craft together by just walking around the neighborhood. Most of these men knew each other, and when groups ran into one another, they would stop for a small conversation and discuss their experiences playing the ‘game’.

The community of ‘game’ practitioners was hierarchically structured on the basis of ‘pickup’ skills and the instruction of these skills was largely provided by the groups as a whole, with different members serving as instructor and student, depending on their relative experience to one another. This is akin the pugilist pedagogy described by Wacquant (2004:113-114), in which boxers alternately take on the role of instructor or apprentice, depending on the relative skill of the player in front of him. Thus, it could be that my key informant Rohit, who had been an active player for many years—although not very successfully—and who often took neophytes of the ‘game’ under his wing, became an apprentice when a more skilled member stood in front of him.

*Matz and I oversaw Rohit’s pickup attempt, who was standing on the pavement a few meters from us. Matz commented on it with the expert eye of an analyst. According to him, the body language of the young woman Rohit was talking to signaled medium interest. Her chest was not completely facing Rohit but directed sideways. ‘She is a little reserved’, Matz said. ‘Look at her feet’, he commented. The young woman had her feet positioned next to each other. ‘She is relatively at ease’, he said. ‘But it does not convey sexual interest’. Matz then demonstrated how she would stand if she was interested. He was standing on one leg with the other folded behind it, one hand supported his chin and the other arm folded in front of his chest. It was clear that Rohit did most of the talking. The young woman nodded and occasionally responded briefly. Matz thought that the interaction lacked sexual tension and that Rohit should use banter to ‘spice things up’. He could, for instance, comment on the bag she wore in front of her stomach. ‘That is a huge fanny pack’, Matz said.*

*Later, Rohit joined us. He was unsure about the chances of meeting the young woman again. Rohit inquired how his body language had been. Matz mentioned all the points he had previously described when he observed the interaction.*

In ‘collective pedagogy’ (Wacquant, 2004:112), all members train each other. This was achieved through observing the ‘pickup attempts’ of other practitioners, reflecting on them and giving advice, or through direct mimesis, illustrating how particular ‘pickup’ acts are correctly executed.

Competent players develop an ‘eye for the game’, an understanding of the idealized forms of the schemata of the field (Wacquant, 2004:117), which can include: the proper enactment of movements, or utterances, or the most effective strategy in a particular situation. This combination of acts generates a highly charged flirtatious interaction and possibly results in a sexual adventure.

*[...] like I've seen naturals [men who are good in 'pickup' without ever getting involved in the 'game'] who are incredible with picking up girls, and I asked, 'How the fuck did you do that?' They'd say, 'I don't know, man. I just sort of pulled up and said, 'What's up girls!' And I'd be like, 'All right'. [...] Whereas I can watch a guy in an interaction with women and I can see how successful they are dealing with it. Even if it's just a failed interaction and I can see how they are conducting themselves (John).*

The difference between a ‘ladies’ man’ and a competent ‘game’ practitioner is an intellectual understanding of the techniques and strategies of flirtation and sexual escalation. Competent ‘players’ possessed a rich vocabulary to scrutinize the interaction in detail and advise junior practitioners on what they could do in order to enhance their ‘game’.

For players, ‘pickup’ is a tactical game in which sex and sexual desires are at stake. In their logic, many women want to hookup but only if they are attracted to the player, feel sexually aroused and if the context allows for such an encounter. ‘Game’ practitioners aim to fuel desires, attenuate inhibitions, spark attraction and create those conditions in which a hookup can occur. According to players, the ‘game’ is akin to a sales funnel; it is about convincing the other that they want the product and to create the conditions necessary for the sale. Hence, practitioners try to read the behavioral cues of their interlocutors, to gauge their interests, and to decide which tactics and which techniques are necessary to make them committed to a sexual encounter. An ‘eye for the game’ implies a know-how of the schemata of the field, the techniques and tactics to optimize the ‘pickup’ process, and entails an aesthetic valuation of enacted practices. ‘Game’ practitioners, like craftsmen, come to appreciate the ‘quality of enactment’ of techniques and strategies. Skills within the ‘game’, which can shine through in individual acts, become a source of admiration.

Mutual attraction is commonly perceived as a serendipitous happening, when two souls meet randomly and ‘click’, instantly feeling attracted to each other, potentially leading down a path of romance. According to ‘game’ practitioners, flirtation, and the sexual scripts of which it is a part, is a highly structured interaction that progresses in a uniform pattern. In the initial stage, *attraction*, in the argot of the ‘game’, defined as physical and emotional captivation, arises, fostered by lightheart-

ed banter. From then, a buildup of trust and amenity occurs, referred to as *comfort* in players' argot, through exploring each others' life-biographies, sharing tastes and preferences and experiencing events together. This takes place while periodically spiking attraction and progressively intensifying sensuous touching. This is followed by *seduction*, the phase in which sexual escalation happens.

A 'pickup' apprentice often focuses on learning and practicing one particular tactic or technique at a time. Practitioners frequently meet to play the 'game' collectively, which is a rather strange encounter since most men would have met on an online 'seduction community' platform and proceeded to meet within the city at a designated spot to practice 'pickup' together. The session often starts with an introduction round in which players list their experience in the 'game' and their *sticking points*, which are reoccurring barriers within the process of a 'pickup'. This is followed by individuals offering advice on how to progress past these *sticking points* and setting clear goals for the session. Neophytes, for example, often struggle to instigate a flirtatious interaction with a stranger in a public setting, suffering from *approach anxiety*, and other players advise them on how to deal with this, for instance, by approaching a woman of interest within three seconds of seeing her. The neophyte is then asked to set clear targets, such as committing himself to a fixed number of approaches, and the others will hold him accountable. Another common *sticking point* of apprentice players is that their interactions are rather mundane and dull, and their female interlocutors have no erotic or romantic interest, since conversations lack the playful insinuation of successful flirtations. Other players would share interactional scripts, for instance specific banter lines, and tactics such as expressing a clear erotic interest, to help these apprentices create more energetically and sensuously charged and enticing conversations. The apprentice again would set targets, for instance to practice these interactional gambits at least a certain amount of times in that session, and the others will see if he succeeds.

Understanding 'pickup' as a rather uniform process that evolves through different phases and which depends on practice and skill, results in a particular outlook on and experience of practice in which players set small goals and feel emotionally rewarded when these are achieved. I recorded the following fieldwork notes when I joined two neophytes of the 'game' in their practice session:

*I accompanied Fred and Nick on their walk through the downtown area. It was Saturday afternoon, and the streets teemed with people. The two men had a rule: They took turns approaching women on the street. It was Nick's attempt next. A gracious, tall young woman passed us. Nick looked at us and turned around and ran after her. He quickly caught up with her, then adjusted his pace to her tempo, walked beside*

*her and spun around. She stopped for a brief instance and then continued her path. Nick returned. 'It was good', he said excitedly, although she had not stopped to talk to him. Nick was glad that he had worked up the courage to 'approach her'. Fred petted him on the back. 'Well done', he said.*

Just as gym practitioners set goals about lifting an additional weight and find the achievement of such a seemingly tedious endeavor rewarding, 'game' apprentices set small goals that offer a sense of accomplishment upon completion.

*I arrived at the bar where I was supposed to meet the 'game' practitioner a little later than usual. A couple of guys were already there. I recognized Jimmy, a long-term practitioner, and Brian, who hosted this weekly session. They were accompanied by two chaps who I had not seen before, named Lorentz and Simon. They stood in a circle and talked about the goals for the night. Jimmy wanted to get better in 'gaming' big groups. His goal for that evening was to acquaint a group and 'game' a girl in the group. I asked Lorentz and Simon if they frequented this gathering more often. Lorentz had been twice, Simon three times. Then I asked them about their goals. 'That's a good question' Brian said animated. Tonight, Lorentz's goal was to 'open at least ten sets'. Simon had other goals: 'To get laid', he said. Brian immediately corrected him. It was not about the results but was about 'optimizing the process' of a 'pickup. Moreover, neophytes should start with 'easy targets', such as talking to at least ten different women.*

A 'pickup' apprentice progresses in a somewhat uniform fashion. Neophytes start by practicing an 'opening', which means to initiate an interaction. Once they have mastered this skill, the next step is to learn how to banter flirtatiously. More experienced practitioners, who have mastered these skills, set other goals. Jimmy, for instance, in the vignette above, wanted to learn how to initiate a conversation with a group of people and then transition to a flirtatious conversation with one of its members. This practice is perceived as more difficult than initiating a flirtatious interaction with a woman who stands in the bar by herself. More competent players set other goals. They, for instance, go and 'play the field' to practice a quick 'sexual escalation' in an interaction. The competences of the 'game' build up, practitioners learn one skill after the other, mastering –what are perceived as– increasingly more difficult techniques and tactics. 'Game' practitioners collectively watch over this seemingly uniform progression in the apprentice of the 'game'. Brian, the most senior member of the group, corrected the too ambitious neophyte Simon. He should start with 'easier' targets, for instance initiating flirtatious interactions with sojourners in

the urban nightlife. The skills of the 'game' are unevenly and somewhat uniformly distributed through the ranks of practitioners. Every layer comprises a similar kind of skill set and builds upon the former with increasing complexity. The progression through these ranks is a rather uniform process that is enforced by the collective of practitioners as a whole.

Many apprentices have a systematic and instrumental, reflexive approach to training. I have met numerous practitioners who kept a diary of their practices, reporting on their approaches, on what they did, which *routines* they used, what went well, and which *sticking points* they encountered. Other players had spreadsheets in which they systematically documented their approaches, and others wrote detailed field reports of their training sessions and often published these on online forums for other practitioners to read, comment on and give advice on how to improve their 'game'.

For the skillful player, each gesture and each word within the 'pickup' attempt is an element for meticulous scrutiny, sublimating every single act to an idealized form of the schemata of the field. Similar to a football player who tries to perfect his kick by incessant repetition, and who can discriminate in detail between a perfect and imperfect execution of this move, 'game' practitioners take acts within the 'pickup' as gestures that can be perfected through relentless practice. Through this approach, their practice transcends the ordinary and enters the domain of the craftsman.

*I accompanied Don and Rohit on their 'pickup' session in a downtown shopping mall in San Francisco. After a number of approaches, Don and Rohit embarked on a discussion of the best opening in this environment. 'The classic approach is that you're in a faster pace than the girl', Don said, while demonstrating this approach on an imaginary other. 'You tap her on the shoulder, walk an additional four steps and turn around'. Rohit added that strong eye contact is key and to wait a few seconds before you start speaking. Let the tension build up. Also, the body posturing is important. 'You shouldn't fidget', Rohit said, 'and face her' with arms dangling besides your body, which allegedly communicates an 'open attitude'. Then follow up with a dramatic: 'I just saw you walking by and I had to say hi', making sure you pace your words.*

A cogent execution of this series of acts take novices months of incessant practice, during which they continuously repeat the same gestures in numerous consecutive 'pickup' attempts and gradually ingrain the techniques, tactics, movements and utterances on the body and mind. In an interview, key informant Matz, for instance, reflected on the time it took him to master the series of gestures described in the

above vignette. 'It took me four months to acquire a solid approach' (Matz).

As with other bodily crafts, mastery in the 'game' comes with countless hours of dedicated, repetitious and ascetic practice. Apprentice players see the sexual pursuit of women as 'work', concomitant with athletes' perception of gym practice (Monaghan, 1999:278; Wacquant, 2004:66). Going out to 'pickup' women, *to sarge*, is primarily about practicing skills and secondarily about seeking potential sexual encounters. Apprentices often go out to practice the 'game' numerous times a week, like aspiring athletes invest countless hours of training in their craft. Many (semi-) professional players I have met have gone out at least five times a week for months or years in order to practice their skills. 'I went out pretty much five days a week for three months straight and was very consistent in working on myself, until I was actually seeing results' (John). It is not surprising that most dedicated 'game' practitioners work as freelancers who largely determine their own schedules. A pickup pedagogy is a long process in which players slowly acquire the competences of their craft. However, only a tiny fraction of neophytes progress through the ranks of the 'game' to become competent players.

## PICKUP AS SPORT: PROFESSIONAL HETEROSEXUALS

'Seduction communities' are organized as a brotherhood of men who voluntarily exchange knowledge on 'pickup' and as an industry in which (semi-) professional coaches are paid to teach clients. Concomitant with other commercialized sexual fields, such as pornography (Escoffier, 2003; Trachman, 2012), professionalization entails the control of knowledge and skills that structure the field hierarchically –for professional and amateur players alike– and can be taught for money. Professional 'pickup' coaches charge up to 3,000 dollars for a weekend of training in the field, teaching multiple clients per session. 'Pickup' can thus be a lucrative business for those on top of the pyramid. One's performances in the 'game' are the clearest signs of skills and knowledge of 'pickup'. This is especially the case in those instances that highlight the player's agentic capacities to sexually charge conversations, to override a woman's inhibitions about sex with virile prowess, and to direct the interaction to a desired outcome by cogent tactics. Sexual stories of 'game' practitioners shared with an audience of fellow players, and if possible validated by peers who were present, were the idiom of status games within the field of 'seduction communities'.

The status games of players centered on displaying skills within the 'game' and were played on multiple axes, pertaining to questions like *with Who? How? What?*

*And Where?* Cogent players were apt in instigating flirtatious, sexually charged interactions, and their number of sexual partners was a gauge of their expertise in the 'game'. Most players were vaguely aware of the number of sexual conquests of skillful practitioners. For instance, 'pickup' instructor Jared knew of a renowned coach who lived in a different city and whom he had met briefly on less than a handful of occasions. Although he hardly knew this man personally, he was aware of his number of sexual conquests, which was a marker of his status and expertise in the 'game'. The perceived erotic prestige of a sexual partner could also signal mastery in the 'game'. Players applied a market reasoning to hooking up and erotic prestige. Women with erotic allure in mainstream culture, such as young women who displayed a Hollywood beauty standard, were supposedly in high demand and were allegedly more selective about bed partners than peers of lesser erotic standing. Sex with women of high erotic prestige thus signaled skills within the 'game', since one outcompeted other suitors. Forming sexual relations with women who were supposedly unavailable, for instance in a monogamous relationship, was another maker of skills in the 'game'. Similarly, hooking up with women who deployed their erotic allure professionally –hostesses, strippers, escorts and porn stars– without paying for sex, signaled mastery in the 'game'.

*Where* sexual contact in a hookup occurred also signaled skills in the 'game'. Women were supposedly more reluctant to hook up with a stranger in a public setting than in the privacy of a home. Thus, many 'game' practitioners shared sexual stories about escapades within semi-public settings such as bar bathrooms, alleyways, dressing rooms and parks.

*I remember one night, me and three wings were just warming up for the night. We were playing pool and this older woman, 32, a lawyer or something. She's attracted, she's into me, and I just pull that line out 'You want me to fuck you in the bathroom. Oh my God, you can't even wait till we get home!' And she pulls me across the table and says 'That will be so fucking hot'. So, we just finished our game of pool, and after that, I took her to the bathroom, fucked her there and she let me come in her mouth, which was cool. This is the kind of stuff that a lot of women have these fantasies, but no guy has the balls to actually do it (John).*

In the logic of the 'game', two continuums overlapped: one ordered sexual activity from 'light' to 'heavy', and the other hierarchically positioned skills. The 'heavier' sexual activity (anal sex, money shots, vaginal sex, blowjobs) signaled more expertise within the 'game'. The scenario that conveyed the most competence in the 'game' involved hooking up with two or more women at the same time, especially shortly

after meeting them. ‘The holy grail [of ‘pickup’] was the cold three-way pull’ (John).

Seductive prowess also showed in the *how* of a ‘pickup’, when the practitioner showed a clear demonstration of his agentic capacities in ‘playing the field’.

*We were in the club, I would open one time, Z. [Matthew’s girlfriend] would open one time. We went through about ten sets and then there were these two girls. We opened them and we were talking to them, and trying to figure out if they could come out of the club with us, and when I’m just about to pull everyone out of the club, Z. starts making out with this one girl [of the two] and this makes about fifty guys on the dance floor surrounding us, like swarms, and it was literally these guys trying to pull the girls away from me, so I ended up putting my arms, I am big enough, around all three girls, and like spinning on the dance floor, like fending off these dudes, and one of the dudes is like ‘you have a girl already! Why do you want the other two?’ And I cut him off and I eventually pull the girls out of the club, and one of my ex-students was in the club with us that time. So, when we found him at the entrance I handed him the girl I was talking to and went for the girl who was with my girl, because she really wanted it and the girl I was talking to wasn’t. So, there were various complications, some of her other friends showed up, but we got passed all those and we got back home and we banged that girl and that was pretty awesome (Matthew).<sup>5</sup>*

‘Game’ practitioners made a distinction between ‘getting lucky’ and ‘solid game’. The former referred to the sexual escapades where women took the initiative and seduced men. The latter referred to episodes where a skillful player cogently fostered a sexual encounter. Stories in which the protagonist demonstrated a stark control over the sexual encounter were the most powerful illustration of mastery within the ‘game’. It was not the sexual adventure itself that demonstrated players’ high-status identity, but instead, it was the competences they displayed in the sexual conquest that mattered.

## CONCLUSION

The advent of hookup culture has brought new strains and challenges to young heterosexual men. Manhood needs to be proven constantly, and among young heterosexual men, this is partly done in sexual relations within women. In this new sexual environment, casual sex is acceptable for both men and women, and young heterosexual men can no longer hide behind the adage that women are not sexually available. Many men, however, experience longing for women who are not sexually

interested in them and do not know how to flirt or to become sexual. This has led to a burgeoning self-help industry, institutionalized within 'seduction communities', that promises young men the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully navigate the hookup scene.

'Seduction communities' are collaboratives of 'game' practitioners that transmute the ordinary practice of flirtation into a skilled bodily craft. Initially, young men flock to these self-help groups in the hope of finding easy answers, but as they get involved in the 'game', the immediate goal of finding sexual partners is suspended and overtaken by the priority to learn embodied heterosexual competences. These skills of the 'game' are learned by practice and in a 'collective pedagogy' (Wacquant, 2004:99). The community of practitioners is hierarchically structured on the basis of skills in the 'game', and each member alternately takes on the role of apprentice and instructor, depending on his competences relative to those of the player in front of him. Learning happens through direct mimesis of senior players and through their advice and explanations of the competences of their specialized field. The collective of 'game' practitioners enforces a rather uniform pedagogical path, in which apprentices progress through the ranks of the 'game' in a similar fashion, systematically learning one skill after another in their specialized field. The competences of the 'game' build up and are thus unevenly distributed through the ranks of practitioners, with the higher echelons possessing more competences and also skills that are perceived as more complex. This ranking of competences can be exploited for material gain by high-status practitioners who offer 'in the field' coaching sessions.

The specialized realm of the 'game' has a competitive dynamic through which 'pickup' becomes a sport. This competitive dynamic is enhanced by the professionalization of this field. Accomplished players, men with high status in a community of practitioners, can easily sell their expertise for money. A high status is acquired through an ostentatious display of heterosexual competences. 'Flashy' sexual encounters and a continuous string of sexual conquests offer powerful rhetoric for demonstrating expertise within the 'game'. In order to acquire high status within this competitive field, a player needs to continuously forge casual sexual relations with women. (Semi-) professional players are thus primed towards hooking up.

Through their progression through the ranks of the 'game', neophytes become competent players, and there is a change in their perception of the relation between masculinity and sex. Neophytes flock to 'seduction communities' because they do not measure up to the expectations of dominant manhood in their young adulthood, which construct sexual relations with women as quintessential to performing a competent masculine identity. Within this construction of masculinity, hetero sex is

a means to do gender, to signal a successful masculine identity to others. However, concomitant with other 'professional heterosexuals', like porn stars, professional players have an alternative construction of manhood with a different relation between masculinity and sex. Within the specialized sphere of the 'game', it is not the score, the sexual conquest in itself, by which men 'do gender' and construct hierarchies amongst one another. Hierarchies between players in the 'game' are constructed on the basis of skills displayed within the performance. Just as porn actors construct professional hierarchies on the basis of tacit technical knowledge of, for instance, the positioning of bodies in relation to lighting and cameras and the ability to 'get wood' on demand (Escoffier, 2003; Trachman, 2012), (semi-) professional players construct hierarchies amongst themselves on the basis of skills displayed in the 'game'. Expertise shows in an ostentatious demonstration of control over the sexual environment, when 'game' practitioners control interactions and strategically manipulate the emotions of themselves and others and engineer a desired sexual scenario. Within 'professional heterosexuality', a competent masculine identity is not communicated through the sexual conquest itself, but comes forth in the competences displayed in the sexual encounter.

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## 4

# A PICKUP IS NOT A HOOKUP: SEXUAL SCRIPTS OF PLAYERS OF THE 'GAME'

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On many US college campuses, hooking up –casual sex without expectations of commitment– has become a prominent sexual script for intimate couplings among students. Much less is known, however, about the prevalence of this sexual script in other heterosexual erotic contact zones. In this chapter, I explore flirtatious encounters and enacted sexual scripts in an environment other than the college arena, the urban erotic contact zone, comprising bars, clubs, daytime cafes and high streets. My focus is on the actions of ‘pickup’ coaches and their clientele. These coaches are men who practice and study ‘seduction’, who have a great, –and at times professional– interest in casual sexual relations with women. I expected to find a strong hookup culture among these men.

In contrast to the vast body of work on college campus sexual cultures that emerged in the last decade, few researchers have looked at heterosexual intimate couplings in other arenas. Those who did generally found that conventional dating is the norm of heterosexual coupling among young Americans outside of the college environment. Bogle (2008) looked at the sexual scripts enacted by ex-students after their graduation, students for whom hooking up was the norm of sexual relations during college. She found that after college the young men and women in her study ‘largely abandoned the hookup script in favor of formal dating’ (Bogle, 2008:130). Other studies also suggest that hooking up in bars outside the college arena is rare, despite hard-pressed myths about the availability of casual sex in the urban nightlife (Grazian, 2007; Laumann et al. 1994:239). On the other hand, acceptance towards premarital sex and sex among adolescents continues to rise, and the younger generations are more accepting of these sexual behaviors than older cohorts (Wells and Twenge, 2005:5). Furthermore, increasingly more youth have sex outside of a relationship context (Wells and Twenge, 2005:6). The question is whether this applies predominantly to college students, or if youth outside the campus arena are also increasingly engaging in casual sex. To what extent is hooking up a norm of intimate coupling among young Americans in urban erotic contact zones?

'Pickup' practitioners are an extreme case that nonetheless offer a window onto dominant norms of intimate coupling outside of college. The 'game' is a highly competitive field in which players compete for status, honor and money. Hierarchies between players are made on the basis of the skills displayed within flirtatious and sexual interactions with women. One marker of skills within the 'game' is a very short interval between meeting and sex, corresponding to a hookup script. 'Pickup' practitioners and especially coaches thus have a professional interest in hooking up and actively pursue these sexual adventures. If they do not hookup frequently and if the rituals, techniques and tactics they advocate and commonly enact contrast with a college hookup script, then it is safe to say that dominant sexual norms outside of college differ from hookup culture. If, on the other hand, hooking up is a frequent occurrence, and the enacted rituals and tactics of the 'game' are similar to scripts of casual sex on campus, then this is evidence that hookup culture is transposing to domains of youth outside of college.

The data for this chapter comes from interviews with the six men that worked or had worked as 'pickup' coaches and the seven dedicated practitioners who had been involved in the 'game' between one and three years (see the method section in chapter three for a more detailed description of the background of these men). Ethnographic data supplements this chapter. This was collected during key informants' attempts to 'pickup' women in the urban erotic contact zone of San Francisco and during commercial boot camps led by the 'pickup' coaches I got to know. Names in this chapter have been anonymized.

In this chapter, I describe the 'pickup' practitioners' discourse on sexual scripts. The described rituals and strategies were enacted during observed 'pickup' attempts of key informants within the interaction order, but it critical to note that these narratives notoriously neglected women's agency. Within the 'game', practitioners discursively positioned themselves as *pickup artists*: the all-mighty puppeteers of the interaction order who strategically manipulated interactions towards their advantage. Within these discourses, women were often discursively positioned as the passive recipients of these interactional techniques or as resisting agents, who were not easily seduced. Seldom were women discursively positioned as strategizing subjects themselves, actively seeking a sexual encounter and playing the player. In this chapter, I describe the sexual scripts and the strategies and interactional techniques enacted within them as perceived by players of the 'game'.

## HOOKING UP: A FREQUENT OCCURRENCE?

*Nearly every Saturday afternoon during fieldwork I went to the food court of a downtown shopping mall in San Francisco to meet a group of men who had responded to a call on Meetup.com. It was called 'The SF Day Game Meetup'. This group welcomed any man who wanted to learn how to pick up young women on the streets of San Francisco. It invitingly claimed it was 'open to all skill levels'. That Saturday, a group of about ten seemingly nervous men sat around a table, surrounded by eating families and patrons who quickly consumed some fast food between their shopping sprees. I had seen a number of their faces on previous occasions, while others were new to me. By now, the ritual was familiar to me: the session would start with an introductory round in which the attendees introduced themselves, their experience in the 'game', their sticking points—reoccurring hurdles within a 'pickup', and their goals for the day's in-the field session. Then, we would divide into groups and roam the streets of downtown San Francisco to put words into practice. Isaak arrived, a man in his early thirties and a data-analyst by profession, who had recently taken an interest in 'pickup'. He shook hands with the other men in the group, most of whom he seemed to know.*

*'I had a crazy experience last night', he said, 'I picked up a hot Latina, crazy adventure'. 'NICE', one of the attendees responded. Others correspondingly applauded the announcement, and a few high-fived Isaak. Another man, who I had not seen before, in his early thirties, wearing a baseball cap, wanted to know more. 'Give us the breakdown', he said. Isaak took a seat and explained. He had gone to the 'Night Game Meetup', where he met five other men. First, they had gone to Ruby Sky, a downtown club, where he spotted her. She was dancing with another young woman.*

*'First I felt a little hesitant'. Isaak explained that he was not in the mood to 'game'. However, when the friend left and the young woman was dancing by herself, he worked himself up and approached her. 'What do you think about the music?' he asked. Reflecting on it, Isaak thought that the opening was rather 'weak', but he had 'no inspiration'. They talked for a short moment, until her friend re-appeared. Isaak introduced himself to her, but she was not up for a conversation. She disinterestedly said her name, Cecilia, and then asked her friend, whose name was Victoria, to go upstairs. Isaak returned to his wingmen, and they suggested going to another venue. Later that night, they returned to Ruby Sky. Victoria was standing outside the venue. 'How are you?' Isaak asked. She was not okay; her friend had gone home and had taken Victoria's phone with her. 'Can you imagine?' Isaak exclaimed, 'What a bitch!' Isaak gave her a hug, in order 'to create a little comfort'.*

*'Smart move', the man with the baseball cap commented. Isaak continued his story. 'You have beautiful eyes', he said while hugging her. She was allegedly flattered*

and looked at him 'with big eyes'. Then, Isaak thought about his options. A coach had recently advised him to 'sexualize' the interaction through unambiguous sexual comments. 'You know what', Isaak said, 'when you were dancing in the club earlier, I couldn't help but notice your legs. You have very sexy legs'. She took the compliment well and reciprocated his hug. 'I thought it was time for a kiss'. He leaned in, and they kissed. Then, Isaak explained to us that he lived in the East Bay, which complicated things. He self-reportedly had two options: to go home with her, or to stay in a hotel. 'Shall I give you a ride home?' he asked. She objected, saying there was no need, and she could go home by herself. Isaak insisted, and she halfheartedly agreed. 'This was the first frame battle I had won', he reflected.

In the car, they kissed some more, and Isaak stared 'escalating', feeling her up, and petting her. 'I noticed she was a little reserved', then she 'froze', pushed him away and called him an 'asshole'.

'Did she really?' The man with the baseball cap interrupted.

'She was testing you,' another man said, seemingly confident about his diagnosis.

'That is what I thought', Isaak continued. What she allegedly meant was that she was 'feeling like a slut' for going home with him. Supposedly, she wanted Isaak to assure her that it was okay if she went with him, and he 'wouldn't judge her' for going home with him.

'So, what makes you so attracted to assholes?' Isaak asked. Victoria said she was not. Then, Isaak changed his tactics. Victoria was allegedly 'framing' him as a persona she would not sleep with, so Isaak aimed to change her perception of him.

'Why am I an asshole?' he exclaimed. 'I only came up to talk to you and see if you were all right. But if you want I can leave again!' 'No, don't leave,' she said.

'Well done', one of the attentive listeners commented.

The story continued with Victoria and Isaak still in the car, but apparently there was a complication. She needed to pee. Again, Isaak thought about his options: if they went back to the club, she could change her mind and not go home with him, but if he drove her home, she would probably kiss him good night and leave. He suggested driving her to a hotel nearby, where he would stay for the night. She could use the bathroom, and then he would drive her home. Victoria agreed but added that she was not going to sleep with him. This was 'another frame battle', according to Isaak, and one he should play along with.

'I am not going to sleep with you', he said. At the hotel, Isaak got a room, and Victoria went upstairs with him to 'use the bathroom'. At this point, Isaak did not live up to his promise, saying he felt tired and asking her to stay. They could 'cuddle up' and 'go to sleep'. Victoria stayed the night, and they had sex, but Isaak stressed that 'It took a

*lot of work' and some more 'frame battles', and the sex was ultimately 'mediocre'. Isaak eventually drove Victoria home the next morning. 'Then I made the only mistake', he said. He parked the car in front of her house and kissed her goodbye.*

*'So, you are not even going to ask my phone number?' she asked, feeling wronged. He apologized and said that he was tired and just 'hadn't thought about it'. Asking for her phone number would allegedly alleviate the unease she might feel about the encounter.*

*'WOHA', the man with the baseball cap yelled and applauded. He jumped from his seat and high-fived Isaak. The man sitting beside him, who up to now had quietly listened, joined in. 'Well done' another said. Others joined in the excited celebration. 'Thanks for sharing the story', the man with the baseball cap said, stating that it had been 'extremely insightful', and Isaak 'had led her skillfully through the whole process'. A rather timid man with bulky eyes admiringly commented, 'I would have ejected when she called you an asshole'.*

*Later that day, I asked Isaak if this was his first one-night-stand. He confirmed that it was and in retrospect, he questioned if it was something he would aim for in the future. It had been 'an awful lot of work' and was tremendously 'emotionally demanding', a 'constant frame pushing', and the sex had not been great either.*

This fieldwork episode was noteworthy because it was rather atypical. Despite the hard-pressed myth that casual sex happens frequently within the urban nightlife, in reality, it does not happen often (Grazian, 20007; Laumann et al., 1994). Even men who explicitly went out with that goal, who studied and practiced heterosexual competences, seldom attained it. In the ten months of fieldwork, in which I on average accompanied 'game' practitioners in their nighttime *sarging* sessions twice a week, I never observed a casual sexual encounter in the making. I heard about a number of hookups from reports of others as, for instance, in the aforementioned vignette, but even accounting for these secondary tales, hookups seldom happened.

Even among the most competent players, hookups did not happen that often. 'Pickup' coach John, for instance, reflected on the frequency of sexual adventurism within 'seduction communities'.

*There is definitely some tall tailing going on. But the other thing is that I've done a number of things, that when I talk to guys about it, they'll say it's impossible. Owen Cook [renowned 'pickup' coach] came up with this theory that he named the secret society, which is that only 1% of the population fucks 50% of the girls, and I think there's some truth in this. I mean I had at least 130 one-night-stands, and I can see other guys doing that as well (John).*

The rate at which hookups effectively happened, set out against the time and effort invested in them, was not that high. John had been an active practitioner for five and a half years and in his most active period self-reportedly went out five nights a week to 'play the field'. Even if the overall frequency of him going out at night to 'pickup' was much lower, say twice a week, then he still only averaged about one hookup in four and a half nights out. This entailed a greater number of approaches a night, often around thirty. John was also an exception in that he was far more competent in the 'game' than other players I met. Similarly, 'pickup' coach Jared estimated that he had had about seventy hookups while playing the 'game' for seven years, and many of these encounters were not strictly hookups. A meeting at a bar or club, at which the couple exchanged numbers, was succeeded by a date, days or weeks after the initial encounter. In fact, like Jared, the 'game' practitioners in my research did not meet the lion's share of their partners in the urban nightlife, but instead during the daytime, in cafes, shopping malls and on high streets. These encounters abided to a contemporary dating script, rather than a hookup.

*Matz had come out to meet me in my neighborhood. I suggested to come to his, but the prospect of 'playing the game' in an area he did not know well excited him. During our stroll, I asked him how he went about approaching women in the daytime. First, he narrated about a particular way of stopping walking women, which he demonstrated on me. Matz quickened his pace, past me, jumped around in front of me and blocked my way, holding both his hands in a stop sign. I stopped. 'See, you have to stop otherwise my hands are on your tits', Matz said. I concurred. Apparently nearly all women stopped after an approach like this. 'So, what's next?' I asked.*

*'I say excuse me'. Matz explained that it might not sound 'very alfa', but at least after these words, women knew that you were not going to harass them. It made the approach less threatening. Then, Matz followed up with: 'Can I just say something random? 'I couldn't help noticing that...'. After this standard introduction, it was time for 'assumption stacking', a form of cold reading in which he made a number of comments on the basis of her appearance about who she allegedly was, where she was from, and what she was about to do. This would prompt conversation. He gave an example: 'I couldn't help noticing that you have something Spanish about you, in the way you dress and your dark hair'. Matz elaborated on this example. The young woman might, for instance, respond that she was from Argentina. He continued on this conversational thread, saying that he had never been to Argentina, but that in his mind he depicted perfect beaches, hot weather, sunshine, and, said teasingly,*

*'people who want to be Italian'. At this stage, it was unclear to me if the example was a reminiscence of an event that had occurred, a script he had read, or a made-up example. The point was clear that in the introduction he made assumptions about her to get a conversation started, to trigger her curiosity and to make her laugh. He explained that she was hooked when she started asking questions or posed in a certain way, which Matz again demonstrated, standing with one leg tucked behind the other, head slightly tilted and hand supporting his chin, while the other arm folded in front of his chest. From then on there were two ways Matz went about the interaction: He would opt for an 'instant date', for instance inviting her for a cup of coffee or an ice cream, or he would ask for her phone number and if she was up for a date later that week.*

*A little later, I had the opportunity to see Matz putting this script into action. We were walking on Union Square and chatting when he all of sudden ran off. He sped down the stairs, ran across the road and jumped in front of a woman in a black dress. I went over to the top of the stairs to have a look. Matz faced the woman, but I was too far away to see their facial expressions. The conversation lasted for a few minutes at the most, and then he returned.*

*The interaction had allegedly gone 'extremely well', and she had been into him. I inquired about what they had spoken about. After Matz jumped in front of her, he had said: 'I really love that you are dressed completely in black. It really suits my style. Since I am all dressed in black I just had to talk to you'. Allegedly, it worked, she smiled, and Matz inquired if she was a native of San Francisco. She was, but at this moment she was unsure if she would stay in the city. She had just sold her condominium.*

*'Aha, you are homeless', Matz had said. 'You know, I usually don't date homeless people, but for you I might make an exception'. The woman had laughed about this and touched his arm.*

*According to Matz, these were signs that she was into him. In the following conversation, Matz had continued to tease her lightheartedly, and she had laughed. Reflecting upon this, Matz said that this showed she 'was really into me'. He had asked her number and suggested meeting for coffee any time soon. She apparently happily concurred.*

*After this meeting, they had texted back and forth, and she welcomed his date suggestions. Matz proposed going for a drink in the Lower Haight, a neighborhood close to his house, which he suggested on purpose. It would make it easier to end the night at his apartment. She did not know the area at all and asked whether she could park her car. Matz suggested a spot very close to his apartment, again so the logistics at the end of the evening would be in his favor.*

*He met her on a Wednesday evening on the pavement outside his home and suggested going for a coffee at a place nearby. Again, Matz mentioned that he had thought about the specifics of this location. It was a bright and busy café, with lots of windows, creating an atmosphere that would not feel threatening to her. They got a cup of tea and sat down. Matz prided himself on his 'game' that evening, and everything he did allegedly 'worked'. He was keen on establishing physical contact from the start. He, for instance, complimented her earrings and nonchalantly ran a hand through her hair. Later, when he needed the restroom, he got up and moved his hand over her hip. She did not react, which apparently was a good sign. Her fingernails were painted artistically with thermochromic polish, and they said 'yes' when warm 'no' when cold. 'It was great for kino', Matz said, referring in the argot of the 'game', referring to the inviting proclivity to touch, warm and sooth such hands. Matz reckoned that she did her nails for that purpose.*

*At this stage, they also played the question game, a routine that he enjoys. The game is very simple. You both take turns asking and answering questions that should be a little edgy. Answers need to be truthful, and the buildup is such that questions become progressively more sexual.*

*'What do you consider to be your best feature?' he asked. Later she asked him what his favorite part of the female body was. According to Matz, this was an excellent opportunity to complement her on her physique, by describing characteristics that could be applicable to her. She was a very slim woman.*

*'My favorite part is the waist', Matz said. He explained why he had said this: many women are allegedly insecure about their waists, so such a compliment could uplift her spirits. She asked him about his most embarrassing moment.*

*'An excellent question', Matz said. It prompted them to share vulnerable experiences through which they would connect emotionally.*

*After the tea, Matz suggested going to another venue, a swanky cocktail bar a few blocks away.*

*They went outside and walked a few blocks, and she crouched and was obviously cold. 'An invitation', Matz said, to put his arm around her and cuddle up. They got a drink at the bar, and the conversation at this stage 'flowed naturally', and the couple kissed. 'I am getting drunk', she said, 'I am a lightweight.' For Matz, this was a reason not to buy her another drink. He did not want her to be drunk; he wanted her to 'be with him'. Matz suggested going to his apartment.*

*'I am not going to have sex with you', she said.*

*'Of course not, I never sleep with girls on the first date', Matz responded, 'I can't believe you would even think that'. Using an understatement was considered a good strategy to take away reservations. She asked him if he was a serial killer.*

*'I kill randomly, not quite serial', he responded. Upon entering his apartment, Matz purposely gave her some space. It gave her the opportunity to check out the apartment and to become at ease. She looked around, had a look at the bookshelf and the drink-cabinet, then the fridge and asked whether he wanted a drink. This was supposedly a 'good sign', as it seemed that she felt at ease. Matz switched on the TV and played a series he often plays when taking dates home. They sat on the couch together, cuddled and watched the show. They made out, and at a certain stage he lifted her up and carried her to the bed. She seemed to close up, her body stiffening. Matz advanced nonetheless. He undressed her and went down on her. At a certain stage, Matz looked up.*

*'Do you want me to stop?' he asked. She did not, but it did not go further than that. Matz reckoned that not going all the way would win her trust and make her curious about another date.*

These markedly different vignettes show the wide range of sexual scripts enacted among 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area. Some of these encounters were, at first glance, similar to a typical hookup script on college campus, for instance Isaak's tale. Others adhered more to a modern-day dating script, such as Matz' experience, and those were by far the most common among my informants. Many sexual scripts dithered between these two examples. A nighttime meeting could be followed up by one or multiple dates, or a daytime meeting evolved into sex that same day. However, even the one-day-stands were not all that casual. Many rites, techniques and tactics of the 'game' accomplished something not quite like casual sex.

## RATING AND DATING

The dating and hookup scripts have specific rituals. A number of the rituals of the hookup script were described in the previous chapter, including the 'audience games', the excessive drinking, the public enactment of sexual acts, and especially the rites to curb emotional intimacy. The sexual scripts of practitioners of the 'game' also had specific rituals, which will be delineated in the following sections.

Both the hookup and dating scripts have a 'screening protocol' in which interlocutors gauge the others' desirability and their potential as a viable match. However, the nature of these protocols differs between the two scripts. Within hookup culture, erotic prestige is determined by appearance, group membership and one's performance in the 'audience games'. A number of scholars, for instance, note that especially male athletes and men of high-ranking fraternities have high status

in the sexual economy on college (Bogle, 2008:61; Wade, 2017:36). As a young female student in Wade's (2017) research states: 'Frat stars and athletes – those are the only ones that matter. I mean, honestly' (2017:36). Relative to hooking up, contemporary dating entails a different evaluation of attractiveness. A broader set of social, physical and psychological criteria beckon attractiveness within contemporary dating; emotional and communicative qualities become more important, as well as character traits, socio-economic status, ambition, and one's worldview. The script of contemporary dating comprises a screening protocol, where interlocutors flag and gauge social status markers, personality traits, and tastes and preferences. Many of the rituals that players of the 'game' enacted were primed towards this screening protocol of status and attractiveness within contemporary dating.

Within the ethos of the 'game', attraction is something that can be gained and lost within interactions. Attraction can be won by men through performances that signal hyper-masculine character traits, such as dominance, stoicism, confidence, persistence, straightforwardness; this can also be achieved with softer qualities, such as discreteness, humor and emotional expressiveness; additionally, attraction forms through signaling socio-economic status. Performances that contrast these markers result in a loss of desirability. Within the 'game', such male performances that heighten attractiveness are *demonstrations of higher value*, or *DHVs*. There is an overwhelmingly large agreement among 'game' practitioners about these qualities; unsurprisingly, playing the 'game' often entails performing these qualities within interactions.

The most important element for generating attraction within interactions with women in the 'game' was the ability to make her laugh. Banter and lighthearted horseplay were emphasized as means for establishing attraction. Players often responded playfully to typical screening questions that are customary within interactions between strangers in urban erotic contact zones.

*For typical questions, [like] age? What you do? Where [do] you live? I just give stupid bullshit. Where do you work? Well I'm a ninja, so we meet on secret undisclosed locations and if you're late they will kill you, you know what I mean? Yeah, I'm a pirate, but on vacation right know. We look for gold, it's pretty awesome. [I would ask her] What do you do? Wait, you are a garbage man, aren't you? I could smell it (John).*

'Game' practitioners emphasized the need to break away from the typical interactions that patrons usually have in their nightlife to distinguish themselves from the majority who are predictable and dull. Humor is what could set one apart from other men in the sexual arena of the urban nightlife.

*I often went to the financial district and there I competed with wealthy men. And these guys would talk about how much money they were making and I would tease them a little in a conversation with a girl. They would be like 'what do you do for a living?' And I was like 'Well I'm homeless, I dumpster dive for a living and then sell that stuff. You want to come to my dumpster in a little?' And I was wearing a good suit, it was more about making fun of them, where these guys just wanted to use their money to get in her pants, I would rub it in and use it against them (John).*

The 'game' was a competition that was not only played between players, but also between insiders and outsiders, in which sexual relations with women were at stake. Within the 'game', status distinctions were made on the basis of an ostentatious display of heterosexual prowess, and the ability to banter flirtatiously with interlocutors was a defining skill that set players apart from unskilled in- and outsiders. A man's ability to 'make her laugh' in the 'game' made him more attractive to women than his socio-economic status or appearance.

Jokes and banter were especially enacted in the initial stages of a 'pickup'. In the logic of the 'game', a 'pickup' developed through stages. In the initial phase, mutual physical attraction emerged, and in a later stage, there was a buildup of emotional and physical intimacy. Since humor generated attraction, it was especially relevant in the introductory phase of a flirtatious interaction, but this did not mean that humorous performances were confined to the initial stages. Throughout the encounter, these gambits were enacted, but they were slightly more pronounced in the introductory phase.

Flirtatious banter, storytelling, jokes, games and dances could all be performed to 'make her laugh'. John explained, 'I dance like a complete idiot and have an awesome time dancing like an idiot. I'll do the running man, the sprinkler, the shopping cart'. Smartphone messages were another potentially effective tool for introducing levity into the interaction. Jared exemplifies this with an example that he accompanies with the image below:

*Here is a really common one I sent. I say 'Hey, I was catching up on Disney films with my nephews, but I am not so sure about Disney anymore' [laughing]. And the funny thing was [...] and the girls would always respond in the same way. They would just say 'Oh, my god, like hahaha' and they would either say, 'Look, he's reaching in the bag for more'. [...] Either they or I would say it. And the funny thing is that I would always ask them, 'What do you think he's reaching in the bag for?' And they always responded in the exact same way. 'A big black dildo' [laughs].*



Figure 1: Still used by Jared in smartphone communication. The source of the original still is unknown.

Banter often took the form of flirtatious play, remarks with a ‘double entendre’, expressions and performances with ambiguous meaning that insinuated a potential future enactment of a sexual script without immediately acting upon it. Tavory (2009) conceptualizes flirtation as the liminal phase between two interactional frames, that of the established relationship –with acquaintances or colleagues- and that of lovers. Flirtation is about enacting behavioral cues of both interactional frames somewhat simultaneously, while never fully actualizing the transition to lovers.

*[...] Flirtation can be seen as a dual interaction occurring at the same time: one which is past-present orientated, and the other future-present orientated, where practices from the potential future are incorporated into the present’ (Tavory, 2009:67).*

This, however, misses the essence of flirtatious banter within the ‘game’. It is not about momentarily enacting cues of a ‘lovers frame’ but is an effort to awaken desires through simultaneously suggesting and denying a potential enactment of a sexual script. This can be elucidated by a distinction between romantic and sexual

flirtation. Tavory (2009) analyzes romantic flirtation. This hints at a potential future relationship as lovers by momentarily enacting cues of a lover's frame; in contrast, sexual flirtation is the suggestion of a potential sexual encounter. Flirtatious banter within the 'game' is sexual and resembles what Simmel calls the 'alternation or simultaneity of accommodation and denial' (1985[1911]:134). Within the argot of the 'game', this double entendre of flirtation is described as *push-pull* or *dual direction*, implying the insinuation of a potential future sexual relationship, alongside the rejection of this future scenario.

The double entendre within the 'game' took two distinct forms. The first entailed an ambiguous expression of sexual interest, while simultaneously overtly denying this. The second was an explicit insinuation of a forthcoming sexual encounter, while at the same time expressing doubts about the likelihood of such a scenario. The first form had the structure of 'I might want and I don't want', which could be expressed through words, gestures and gazes and often entailed a rather complex performance of behavioral cues. This complexity revealed itself in experiences of 'game' practitioners with *negs*, teasing remarks, such as comments like: 'Nice nails, are they real?' or 'Those are like really great shoes, that's something my mom would wear' (John). *Negs* have a negative connotation, mainly because, in the logic of the 'game' these interactional gambits work by momentarily lowering a woman's self-esteem and setting the player apart from all other men who compliment her looks. As a result, women become interested because for once a man is not talking to her because of her appearance. Most neophytes of the 'game' started from this theory and began interactions by insulting a female interlocutor. Competent players, however, did not insult their flirt. Their *negs* were accompanied by subtle expressions of sexual interest, through gazes, body language and gestures. Through this double entendre, *negs* could be a form of flirting; however, most players of the 'game' lacked the cultural competences to make this effective.

A far more common mode of flirtation was the second form. This entailed an explicit insinuation of a forthcoming sexual script and a simultaneous expression of doubt about its future enactment. These expressions often had a structure of 'I want, but you don't'.

*I'll try to kiss her right then and when she turns her cheek, I'll be like 'Oh, no you rejected me. Now I'm sad', said with irony.*

*'I don't kiss boys on the first date' (a woman's voice).*

*'No, it's okay I'm understanding it. You are rejecting me. It hurts my feelings. I'll go to the bathroom and cry for a bit', again said with irony (John).*

This form of flirting was less often misunderstood by interlocutors. It also entailed a simultaneous duality of interest and denial, but the latter was framed within self-effacing statements that questioned one's potential, ability or interest to enact a sexual script.

A variation of the second form of flirtation, were statements structured as 'You want, but I don't'. Here, the duality of interest and denial was expressed through insinuating that she wanted to enact a sexual script, while he withheld it. This form of flirtatious banter was often enacted as a role-play, in which the woman was discursively positioned as the desiring subject and the man as the desired object.

*When I go to a bar and talk to a girl, she's the prize, and I want to get in her pants. When I frame switch, I'll be the prize, and she needs to flirt with me. And how I do that is, when she's laughing at my jokes, I say: 'You think I'm funny, you're already thinking about taking me home, aren't you?' And she'll be like, 'No', and then I accuse her of lying [...] And then I [...] say 'Oh my God, you are totally thinking about fucking me right now'. And she'll be like 'No, no', and I'll be like 'Yeah, the damage is done (said teasingly). You're thinking of me as a sausage with feet'. And I'll turn to her friend and say, 'You are thinking about it as well, aren't you? You're about to shove your hands in my pants'. And then we've initiated this super-sexual conversation, and I can give her little hugs, and say 'You're thinking about it, but I'm not gonna give it to you, yet' (John).*

As Simmel (1984)[1911] argues, flirtation can awaken powerful desires, through insinuating an enactment of a sexual script while at the same time denying it as a potential future scenario. Such is the structure of the imposed role-play. It entailed a constant framing of the female target as the sexual aggressor and desiring subject, while the man is presented as the prey of her yearning. When enacted successfully, this fueled a highly sexual stimulus between interlocutors.

Besides humor and the ability to banter flirtatiously, a man's sexual appeal was allegedly also determined by his *body language*, the way in which he held his body to display an ideal of *alphaness*. *Alpha* were bodies that took up space, walked wide, chest up, stood up straight, sat with legs apart and talked with a deep and loud voice. Coaches often tried to teach neophytes the 'techniques of the body' (Mauss, 1973[1935]) of the *alpha* ideal. This resulted in rather comical situations of men instructing other men how to hold their bodies in order to be *alpha*. I made the following observations during a commercial 'pickup' instruction:

Verron asked the attentive audience of neophytes for a volunteer. A man, black hair, leather jacket, rose his hand. Verron would play, in his words, 'a bitchy girl', and the volunteer was asked to make a move. The volunteer stepped from the picket line of onlookers. 'Relax', Verron said. The guinea pig indeed looked rather cramped. He held his arms besides his body, but not loosely. It looked as if his muscles were all tensed up, his arms, his back and his neck all looked cramped and tightened. The volunteer's voice sounded similarly restricted and very nasal. Verron told him to relax and to 'look sexy'. The man readjusted his posture.

'Does that look sexy?' Verron asked rhetorically. The audience laughed. Then Verron illustrated a sexy posturing of the body. He held his head up straight and looked over his shoulder suggestively and relaxed his torso. That was the sexy look. The volunteer imitated the posture but could not completely match it. It remained a rather cramped copy of the Verron's posture. He said a few lines, and then Verron cut him short and suggested that we all would practice our 'body language'.

Being *alpha* not only resonated in the posturing of the body, but also within the timbre of voices. Players tried to talk in deep voices, speaking loudly and clearly and pacing their words.

*Do you know Dexter, the television series? He speaks in the right tonality, it's almost always if he's yelling. What we teach is that you want an emphasis on the first part of the speech act. Most guys raise their voice in the end of the sentence. We teach guys to do that at the beginning of every sentence (Dylan).*

*Alpha* not only meant a particular bodily disposition, but it also entailed assertiveness, straightforwardness and dominance within interactions. It involved explicitly stating what one thought and what one wanted and directing the interaction towards that goal. Much of the acts while playing the field were informed by this imperative. *Alpha*, within the 'game', entailed expressing a clear sexual interest in flirts, '[...] being *alpha* enough to say "you're fucking hot"' (Dylan). And *alphaness* meant that one was 'the harbinger of the interaction' (John), that one initiated the flirtatious interaction and directed the interactions towards a sexual scenario.

*It's also leading to a direction that I want it to go into. It doesn't mean that I have a disregard for what she desires, it's just like, I'm not asking her for much input on stuff. Like, what you wanna do? [...] I'm in a very leading role, very physical, very forward, especially in 'pickup' you have to be leading (Jared).*

*Alpha* also meant displaying dominance over other men and women. When bystanders, intentionally or unintentionally, interfered with the 'pickup' attempt, players tried to establish dominance over the situation. This was achieved, for instance, by outcompeting them with wit, by persisting the 'pickup' attempt despite interruptions, or by physically moving the interaction and the interlocutors to another place in the venue.

Performing *alphaness* also entailed a form of stoicism, meaning that one should not be disturbed when a woman rejected one's advances, or when unforeseen forces interrupted with one's 'pickup' goals. In the wordings of practitioners, *alpha* entailed an unshakable upbeat emotional state. 'Well, he (competent player) should be completely rooted and unshakable in his presence, so the girl can throw things at him and he doesn't really flinch much' (Jared). *Neediness*, in the argot of the 'game', was the antonym of the cherished centered stoicism of players. *Neediness* entailed an emotional investment within interactions and relations, suggesting that one's mood and confidence depended on the reactions of flirts.

*It's hard for me to say when behavior is needy. It depends on their motives and their minds for action in a way. When a guy has neediness over a date [...], when a woman ends up texting: [...] 'Hey, I have a really bad day at work and it's this and this and this, so I might need to reschedule for tomorrow'. But when his day is completely shocked from that point, I would say that that guy is in a state where he lives a pretty needy life. Where his happiness doesn't depend on himself, but on other people's reaction to him. But also in the opposite way, when he gets really stocked on validation from a female, like he weighs everything on this one date and when he gets it, he gets shot out (Jared).*

Playing the 'game' for most practitioners entailed an effort to overcome *neediness* within their interactions with women and reach a state of unshaken emotional centeredness. This was seen as a quality that raised one's attractiveness to women in the sexual arena. 'When that neediness drops away women want to be around you so much more' (Jared).

Being *alpha* also meant performing an upbeat, energetic, social and charismatic persona within the interaction order. According to the 'game', spaces and their patrons, for instance bars and clubs, were stratified on the basis of erotic prestige. This was not solely determined by appearance, but primarily, at least for men, on social qualities, for instance, the ability to animate people, to captivate them through stories and convivial conversations, to make them laugh and think and to entertain them. The erotic elites were the 'sociability stars' of the venue, the centers of attention, the popular bunch (Collins, 2004:252-254).

*We passed a bar on Geary. It seemed reasonably crowded inside. Matz suggested doing some 'warm-up approaches'. We went inside and I scanned the room for potential people to talk too. Matz called my attention. 'You shouldn't be looking around that obvious', he said. He explained, a man of value would enjoy himself and be little concerned with who is in the bar and who is not. We should instead behave as if we were engaged in lively interaction and were having fun and never look around silently at how other people interact.*

Playing the 'game' was about performing this charismatic and social role within the interaction order. When one or a group of players entered a venue, they would often pump themselves up and transition from a low-key mundane interaction to an ostentatious, purposefully enacted energetic engagement. They would walk through the crowd and high five each other and perform enthusiastic greetings, dance animatedly, and always playact their engagement in sparkling interactions, even when this was a facade. 'Game' practitioners often pretended to be the 'sociability stars' of the venue, often with success, even if minutes before their vibe was low-key and their interactions dull.

Besides humor, banter and *alpha*, popularity, or *social proof* in the argot of players, within the sexual arena was an important determinant of attraction within the 'game'. *Social proof* was embodied by popular conversationalists with many friends and acquaintances, especially people of high erotic prestige. This explained why many players went out in groups. Furthermore, even when they went out alone, practitioners tried to foster the impression that they were always engaged in animated and exciting conversation and that they knew many patrons in the venue. In a meetup of players, one man called Greg explained how he demonstrated *social proof* when playing the 'game' solo.

*'Going to bars alone is weird, people find it creepy,' Joshua said. Greg mentioned that he had done this a lot in the past. In France, where Greg was born and raised, they had an expression that translated as 'going out with your balls and your knife'. This meant that one went out alone to 'pickup' women. According to Greg, it was all about 'confidence building' in the venue. Greg would enter the bar and immediately talk with some people near the entrance, men and women alike. Then, he would slowly work his way through the bar, meeting and talking to others. When he felt he had built his confidence and established a 'safe base' of social contacts in the bar, people he could return to, he would 'game' the women in the venue that he wanted to 'pickup'.*

When going out solo, ‘game’ practitioners would never tell other patrons that they were alone. When asked about it, they were always out with ‘friends’. When interlocutors asked where these friends were, a player could point to people that he had previously befriended in the bar, or he could say that the friends had just gone to another venue.

It also mattered with whom one socialized in the public arena. Popular individuals or people of high social status were preferred. This meant that players of the ‘game’ tried to associate with people with erotic prestige, often the group of pretty and seemingly successful people that seemed to have the most fun. A common strategy was to befriend this group and use this as a ‘safe base’ from where one would venture to flirt with targeted women. Being in the presence of people with high socio-economic status could also be utilized as a form of *social proof*. During fieldwork, some players introduced me as the ‘professor in social-psychology’. Initially, I corrected them saying that I was a PhD-student in sociology, but this was not appreciated. Being out in the field with a ‘professor’ whose field was akin to a supposed interest of women offered much more *social proof*. When people of high socio-economic standing or of high popularity were not in one’s immediate presence, one could always tacitly mention that these individuals were friends or acquaintances. ‘I could tell a cool a story that involves Tom Cruise. You do these displays through secondary means [...] I would have a bunch a photo’s in my phone where one would be of Tom Cruise’ (John).

On dates, ‘game’ practitioners also aimed to foster the impression that they were extremely social men who had many friends. A common tactic was to plan dates in locations where one was sure to run into people that one knew and liked, who would be able to give the player some *social proof*. Jared, for instance, explained how he demonstrated *social proof* on a date.

*My dates are really casual. I would just have them come over and then we do this or do that. I would go to a grocery store, or I would go to a coffee shop and the point of going to a place [like this] was to make her feel comfortable around me and also, I would just be extremely social. So, I would talk to any single cashier. I would just be flirty and fun with people, just to set the parameters of this is how it’s going to be with me.’ [...] and then I would take them to a lot of different venues and different places, and the girl would see that a lot of people are excited to see me. So, I would always take them to a place where I knew I would be running into people. I just know that if I go to certain clubs or go to certain restaurants, I would run into people I know (Jared).*

Other players would plan their dates in venues where they knew the staff and held friendly relations with them. Being warmly greeted by waitresses, bar staff and club managers was of course a *demonstration of higher value*.

In the logic of the 'game', one's popularity as a hookup or dating partner determines one's attractiveness to women, especially if one's prior partners were also popular. This parallels the dating and rating dynamic described by Waller (1937) in which one's status among peers is determined by one's popularity as a date. Within the 'game', practitioners aimed to show the women of their liking that they have been sought after partners in the sexual economy. Within the argot of the 'game', this is referred to as *preselection*. This could be signaled through implicit references to popular women that wanted to date them. Alternatively, it could be communicated through images, for example on social media, which is why many players had carefully crafted Facebook profiles that depicted them with a variety of attractive women. Smartphones and the images stored on these could be other tools to communicate one's popularity within the sexual economy, hence a favorite 'pickup' ritual was to show a collection of photos to a targeted woman, of which some depicted him together with women perceived as beautiful. The principle of *preselection* was also the reason why some players carefully drew a lipstick mark on their cheek or neck, insinuating that they had recently been kissed. Additionally, *preselection* informed 'pickup' strategies within the nightlife. A common tactic to enhance one's erotic status in a bar or a club was to befriend women perceived as beautiful, then, together with these individuals, *pawns* in the argot of the 'game', maneuver towards a targeted woman to flirt with. *Wing-women*, women that assisted players in the 'game', were especially valued, because they communicated *preselection*. One of my informants, Mahesh, one time hired a female model to play the *wingwoman* role.

High socio-economic status was also seen as a *demonstration of higher value*, although explicitly flaunting this was not. 'Game' practitioners tried to communicate this tacitly, for instance through casually referring to the neighborhood one lived in or the company one worked for. A number of players that lived in expensive apartments within the city would ask a woman to meet them there for their date, from where they would go to different venues. This way she could see for herself that he was a man of high socio-economic status, without him referring to this in conversations. I met one player who had a large stash of dollar bills in his wallet. He was not rich, but this gave the impression that he had a considerable amount of spending money, which was precisely the impression he hoped to foster. Another player of the 'game' showed me his profile on a dating website. In his profile picture, he nonchalantly sat in his car, the BMW logo clearly visible on

the wheel, which, according to him, *demonstrated higher value*.

Additionally, performances that communicated a spontaneous, exciting and hedonistic lifestyle would allegedly foster female interest. The banalities of one's daily existence were downplayed within male-female interactions. A practitioner who worked as a software engineer told women that he professionally 'solved problems'. Both their artistic and entrepreneurial activities were *demonstrations of higher value*. Stories about 'risky' leisure activities, such as skydiving, racing and surfing were often told within the 'game'. Likewise, players often spoke about traveling and exciting and daring experiences upon these trips.

*An example of a story I used to tell in 'pickup' was about our bus in Tibet getting hit by a truck full of pigs. The bus driver started fighting with the other chauffeur, then the bus driver hit the guy with a rock, took his wallet and went off. Things you can integrate in your conversation is that you have access to wealth, that you're well-traveled, that you have famous friends, that you're involved in sports that are cool. It's the idea that through storytelling you show different aspects of your personality (John).*

Within the 'game', storytelling was a means for showing certain aspect of your identity. In particular, it was used to emphasize the aesthetic qualities of life, such as spontaneity, excitement, thrills, intellectual stimulation, arts, travel, food and other expressions of easily relatable passions. One could also emphasize these qualities through activities on a date or a 'pickup', for instance through visiting certain bars, gourmet ice-cream parlors, coffee shops, restaurants, galleries or architectural sights. Or, like Jared, one could create unexpected and memorable experiences that would foster a long-lasting impression on a significant other.

*I would take her to a high place, for instance, climb on a roof. There are always some roofs that you can access via climbing a street pole. Or it was the railroad crossing. You can actually climb up them really easy, sometimes it was trees, sometimes it was my roof, and I would make it an adventure. Where other guys would approach it and say 'Are you up for this?' or 'Are you not up for this? Nothing bad is going to happen.' I actually did the exact opposite. I would say, 'You are adventurous. This is something you would do. If you are not adventurous [then] this is a moment to become adventurous. This is you and we put it to the test now'. And the girl would be like 'Okay'. And I would be walking with her, and I would already have it in my mind to where we were going to climb up to. So, I wouldn't tell her that we were usually right next to it. So, I would take her for a walk, down the railroad tracks and then I*

would be [...] ‘Seriously, you are like that, like living adventures, like living wild, that is you’. And she would be ‘Yes’, and I say ‘You can always do more, you always want to live up to more’. And, she said ‘That is me’, and I say ‘Awesome’. Sometimes I would actually lift the girl up to my shoulder, and I would say, ‘Keep your eyes closed’. And I would tell them before I put them down, ‘Listen this is our moment, this is one of the moments I’ve been talking about’. I am a cheesy romantic guy too, I sat them down and keep their eyes closed and check it out. ‘You are on an adventure’ [...] and the girl would be ‘Okay’ and I say, ‘When you open your eyes, just follow me’. And most girls would, and they would open their eyes and start climbing up whatever it was, and I would say, ‘Go, go, go’, and most girls would. They would climb right up [...]. So, when they get up there they always say the same thing. ‘This is amazing. I have never come up here. I have never been up here before. I never thought about it, that is one of the things that is amazing’ (Jared).

Not only did ‘game’ practitioners try to express a broad range of character traits within their flirtatious interactions with women, they also tried to foster the impression that they were sincerely interested in their personalities. At times, this might have actually been the case, but at other times, it was predominantly instrumental. While these valuations of character and tastes and preferences might not be important in truly casual sex, it was central to the enacted scripts of players. In the argot of the ‘game’, *screening* entailed fishing for personal interests, tastes and character traits of one’s interlocutor. Questions, such as, ‘If you win the lottery what would you do?’ or, ‘Look, I got my private jet outside. We’re gonna go on a holiday for the next month and you can decide where we’re gonna go’ (John) offered an opportunity for interlocutors to express some of their personal interests, tastes and preferences. *Cold reads* were another interactional technique to prompt the interlocutor to talk about herself. These were assumptions about women that were based on her appearance and behavioral cues. From these cues, players attempted to gauge a woman’s interests, tastes, passions, apprehensions, or any single aspect of her identity one could think of. In the following interaction, one would disclose these and elaborate on which behavioral cues led to these assumptions. The ‘game’ emphasized a performance of a seemingly unrestrained curiosity within flirtatious interactions.

*I’ve a way to get myself in that state of this extreme curiosity. And from there I would ask myself kind of, where I was curious about the girl, and then I usually go over and say what is most on my mind about her. And I would make a statement. It could be like, ‘You have a lightness about you that seems that you’ve had an awesome day’ (Jared).*

Such statements would often prompt conversation about topics related to her interests and reveal aspects of her personality. Practitioners often followed up on such information with *qualification*, a communication strategy in which they explicitly acknowledged the traits and tastes they appreciated in their flirts. 'I'm gonna pull three things out of the girl that I really like and say that I enjoy those things about her' (John). Through *qualification*, players of the 'game' tried to foster the impression that 'you don't just want to be with her just to get your dick in' (John).

Within the 'screening protocol' of a contemporary dating script, interlocutors fish for and ostentatiously communicate a broad range of identity markers. Examples are: character traits, tastes, lifestyle preferences and socio-economic status. On the basis of these criteria, flirts decide whether they make a good match and whether they will date. The performances of players of the 'game' described within this section are tailored towards the screening protocol of contemporary dating. Why would practitioners go to such lengths to show all these identity markers to their flirts, if both parties expected just a hookup?

## RITUALS OF EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

A number of scholars emphasize that the hookup script is largely devoid of emotional intimacy, and quite a few rituals enacted within the script aim to curb the development of this experiential proximity (Bogle, 2008:165; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:144; Wade, 2017:41-43). In chapter two, I discussed a number of these strategies to restrict emotional intimacy within a hookup encounter. Very few players enacted rites to curb the development of experiential proximity with a flirt. On the contrary, many of the rituals enacted in the 'game' were intended to aid the development of emotional intimacy within the flirtatious interaction. This is another indicator that sexual encounters in the 'game' often did not abide to a hookup script.

One strategy enacted in nearly every 'pickup', during both the day and night, was to visit a number of different places in a relatively short period with a flirt, which players call *bouncing*. These places could be bars or nightclubs, or a restaurant or tourist site. If she was with friends, then the whole group was invited to come too, at least during the first location changes. On dates, practitioners used the same tactic; dates would ideally spread out over multiple sites that were carefully chosen. The first location should have a non-threatening atmosphere, a busy spot, light and open. 'I would go to a grocery store, or I would go to a coffee shop, and the point of going to a place [like this] was to make her feel comfortable around me' (Jared). Consecutive locations could be venues with games, like pool or foosball, or

shops, cafes or restaurants. At some stage, they would transition to a more intimate location, such as a bar with dimmed lighting and private seating, and eventually one's home. Dates would seldom happen at one location. 'Even if she would be just coming over, I would be like "Hey, I am hungry. Do you want to get a bite to eat?" [...] Always something else would come up' (Jared). *Bouncing* purportedly created a sense of comfort between partners, by visiting numerous places in a relatively short time period and undertaking different activities. This could lead to the impression that both had experienced quite a few things together, and they got to know each other quite well in such a small amount of time. *Bouncing* stretched the subjective experience of time.

Within flirtatious interactions, both on dates and on nighttime 'pickups', players of the 'game' tried to *build comfort*, meaning to win the trust of their special other and to make her feel at ease. One way to do this was by talking and sharing stories about things that related to her interests.

*The main thing is that it's not about me but about her. What I try to do is elicit values from her, like if she likes rock climbing I say I love rock climbing. I talk about the stuff that she's really enthusiastic about, and then I want to connect to that specifically (John).*

Likewise, practitioners often shared details of their life stories, especially those that *demonstrated higher value*. They encouraged their flirt to inquire about life episodes, convictions, tastes and preferences that she wanted to know more about. 'I want you to ask me anything that you like, there is no walking out of here with a wish you would have asked something you didn't' (Jared).

*Seeding* was another ritual that fostered emotional intimacy within interactions. This involved discussing the prospects of future activities that could be undertaken together. *To seed* was to invitingly describe splendid itineraries, alluring activities and marvelous places. By talking about these things, interlocutors would allegedly become interested and enthusiastic about visiting and undertaking these things together.

*So, what you can do is [say] 'Hey, have you ever been to this bar in the Castro? It is so much fun. Have you been? Oh my God, the staff there is fucking amazing. They make this super awesome drink. We should totally go there. I love the place, it has a cool vibe. Gay guys always buy me drinks and hit on me, it's awesome'. Oversell the shit out of it, make it the most amazing thing she has ever seen in her whole life. If you go to a coffee place, tell her it's the best. They make like the best hot chocolate, and then you take her to Starbucks, it doesn't matter. You just want to oversell the shit out of whatever you want her to do (John).*

*Seeding* was a prelude to a date-proposition. After finding an activity of mutual interest and creating enthusiasm for undertaking this together, a date could be proposed and contact details exchanged.

Games were other interactional gambits that could aid an intimate connection between interlocutors. Two games that were often played were the role-play game and the questions game. In the former, practitioners formulated an imaginary scenario, including roles and a synopsis, and encouraged the other to play into it. A clear example is what Jared called ‘the travelers’ game’.

*And in that wine bar we were playing the ‘travelers’ game’. So, let’s act as if we were not from here, let’s act as if we have never been here before, this is a different place. We are in Richmond, but we are not from here. So, we pretended to be a couple from LA. [...] So we ran into this wine bar and a woman said, ‘You guys are not from here. Where are you from? That’s when we decided LA, and she said, ‘Oh yeah, which part? And we said, ‘The West” and she said, ‘oh, that is cool’. [...] And she said, ‘How did you guys meet? I said, ‘We met at this great little restaurant called The Shoulder. I think it is because of the shoulder cut or something they specialize in. And Elena [current girlfriend] was laughing and I said, ‘It was an interesting time us meeting there’. And the woman asked ‘What is the story?’ And I said, ‘You know what? I can’t tell it well. [...] I mean I can tell it, but I think she [Elena] can even tell it better’. I just throw it on her [laughs]. I say, ‘Tell the story, and then the girls always look at me like ‘What am I going to say?’ [laughs] Elena did a really good job and they bought it all. [...] I have had a girl resisting. She said ‘No, he will tell it better’. And then I make the story worse [...] if you make the story even worse, like ‘We were sitting there and this girl came up to talk to her and we both thought that this chick was a lesbian. And I am not sure if she has a problem with lesbians, or if she has a problem with gay people, but it was how she came across in that moment’. You can say anything. It’s just about making the situation worse, where the girl is like ‘Shut the fuck up.’ [...] and then you can say ‘Okay, I think you can tell it better’ [laughs] (Jared).*

In line with Huizinga’s classic formulation, games like these established a short-lived suspension of everyday reality. The usual norms and roles were momentarily discarded. These games had their own rules and regulations to which players abided and which were temporary and often location specific (Huizinga, 1977[1938]:29). Games allowed for a space in which actors could transgress formalities and reduce social and emotional distance.

Another game frequently enacted by practitioners was the ‘questions game’.

This game entailed taking turns in asking and answering questions and offered an opportunity to explore details of each other's biographies and decisive traits of their personalities.

*In this game, I would ask a lot of questions that are very revealing to the girl's personality. So, I would ask questions like: 'If I was to talk to your family, what would they say is, say if the girls name is Jessica, what would they say is so Jessica? When I would be sitting with your family members and they would trust me, what would they continuously say? This story that was so her, that is just who she is' (Jared).*

Additionally, the 'questions game' allowed for a rupture of social conventions. It was an opportunity to sexualize the interaction, to talk about sexual experiences, about fantasies and desires. As the game progressed, more explicitly sexual and intimate questions were asked. Conversations about defining life experiences were followed up with questions like: What 'is the naughtiest thing you have ever done?' and 'What do you consider to be your most outstanding feature?' (Matz), and 'What is a sexual fantasy of yours?' (Mahesh). These probes would establish a highly sexual 'definition of the situation'. By talking about these topics, interlocutors would allegedly galvanize their sexual fantasies and desires and viscerally experience these sensations.

## RITUALS OF SEXUALIZATION

A sensuous and physical initiation of contact leaves little room for ambiguity. A practice like grinding from the get-go establishes a clear 'definition of the situation'; this encounter will be flirtatious and sexual. Within the college hookup scene, grinding is an often-enacted initiation ritual (Ronen, 2010; Wade, 2017:31-38). Not all college hookups start like this, but a high degree of physical intimacy is often present from the start. The sexual encounters of players of the 'game' often did not start with much bodily contact, but instead had a gradual intensification of physical intimacy. Numerous rites were intended to facilitate this gradual buildup of touch. The fact that these rituals of sexual escalation were common within the 'game' indicates that sexual norms in the urban erotic contact zone precluded a quick escalation of physical intimacy. Outside of the campus arena, the most common sexual script had a gradual buildup of physical intimacy that coincided with a progressive intensification of emotional intimacy.

Most of the sexual encounters of 'game' practitioners did not start with an unambiguous sexual 'definition of the situation'. Most started as seemingly conviv-

ial conversations, and the double entendre enacted within it left much room for uncertainty about the intentions of their interlocutors and the likelihood that the interaction would evolve into a sexual encounter. This uncertainty combined with the discourse of the 'game', which naturalized men's desire for casual sex but not women's, resulted in practices through which players aimed to influence their flirts' desires for and compliance with a sexual encounter. *Framing* was this kind of interactional technique. This was a speech act in which practitioners hypothesized about personality traits of their flirt, traits attributed to sexual adventurism, while simultaneously encouraging her to accept these suggested characteristics.

*And one of the ways you set this up is that you always make them set the frame. [...] If I would introduce you to somebody and I would say 'This guy is the funniest guy in the world', a lot of people would respond with 'I am really not that funny'. The reason being is 'I don't think I'll be able to live up to this'. [...] You have to get them to agree with it and let them step into it. [...] I always give them an opportunity of not believing it, but then I always encourage them to believe it. So, it's basically like, 'You seem like a risk-taker and that is why I talk to you. You are a cool chick'. And [...] after I set the frame, I would say, 'I can be totally wrong, but I just think this about you'. And, the girls would typically move into the direction of convincing you that that is true. Or she would say, 'I don't know this is really true'. [...] I just want that trait to get out of them. So, I would encourage them to believe it. So, I would say, 'You are a spontaneous person, I feel that about you'. And if they say either 'No, I'm really not that spontaneous', [...] I would say, 'You are not spontaneous. You are talking to me now; to me that is spontaneous, most people are seriously frightened to talk to strangers'. And the girl would then usually say, 'That is true'. And as a last resort, I would be like, 'You know what? I think that everybody could be spontaneous. Maybe they are not, but everybody wants to be more spontaneous'. So, sooner or later, the girl would be like, 'Yes, that is totally me' (Jared).*

Invoked frames nearly always dealt with 'rebellious' personality traits, qualities of people that were willing to break social conventions. 'I used "risk taker", another one is "spontaneous"' (Jared). Other frames used were 'open-minded' and 'adventurism'. Invoking these frames and encouraging a flirt to accept these as adequate descriptions of her personality would allegedly result in behavior in the subsequent interaction in correspondence with these traits. 'Game' practitioners associated a casual sexual encounter with rebellious women, who were willing to break social conventions. They learned from experience that many of their flirts did not evolve into sex and hence saw casual sexual encounters, and the women engaging in these, as norm breaking.

Most of the sexual scenarios enacted within the 'game' had a relatively slow progression of physical intimacy, despite the aim to quickly become sexual. The dogma within the 'game' was to push until one could push no further, withhold, reverse and try again. 'In a general interaction, I can continuously escalate till she feels very uncomfortable. If she pulls away, it is time to tune it down. I was fan of guys trying to push that envelope as much as they can' (John). This was the common strategy from the moment of first contact. The traffic light was a prevalent metaphor used to describe the progression of sexualized touching.

*Matz narrated about a technique he used for establishing physical contact with a woman. If she was wearing a ring, like many of his dates did, he made a trivial comment about it. He would take her hand and look at the thing carefully. She could allegedly give you three different types of signals. Pulling her hand back vehemently was a 'red light', in which case he had to wait, 'build some more comfort' and try again. Holding her hand in his, but not giving him any signs of approval was a 'yellow light'. This meant that he could progress with care. Leaving her hand in his, while she would show him other rings was a 'green light'. In that case, he could 'physically escalate' faster. When she did not have jewelry on her hands, but in her ears, he would use a similar technique. He would look at her earrings and use his hand to soothe them. Her reactions could be classified similarly. When she was not wearing any jewelry, he would do a similar thing to her hair.*

This intensification, withdrawing and reengagement of physical contact happened throughout the interaction, from first contact until sex. However, despite the constant efforts to quickly progress sexually, most sexual encounters did not. This was especially the case in the progression from sensuous touching to sexual activities, whether these included manual or oral stimulation or penetration, which women often resisted. 'Game' practitioners even had an expression for such contested advances, *LMR* or *last-minute resistance*. Again, the common tactic was to push, holdback, and reinitiate. Most players had little regard for sexual consent and frowned upon recent affirmative consent laws in California, which demand that partners unambiguously agree upon engaging in sexual practices. In their view, playful female resistance was part of the most commonly enacted sexual script.

Within the party and hookup scene on campus, light sexual activity enacted in public appears to be relatively common. While at the student parties I visited the number of couples that hooked up and the sexual activity they engaged in publically was rather light, at other campuses, student parties seem to be a lot more sexual. A college student in Wade (2017) mentioned that at college parties, one can look

'any random direction and see people hooking up' (2017:31). Furthermore, it is 'a common thing' for students at parties to engage in light sexual activities, such as manual stimulation (Wade, 2017:38). Within the urban erotic contact zone 'game' practitioners operated in, this was not the norm. Sexual activity, on occasion, happened in bars, cafes, restaurant and clubs, but this was the exception rather than the rule. Etiquettes precluded the public displays of heavier sexual behaviors in such settings. Within flirtatious and sexualized interactions, practitioners often opted for *isolation*, players' argot for moving to a secluded spot within a public setting, like a comfortable bench in a dimly lit spot or a secluded corner in or outside a venue. When they met at night in a bar or club, *isolation* often entailed moving away from their friend groups. Outside of the scrutinizing gazes of companions, women allegedly felt less inhibited to become physical and sexual. On dates, *isolation* often implied moving to a secluded spot where other patrons paid little attention to the couple. Such practices were common in the 'game' because within urban erotic contact zones, public sexual activity is not the norm.

A sexual encounter nearly always entailed a transition from a public to a private location. 'Logistics' were key within the 'game'. The transfer from public to private needed to be smooth and swift. In contrast, a transition with many interruptions and moments of deliberation about where to go next, would allegedly rupture the sexual tension between a couple and increase the likelihood of second thoughts. 'Game' practitioners often lived close to the urban nightlife, so that transfers, by taxi or foot, would not take long. On many instances, the degree of sexual activity enacted in a public setting was rather light. It might have included a mere kiss or a sensuous dance, and the 'definition of the situation' might be such that sex at home was not a self-evident progression from the meeting. In such instances, a common enacted ritual was to formulate an alibi, by talking about objects and activities at home that did not relate to sex and that one was passionate about and desperately needed to show one's flirt.

*The best way to do this is [to] tell the girl that she must see/do/play with your... fill in the blank. Doesn't matter what it is, it is THE COOLEST FUCKING THING ON THE PLANET!!! They have to see that thing...IT SO AWESOME. Talk like it's the second coming of Jesus and they'll want to roll (John).*

During the transfer, it was common for players to discuss topics unrelated to sex and without innuendo. Within the discourse of the 'game', women would often need to be seduced, presuming that women did not want casual sex as much as men. Incessant talking aimed to 'occupy' her mind and thwart the development

of 'second thoughts'. At home, a prevalent ritual was to momentarily release the pressure, to turn the television on, to ask her to play some music, or to make her a drink, giving her time to acclimatize and feel at ease there. From that point, the physical escalation loop would again be reinitiated, pushing, until one could push no further, reverting, reinstating until she finally gave in.

## CONCLUSION

The 'game' entailed a methodical pursuit of sexual adventures within urban erotic contact zones, such as bars, clubs, cafes, shopping malls and high streets. Players approached many women in rapid succession and tried to direct these interactions towards sexual encounters. Despite these adamant efforts of young men to find sexual adventures in urban erotic contact zones, they rarely succeeded. The vast majority of men that flocked towards 'seduction communities' did not find sex there, but amongst other things, primarily rejections. Even competent players did not have that many sexual partners, relative to the time and effort invested in the 'game'. Most 'played the field' numerous days a week, instigating a large number of flirtatious interactions in rapid succession, incomparable to most other sojourners in urban erotic contact zones. Sexual adventures with relative strangers within these zones of the city were a rarity. Outside of the college campus, casual sex did not happen that often.

Furthermore, the sexual encounters of 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area often abided by a contemporary dating script rather than a hookup. Even in the urban nightlife, despite its reputation for omnipresent one-night-stands, many sexual encounters followed a dating blueprint. A couple would meet in the bar, exchange numbers and go on a date in the following days or weeks. My estimation is that approximately half of the sexual encounters initiated by players in the urban nightlife of the Bay Area followed this scenario. Additionally, practitioners met most of their sexual partners during the daytime, in places like cafes, on high streets and in shopping malls. After the initial meeting in these spaces, the couple would go on a date, often in the days and weeks following this encounter. Outside of the campus arena, dating not hooking up, is the dominant sexual script of young heterosexual men and women.

Upon close scrutiny, the rituals enacted within the 'game' made the sexual encounters arising from them not so casual. An elaborate ranking and screening protocol was enacted in nearly all flirtatious interactions. Within the 'game', practitioners ostentatiously communicated a wide range of identity markers to their partners.

They aimed to present themselves as hyper-masculine subjects, energetic, social and humorous, who were popular within the erotic market place and successful, ambitious and adventurous. They fished for personality traits, tastes and preferences of their flirts to foster the impression that their interests were more than merely physical. Many of the rites, tactics and techniques enacted within the 'game' were primed to establish emotional intimacy between interlocutors, by sharing determining experiences of their life-biographies and through games and efforts to stretch the experiential dimension of time. These rites brought the interaction further and further away from a hookup. An inherent contradiction of the game was that players often aimed for a hookup but instead enacted rituals of a dating script.

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## 5

# CHANGES IN GENDER AND INTIMATE RELATIONS IN HONG KONG

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The shift from conventional dating to hooking up in college campus culture in the US occurred in the context of significant changes in gender relations. Continuous efforts to advance women's position in society, as well as enhanced career possibilities, have given young women unprecedented autonomy over their lives and bodies. Concomitantly, a stringent development imperative has amassed weight for young women and men alike, suggesting that they should put off commitments until later in life.

On the surface, Hong Kong experienced many similar changes in gender and intimate relations as seen in the United States, and youth grow up under similar socioeconomic conditions. Women's labor force participation ranks amongst the highest in the world in Hong Kong, and an increasingly large number of young, ambitious women gain access to tertiary education to the extent that women outnumber men in most colleges. At the same time, the age of marriage has risen dramatically, resulting in a prolonged period in which youth can experiment with sex, intimacy and relationships. Furthermore, the acceptance and prevalence of premarital sex among youth has risen dramatically in recent decades (Chow and Lum, 2008:21; TFPAHK, 2011:48), suggesting that youths' sexual norms and behavior increasingly diverge from adults'. Although social scientists have started to document changes in intimate relationships in East Asia (Davis and Friedman, 2014; Jackson et al., 2008), very little is known about the implications of these changes for youth sexual cultures in this region. Have dating and hooking up become part of the sexual repertoire of young adults in Hong Kong? And, how is sex connected to identity formation of youth? These questions will be empirically explored in the following chapters. First, a more thorough look is taken of the changes in gender and intimate relations in the city-state.

Hong Kong is a complex society, often described as a hybrid of 'east' meets 'west'. It has been a British crown colony for an extensive period, governed by a small colonial bureaucracy. At the turn of the century, the Chinese government took over

the rule of the city-state but left much of its bureaucratic infrastructure intact. It has seen an extraordinary rapid economic development, evolving into a complex and innovative service economy by the end of the 20th century. It has experienced an astonishing influx of people, mainly ethnically Han Chinese, who brought with them their own traditions and their own norms and values. As most local denizens will point out, Hong Kong is part of China, but it is not like other parts of China. It has a unique cultural history and socioeconomic development, while at the same time, it shares many cultural similarities with mainland China. In this chapter, I try to do justice to this complex intersection of history, culture and socioeconomic change, which has made Hong Kong into this unique melting pot.

## THE REGULATION OF SEX IN HONG KONG

When Chief Superintendent of British Trade Charles Eliot claimed Hong Kong Island in the name of Queen Victoria, in 1841, the isle was a backwater to the Chinese Empire, hosting a population of fewer than 7500 residents, predominantly fishermen and farmers (Tsang, 2004:16). Hong Kong became the entrepôt for British trade with China, and its success as a commercial hub attracted an array of migrants. These included Chinese laborers seeking employment in the colony, British businessmen hoping to exploit the opportunities of burgeoning Chinese-British trade, British middle-class men employed as cadres in the colonial government, Parsee traders from India, and Sikh and Punjabi regiments employed by the British state and stationed in the colony. Despite the settling of a variety of different ethnic groups, the population of Hong Kong maintained a rather homogenous ethnic composure. From its onset, Hong Kong's population consisted of mainly ethnically Han Chinese. For instance, at the end of the 19th century, the population of Hong Kong had grown to 221,400 people, of which 211,000 were Han Chinese (Tsang, 2004:27). In the 20th century, Hong Kong's population grew rapidly, attracting mainly migrants from mainland China, who sought economic opportunities in the city-state and were fleeing from the gulfs of social upheavals that washed over China throughout that era. In later periods, when Hong Kong was developing into a post-industrial society, another stream of migrants flowed into the city. This included young women from the Philippines and Indonesia, who were employed as domestic helpers. Hong Kong society today hosts a large variety of ethnic groups but remains a rather ethnically homogeneous society, with around 94% Chinese, 5.2% non-Chinese Asians and 0.8% Whites –of whom only a small fraction (10%) were born in the city (C&SD, 2011:13,40). While I by no

means want to disclaim the cultural diversity of Hong Kong, my main focus in this chapter is on gender and sexual changes among the dominant Chinese population. For studies on sex and gender relations of other ethnic groups in Hong Kong, I refer to the compelling work of, amongst others, Chang and McAllister Groves (2000); Constable (1997); Tang (2011).

As a result of its seizure by the British crown, Hong Kong became a commercial hub, first connecting trade flows from the British colonial empire and China and later as a manufacturing base, producing consumer goods for mainly western markets. Recently, it has emerged as a financial center, linking the savings and investments of China and the rest of the world. From its onset, the British colonial government was primarily interested in the commercial potentialities of Hong Kong. It focused on facilitating trade, governing the colony with a small bureaucracy, imposing low taxation, maintaining a rule of law, and retaining a policy of minimal interference towards society (Kong, 2011:96; Tsang, 2004:171-172). While many European and Anglo-Saxon nations developed a concept of citizenship as comprising political and social rights, citizenship in Hong Kong revolved around economic rights (Ho, 2004). The small indigenous population as well as the large number of migrants from mainland China were allowed to live in the crown colony and could participate on the free market; however, they were not granted political rights and could not count on the government for social welfare. This policy of minimal interference in society became the hallmark of colonial rule. The bureaucracy only reacted ad hoc to social challenges. For instance, the government started supplying social housing when it became apparent that refugees from mainland China were there to stay and after a massive fire in a shantytown rendered tens of thousands of people homeless. Similarly, educational provisions were extended largely in reaction to social upheavals in the city-state of the late sixties, with the aim of increasing support from the local population for the colonial government (Tsang, 2004:205).

The lack of social provisions by the colonial state meant that the people of Hong Kong looked towards informal kin networks for basic welfare needs, and material interests took precedence over all other concerns in the family (Lau, 1982: 68-71).

The family became the locus of material provisions and economic decisions, individual members contributed to the family income, resources were shared, property was owned collectively, and investments and business operations drew on family networks. Drawing on Foucault, Ong (1999) argues that governmentality and biopolitics within the context of Hong Kong happen predominantly within the family. She denotes this as 'family governmentality', 'the rational, normative practices that regulate healthy, productive, and successful bodies within the family and their deployment in economic activities for economic well-being' (1999:118). The

living arrangements in Hong Kong amplify the strength of this specific form of bio-politics. Land is particularly scarce within Hong Kong, and real estate prices range among the highest in the world. As a result, children continue to live in their parents' homes to a high age, often remaining after marriage, under the direct controlling gaze of parents.

At the same time that the political economic environment in Hong Kong gave rise to a bio-politics rooted within the family, patriarchy and Confucian as well as Christian discourses continued to structure and inform the specific practices of family governmentality. This is visible in the regulation of sexuality within the family. In Confucianism, the continuation of the family lineage is of utmost importance, and in the patrilineal kinship structure this is the responsibility of sons. This translates into what Kong (2004:43) calls the 'iron law' within Hong Kong Chinese families that obliges children, and especially sons, to get married and continue the bloodline of the family. At the same time, filial piety in Confucianism defines a good son and daughter as those who are obedient to parents (Kong, 2011:100), and particularly to the father, who in the patriarchal family structure is the undisputed head of the household.

These discourses and gender structures solidify the reproduction of heterosexuality within the family, as they render homosexuality as a potential threat to the family lineage. Kong (2011), drawing on Berry (2001), discusses homosexuality in Hong Kong, noting that 'the queer problem for the family is not so much about sexual behavior itself' but is about the formation of a sexual identity that jeopardizes the conventional roles in the family and its ability to reproduce itself (2011:107). Within Confucian discourses on sexuality, non-reproductive acts are not necessarily sinful. Sexuality in ancient China was formed in relation to power structures of class: 'the upper-class adult male, could sexually dominate social inferiors like his wife, second wife or concubines' as well as young male servants (Chou, 2001:30). At the same time, Christianity is a paramount force, and this informs discourses on sexuality in the Hong Kong. The city has many educational facilities with a Christian heritage (roughly 50%), and around 10% of the population belongs to a Christian denomination, while the percentage of Hong Kongese identifying as Christian is estimated at around 22% (HAB, 2016; HKTP, 2012:27). Christian discourses about the sinfulness of homosexuality and non-reproductive sexual acts in a more general sense are omnipresent within the city. In the complex cultural environment of Hong Kong, competing discourses on sex exist.

The family often exerts stringent control over the sexuality of young women. In contrast with the different Confucian and Christian discourses on homosexuality, women's sexuality in both traditions is construed as dangerous and in need of patriarchal control (Louie, 2003). Female chastity and the imperative for women to

refrain from premarital sex are prominent in discourses on sex, and these narratives shape the family governmentality of young women's sexuality to this day. In interviews with female college students in Hong Kong, Jackson and Ho (2014) found that mothers surveilled the sexuality of their daughters severely. The virginity of daughters was highly valued within the Hong Kongese family, and some mothers were 'assiduous in policing it' (2014:394). Mothers continuously mentioned the importance of virginity to their daughters and inquired about their sexual experiences and those of their daughters' friends. Sleepovers with boyfriends were generally not allowed, except on some rare occasions and only in the context of an impending marriage. However, some young women in their research had had premarital sexual experiences, and according to the Youth Sexuality Study, 32.3% of young women aged eighteen to twenty-seven have had premarital sex, compared to 45.4% of young men in the same age bracket (TFPAHK, 2011:48). While the family unit is the prime site where the managing and negotiating of female sexuality occurs, this control is not all-encompassing, and there are other cultural repertoires besides virginity until marriage that guide the sexual choices of young women.

While the imperative to continue the family lineage falls predominantly on the shoulders of young men, there are fewer restrictions on the sexuality of men than on women. Virginity until marriage and chastity are cultural imperatives for women that are not present for men. The policing of the sexuality of daughters, noted by Jackson and Ho (2014), did not pertain to sons, whose premarital sexual relations were generally accepted by parents. These unequal norms about premarital sex resonate within the aforementioned prevalence of premarital sex among youth in Hong Kong. Additionally, the cultural evaluation of non-monogamous lifestyles is different for men and women. Extramarital sex and non-monogamous lifestyles are much less problematic for men than for women. This resonates in public opinions about mistress keeping in Hong Kong –a recurring theme in the media and allegedly a common practice-, in which male infidelity is naturalized and often assumed to be the result of innate biological drives (Ho, 2014: Tam et al., 2009). At the same time, extramarital sex and non-monogamous lifestyles are severely condemned for women, and the social consequences for women to engage in these practices are profound.

The 'eroticization of sex' –the cultural process in which sex became valued for its sensual pleasures and expressive qualities (Seidman, 1991:5)- that has become so pronounced in America today has also taken root among the younger generation in Hong Kong. Traditionally, sex in China was primed towards male needs, and the remnants of this principle are found among the older generation in Hong Kong. Among the elderly interviewed by Yan et al. (2011), the majority of female

interviewees mentioned that sex was not pleasurable but was primarily about satisfying the sexual needs of men (2011:991). Among the younger generation, however, sexual gratification is an aspirational goal for both sexes. Cheung et al. (2008) found, in a citywide survey among people aged eighteen to forty-nine, that both men and women reported to be satisfied with their sex life, with men reporting slightly more satisfaction than women (Cheung et al., 2008:133). In a different survey conducted among young women, researchers found that a majority of women (92%) deemed a good sex life central to an intimate relationship, and for many (54.6%), an orgasm was important for good sex (Chan, 2008:200-206). Among the younger generation of women in Hong Kong, the physical pleasures of sex are highly valued. In America, the emergence of this meaning of sex coincided with a gradual separation of sex from committed relationships, and the question is if a similar trend is happening in Hong Kong.

It is clear that sexual norms among youth in Hong Kong are changing rapidly, for instance their stance towards premarital sex. In 1991, 1.4% of the girls and 12.6% of boys, aged fourteen to eighteen, found intercourse acceptable in dating. In 2006, this had risen to 10.1% of girls and 29.6% of boys (TFPAHK, 2011:72). The percentage of girls and boys, aged fourteen to eighteen, who had actually had sex with a dating partner approximately doubled over the last two decades, although it remained low. In 1991, 6.1% of boys and 4.3% of girls who had dated had had intercourse with their dating partner, while in 2011, 14.8% of boys and 7.6% of girls in that same age group reported to have had sex with their dating partner. Most sexual activity among boys and girls, aged fourteen to eighteen, who had dated remained rather light. A majority reported holding hands (77.3 % of boys and 81.3% of girls) and kissing (57.1% of boys and 60.7% of girls). Petting was only engaged in by 23.2% of boys and 13.5% of girls. Although sexual attitudes among boys and girls became more permissive in the last decades in Hong Kong, the sexual activity in dating remained light.

Among the older cohort of youth in Hong Kong, a similar sexual orthodoxy, in combination with a slight trend towards a relaxation of restrictions on sexuality, is happening. 22.8% of the women and 29.3% of the men, in the age cohort eighteen to twenty-seven, had had premarital sex in 1991, while this had risen to 32.3% of women and 45.4% of men in 2011 (TFPAHK, 2001:10; TFPAHK 2011:48). The average age at which youth have their first experience of intercourse has slowly declined over the last two decades. In 1996 –the first year in which these figures are available- the mean age at which young men lost their virginity was 19.0 and was 18.9 for women. In 2011, this had dropped to 17.7 for men and 18.2 for women. While the last decades saw relatively large changes in youths' acceptance and enact-

ment of premarital sex, the vast majority of sexual experiences of Hong Kongese youth seemed to happen within a relationship context. In 2011, only 16.7% of young men and 6.5% of young women reported to have had casual sex in the past six months, where a casual partner was defined as an ‘ordinary friend, online friend, new acquaintance or ex-schoolmate’ (TFPAHK, 2011:50). Although the frequency of casual sex is low, it did increase. In 2006, only 11.1% of men and 1.1% of women reported to have had a casual sex partner in the last six months (TFPAHK, 2011:50). Sexual abstinence remains the orthodoxy among unmarried Hong Kongese youth. When they engage in premarital sex, they seem to do this within a committed relationship context. However, an increasingly larger fraction of youth experiments with sex outside of a relationship context, and the question is if this sexual experimentation happens within particular domains of youth culture. Maybe casual sex, as seen in America, is a relatively common practice among campus-going youth.

## MARRIAGE AND DATING

Marriage is still a paramount ideal in Hong Kong, although recent statistics indicate that the prominence of marriage is declining. Increasingly, people marry at a higher age. In 1981, the median age for first marriage among women was 23.9 and was 27.0 for men, but this shifted to 29.3 and 31.2, respectively, by 2016 (C&SD, 2016:46). Moreover, an increasingly larger proportion of the population seems to repudiate marriage altogether, which is indicated by the number of unmarried people in the age bracket forty-five to forty-nine, when most people would have formed their first marriage, especially in a Chinese society. In 1981, 2.3% of women and 9.2% of men had not married by their late forties (Ting, 2014:148). In 2015, this had risen to 15.4% of the women and 16.5% of the men in that age cohort (C&SD, 2016:38,41).

More and more, Hong Kongese rebuff marriage altogether, and this is especially prevalent among higher educated women. Among women with a college education, aged forty-five to forty-nine, 25% are not married, compared to 14.3% of college-educated men, and compared to 15.4% of women and 16.5% of men in that age group (Ting, 2014:150; C&SD, 2016:38,41). A number of mutually intersecting social and cultural processes play a part in this odd pattern. First, hypogamy –marrying someone of lower social class- is culturally unproblematic for men but is problematic for women. Higher educated women simply have a smaller pool of acceptable suitors than women who have received less education. Second, a prevalent trope within China largely demonizes highly educated women. In China,

there is a joke that there are three kinds of genders, men, women, and women with PhDs. This quip reveals the less humorous reality that highly educated women are stigmatized within China, labelled 'left-over women', *shengnü*, who are allegedly 'unattractive', 'aloof' and 'self-important careerist[s]' (Kuo, 2014). This demonizing discourse is actively propagated by Chinese state media (Fincher, 2014) and finds its way into the city-state. Many Hong Kongese, however, remain ambivalent towards this trope. Hong Kong has a history of working women who have contributed to the family income and remained unmarried (Salaff, 1981). Moreover, singlehood remains a relatively acceptable life path for women (Nakano, 2016). On the other hand, a dominant trope within Hong Kong frames local women as being overly materialistic, demanding and self-centered, in contrast to the supposedly 'unspoiled', accommodating, traditional mainland Chinese woman. This discourse builds on a distinction between highly educated Hong Kongese and less-educated mainland Chinese. As Ho (2014) shows, this discourse informs Hong Kongese men's intimate and sexual partner choices (2014:165). Concomitantly, increasingly more marriages in Hong Kong include a partner from outside of Hong Kong. Nearly half of the registered marriages in 2011 fell in this category, and in nearly all cases these were marriages between a Hong Kong man and a mainland woman (Ting, 2014:149). This can partly be explained by the large number of Hong Kongese men working in mainland China, but the existence of hypogamy and the adverse trope of Hong Kongese women play a part in the existence of a large group of highly educated women that remain unmarried. According to many Hong Kongese, it is especially this fraction of the female population who are interested in intimate relationships with expat men.

Traditionally, Chinese families controlled the selection of a spouse for their children. However, as Ting (2014) shows, this lessened throughout the 20th century, and with this change, dating became ingrained as a routine practice for Hong Kongese youth (2014:150). In the last decades, Hong Kong youth started to date earlier in life. Ting (2002 in Ting, 2014:150) mentions that individuals born between 1940 and 1945 had their first dates at the ages of 24.6 (men) and 20.4 (women). Men and women who were born twenty-five years later had their first dates at the ages of 18.8 and 18.7, while half of the individuals in the age cohort, born between 1965 and 1969, had their first dates in secondary school (aged twelve to seventeen). Parallel to this trend of dating at increasingly younger ages has been a gradual rise in marriage age. The period of courtship in individuals' lives has thus gradually increased, and lovers date each other for a longer period before getting married. For Hong Kongese born in the early fifties, the average period of dating prior to marriage was twenty-seven months, while it had increased to forty-four

months for those born in the late seventies (Ting, 2012 in Ting, 2014:151).

Traditionally, dating was a vestibule for marriage (Chang et al., 1997:267), but as Ting (2014:147) argues, parallel to the trend of a prolonged period of dating, there was a disconnection of courtship from seeking a marriage partner. However, very little is known about dating cultures among Hong Kongese youth. What are the norms, conventions and expectations of dating for Hong Kongese youth? Is dating a leisure practice, separated from the adult norms of finding a life-long partner? Is it a practice whereby youth can experiment relatively freely with sex, intimacy and relationships? The scholarly orthodoxy tells us that families actively govern the sexuality of youth in Hong Kong. To what extent do adult norms of sex and relationships inform the sexual culture of youth?

## PATRIARCHY AND GENDER CHANGE

Through its governance by minimal interference in society and its cooperation with local male elites, the colonial state 'prolonged maintenance of patriarchal social institutions in the name of respecting the social customs and practices of Chinese society' (Lee, 2003a:4). These institutions are illustrated by the relatively long continuation of the *mui tsai* system in Hong Kong - which, until the late 1920s, enabled young women from poor families to be sold to wealthy households-, the legality of polygyny until the 1970s and the inability for women to inherit family wealth that persisted until the nineties (Lee 2003a:4). However, the colonial state also made provisions that affected gender relations in Hong Kong. Especially in the years preceding the handover, social policies augmenting women's rights were put on the agenda. Examples include the lifting of the aforementioned ban on female inheritance and the installment of a sex discrimination ordinance and an equal opportunity commission in the mid-nineties, which, despite fierce opposition from the local business elite, had some minor successes in fighting sex discrimination (Petersen, 2003).

Arguably, the most pronounced social policy facilitating gender change in Hong Kong was the implementation of general education for all youth. Hong Kong experienced a gradual extension of educational provisions throughout its history. While more boys initially enrolled in educational programs, especially in secondary and tertiary facilities, over the years, the gap in educational attainment narrowed and eventually reversed. In the mid-eighties, 37.1% of the students enrolled in undergraduate programs at universities in Hong Kong were women; in 2016, this stood at 55.0% (C&SD, 2001:28; 2016:71). This advancement of education for

women did a great deal to uplift women's positions on the labor market, –with labor market participation rates for people aged thirty to thirty-nine standing at 95.2% and 95.1% for never married men and women, respectively, and 97.5% and 71.4% for married men and women. Progressively, more women worked in better-paid positions, and this resulted in important inroads for extending women's autonomy (C&SD, 2016:105; 2016:249).

High labor force participation rates do not necessarily result in dramatic changes in role patterns within the family, nor in drastically changing aspirations of women of their work and family life. Particularly among the first and second-generation Chinese families, who migrated to Hong Kong in the 1940s, conventional role patterns existed. Fathers were the breadwinners in the family, authoritative and emotionally distant. Mothers also worked for income and were responsible for domestic work and for managing 'emotional life' and care in the family (Kong, 2011:99). However, despite the high percentage of women working in Hong Kong, the ideology that positions women in the reproductive sphere remains dominant up to this date. Lee (2003b), for instance, interviewed successful entrepreneurial female lawyers, most of whom construed the maternal role in the family as 'natural' and accepted without questioning the double role as career women and caregivers in the family (2003b:88). This resonates with findings of Tam (2003), who interviewed Hong Kong born mothers living in 'astronaut families' (Skeldon, 1994:229) in Australia –households dispersed over multiple geographical locations. While most of these women had successful careers in Hong Kong, in their new country of residence they were homemakers, and they understood this as an improvement since they could fulfill the ideal role of 'mother-wife' (2003:196). Dominant ideals of womanhood continue to emphasize women's responsibility for the emotional well being of the family. This also means that women carry the responsibility for maintaining satisfactory intimate relationships. Tam et al. (2009), in a study of Hong Kong men with cross border mistresses, mentioned that an interviewee, the Hong Kongese wife of an adulterous man, responded fairly typically. She was 'extremely upset', like other wives, and was unwilling to divorce because she believed that 'a divorced woman was a failed woman' and that it was her duty to 'keep the family together' (2009:347). Despite a dramatic proliferation of career options for women and increased financial autonomy, conventional role patterns and conventional ideals of womanhood remain dominant within Hong Kong today.

At the same time, new female role models emerge that stray from the conventional ideal of 'mother-wife'. Carrie Lam is likely the most renowned example, as the freshly elected Chief-Executive of Hong Kong -the highest political office within the city- making her the first female political leader within the city-state. Lam, a

mother of two, seemingly effortlessly combined the conventional mother role with an outstanding career. Like Lam, other well-known Hong Kongese women have done this in the past or continue to do so in the present. However, profoundly fewer female role models have strayed from the conventional expectations of marriage and motherhood because they prioritized a career above having a family, or because they felt uncomfortable within these role patterns. This is quite surprising since Hong Kong has a tradition of working women, who have strayed from marriage and have provided financially for their families (Salaff, 1981). This, however, seems to have been more common in working-class families than among the higher echelons of society.

When I asked my Hong Kongese acquaintances if they could name a well-known Hong Kongese woman that fit that profile, most remained blank, while a few mentioned Elsie Leung – an accomplished lawyer and renowned political figure in the city-state-, who never married and does not have a family. However, Leung self-reportedly never refrained from marriage and family life intentionally; she just never met a suitable partner.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the new female role models that emerged in Hong Kong, few prominent women actively propagate feminist politics. Carrie Lam, in her campaign for political leadership in Hong Kong, promised to enhance career options for women, hoping that more women would find their way to the top in politics and business, but this advocacy can hardly be called ‘radical’ (Wu, 2017). Feminist politics in Hong Kong remain a subdued voice and when it speaks, gender equality is framed in relation to enhancing women’s positions on the labor market. Seldom are feminist concerns raised in relation to the division of labor within the family, or in relation to sex in heterosexual relations. Many authors have noted the apolitical stance of Hong Kongese, and often this is explained as an outflow of the dearth of political rights under colonial rule (Ho, 2004; Kong 2011; Lee, 2003a). The absence of a feminist movement in Hong Kong could, as Lee (2003a) mentions, be related to this apolitical stance of Hong Kongese. Very few Hong Kongese support a feminist political agenda (Wong and Wan, 2009). Although the recent social upheavals of the Umbrella Revolution indicate that the apolitical orientation of many Hong Kongese is changing in favor of a more activist stance, until this day, this activism does not pertain to promoting a broad feminist agenda.

Perhaps the result of this subdued feminist voice, dominant ideals of manhood in Hong Kong resonate with longstanding models of manhood in East Asian societies (Liong, 2015; Louie, 2003). Louie (2002) proposes the dualistic concepts, *Wen-Wu*, cultural attainment versus martial valor, to understand manhood ideals in East Asia. *Wen* refers to ‘genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artis-

tic pursuits of classical scholars' (Louie, 2002:14). It can mean 'accomplished' and 'civilization' (Louie, 2002:10). *Wu*, on the other hand, refers to 'physical strength and military prowess (Louie, 2002:14), the 'physical', 'marital' and 'athletic' socially cultivated competences (Liong, 2015:939). Both *Wen* and *Wu* are masculine qualities, 'so that a scholar is considered to be no less masculine than a soldier' (Louie, 2002:10), and ideally men embody both qualities.

But Louie's (2002; 2003) work seems to overemphasize the differences between histories of masculinities in the 'west' and in East Asia. In his cultural history of manhood ideals in America, Kimmel (1996) dissects a similar trend in the different discourses of masculinity that evolved throughout the centuries. Discourses of masculinity in America converge around the ideal of physical prowess, which shows, for instance, in the rugged settler of the westward expansion and the narrative of the working-class hero of a later period. Cultural refinement is a reoccurring theme in American manhood ideals, for instance in the aristocratic patriarch of the 19th century and the colorful dandy of the 20th century.

Sexual prowess arose as a prominent marker of manhood in America around the turn of the 20th century and coincided with the advent of heterosexuality and homosexuality as distinct cultural identities (Katz, 1995). Similarly, Louie (2002) argues that signaling a masculine identity through sexual prowess was absent in ancient Chinese societies. Traditionally, *Wu* manhood rejected sexual relations with women, while *Wen* manhood implied commitment, often confirmed in marriage. While sexual prowess is quintessential to dominant ideals of manhood among youth in America, in East Asia this appears as marker of manhood in some discourses of masculinity but is absent in others. Hibbins (2006), in a study of constructions of masculinity among Chinese migrants in Australia, found that none of the men he interviewed construed sexuality as a domain to do manhood (2006:298). However, the rhetoric of sexual prowess appears in other studies of East Asian masculinities. Tam et al. (2009) interviewed mistress-keeping men in Hong Kong from working-class and middle-class backgrounds. One of their interviewees, a man named Chow, narrated the attractions of mistress keeping. He felt that his mistress allowed him 'to prove to his peers that he had financial ability as well as sexual potency' (2009:346). The discourse of masculinity that Chow draws upon shows that both economic and sexual conquest are masculine status markers in contemporary Hong Kong. Young men in the city have multiple competing discourses of masculinity to draw upon and the question is if a rhetoric of sexual conquest informs their stance on sex and relationships.

Accomplishments in the economic and familial sphere are of utmost importance in constructions of manhood in Hong Kong, personified in the male bread-

winning role (Liong, 2015:940-941). Unsurprisingly, the Asian Economic Crisis of the late nineties had a noticeable impact on men's self-images in East Asia. These concerns were captured in Hong Kong cinema of that epoch, which portrayed men's lives as filled with anxieties and male protagonists who were insecure and 'deprived of full confidence in mastering the opposite sex' (Pang, 2002:326). This contrasted the aggressiveness and confidence of male characters of earlier film (Pang, 2002:326). Masculine self-worth in dominant constructions of manhood in Hong Kong is intrinsically tied to men's abilities and potential to provide for their families.

Structural changes in Hong Kong's economy have put additional strains on young people's lives. As Hong Kong's economy integrated with mainland China, much manufacturing work moved across the border to South China. This left many factory hands redundant and looking for new job opportunities, putting downward pressure on wages in low-skilled employment. When the Chinese economy took off in the early eighties, Hong Kong rapidly developed a strong service economy, especially in the realm of finances. This new economy, however, demanded a different workforce that was highly skilled in international business operations. This economic restructuring had a direct effect on economic inequality in Hong Kong, which grew rapidly throughout the eighties, nineties and in the new millennium (Goodstadt, 2013). In that same period, real estate prices in Hong Kong surged and costs of living rose tremendously. Hong Kong became an economically divided society, with a small group of, often highly educated, winners, and a large group of people struggling to make ends meet in a society where social welfare provisions are minimal.

These new economic conditions made the male breadwinning role an increasingly unattainable ideal for many young men. However, the belief that one can improve one's social and economic situation by hard work reigns supreme within the city (Lee, 2003a:7). Interestingly, manhood ideals changed little under these new economic conditions. In a large-scale survey among men in Hong Kong, Leung and Chan (2012) found that approximately 65% of the Hong Kong men agreed that men should be the breadwinners of the family and women the caretakers. Unsurprisingly, some scholars (Leung and Chan 2012; Tam et al., 2009) talk about a crisis of masculinity, in which many men cannot attain the socially ascribed role of provider and, as a consequence, bolster a negative self-image (Leung and Chan, 2012:12). However, instead of questioning the ideology of the male-breadwinning role, many men draw on a narrative of victimization, construing women's changing position in society as a threat (Leung and Chan, 2012:13).

## CONCLUSION

Gender and intimate relations change rapidly in the complex society of Hong Kong. Increasingly, more young women find their way towards higher education and embark on outstanding career trajectories after college. Many of these women postpone marriage to a later age, after they have settled in a career. But, what is their orientation towards sex and relationships within young adulthood? Sexual mores among the younger generations in Hong Kong are changing. An increasingly large fraction finds premarital sex acceptable and more and more youth experiment with sex, dating and relationships prior to marriage. At the same time, conservative forces remain strong within Hong Kong. Female chastity is still valued, especially among the older generations who have a firm grip on youth sexuality via the bio-politics within the family. What these multiple, and at times contesting, forces mean for sexual cultures of youth will be empirically explored in the following chapter. This is first considered within the college arena and then within the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong.

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## 6

# ***CEOT POOL: SEXUAL CULTURE ON UHK***

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Like America, Hong Kong has experienced drastic changes in gender and intimate relationships in recent decades. Labor force participation rates of women rank among the highest in the world, and an increasing number of young women enter college, giving women unprecedented autonomy over their own lives. At the same time, the face of intimate relationships has changed dramatically, the age of first marriages has risen and there have been landslide changes in youth's acceptance of premarital sex (Davis and Friedman, 2014:3; TFPAHK, 2001; 2006; 2011). Concomitantly, Hong Kongese youth increasingly date at younger ages, which means that they have a long period before marriage in which many explore intimate relationships (Ting, 2014:151).

In America, similar changes in gender and intimate relations coincided with a drastic change in youth sexual culture. On many US college campuses, hooking up has become a dominant form of intimate coupling. While many other regions in the world have experienced comparable structural changes in gender and intimate relations, little is known about the extent to which hooking up is embraced as a sexual arrangement of youth in other regions of the world, for instance in Hong Kong. In this chapter, I explore the dominant regime of youth sexuality on a campus in the city-state. I question if hooking up is part of their sexual repertoire.

Grand narratives of modernity sketch a seemingly uniform development of changes in intimate relationships throughout the world (Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 1992). Most of these narratives emphasize a decoupling of sex from committed relationships in modern times. Bauman (2003) speaks about fluid love, in which love relationships, and sex, have become transient, lasting until a slight shift in life-plans renders them obsolete. Giddens (1992) speaks of a 'transformation of intimacy', in which structural dependencies in intimate relationships have been dismantled, mainly through the achievements of feminism. He suggests that the rewards of emotional intimacy are the glue that hold couples together. Furthermore, he describes 'plastic sexuality' as the decoupling of sex from reproduction, marriage, and com-

mitted relationships. Sex in modernity, according to Giddens (1992), is undertaken for individual enjoyment and self-realization and is quintessential to individual identity projects for both men and women.

Some scholars postulate that these modern, grand narratives of changes in intimate life are applicable to East Asia. Lin (2008), for instance, argues that the contemporary usage of love hotels in Japan reveals a discourse on sexuality in which sex is associated with personal pleasure, autonomy, self-fulfillment and identity formation (Lin, 2008:33). Chu (2014) argues that the trend towards plastic sexuality has happened in modern day Hong Kong. In her writings on compensated dating -a relatively new sexual arrangement in the city-state comparable to sugar daddy-ism- she argues that Hong Kongese youth have normalized a script in which sex is detached from marriage and is non-monogamous, recreational and devoid of emotional intimacy (Chu, 2014)

Other authors, on the contrary, have criticized such grand narratives of changes in intimate life for its inherent ethnocentrism (Besnier, 2015; Gross, 2005; Jackson et al., 2008). Jackson et al. (2008), for instance, emphasize that East Asia has its own route into modernity, and we cannot take for granted that modernization will have the same consequences for intimacy and sex in East Asia (Jackson et al. 2008:17). Nonetheless, new sexual cultures have emerged in this region, and for urban East Asian women, modernity often means 'being sexy' and living a more 'sexually adventurous lifestyle' (Farrer, 2002; Jackson et al., 2008:8;). The question is whether this means that hooking up is a common practice among youth in Hong Kong, or if they prefer different sexual arrangements.

In this chapter, I investigate whether there is a hookup culture at a university campus in Hong Kong, or an equivalent in which the dominant form of intimate coupling is sex outside the context of a committed relationship. Because hookup culture in America is predominantly confined to the campus arena, I start my quest in Hong Kong in the college arena too. In this chapter, I qualitatively explore the sexual norms of University Hong Kong -this is a pseudonym-. I explore what sexual scripts are enacted by students and if they enact equivalents of hooking up. I further draw on insights from sex and gender studies that emphasize the practices through which sex and gender norms are continuously made and remade.

## CASE AND METHODS

This is a qualitative, interview-based study of an intimate and sexual culture of a college campus in Hong Kong. UHK is a flagship education facility that offers a broad range of education programs. UHK offers campus residency to its students, although

housing supply is in short demand, and currently around 50% of the total student population resides on campus, which is approximately 8000 students. Interviews with students were conducted in the winter and early spring of 2015. In total, I interviewed forty-one heterosexual students (twenty men and twenty-one women). Eighteen male students were born and raised in Hong Kong, one man was born in mainland China, and another man of Chinese descent came from Indonesia. The latter two moved to the city-state upon entering college. Of the twenty-one women in my sample, seventeen were born in Hong Kong, three were born and raised in mainland China, and one in Japan. All four of the women from outside Hong Kong moved there recently for their studies. One of the mainland born women also did part of her studies in Japan. Another woman was born in Hong Kong but spent a considerable part of her childhood in America. Four men and six women identified as Christian, the others did not subscribe to a religion. The students ranged from freshmen to seniors and came from a variety of different disciplines (including natural sciences, humanities, arts and social sciences). Nine female students came from working-class families, ten from the middle class and two from the upper-middle class. Of the male students, eight came from the working class, eleven from the middle class and one from the upper-middle class. I made this classification on basis of their parents' educational attainments and professions. Three students were recruited through a sociology course on gender and sexuality in which I participated. I recruited the other thirty-eight students on campus. I approached students, explained my research project and asked if they wanted to contribute. When students reacted positively, I took their contact details and scheduled an appointment. All the interviews were conducted in English, and this resulted in a major selection bias, since the students who participated were confined to those who were confident with expressing themselves in this language.

The interviews were conducted on campus, in one of the many canteens, coffee shops or gardens on campus. Prior to each interview, I discussed the aims of this study and the topics that we would discuss. Students were asked to sign an informed consent form and were explicitly told that they should only answer if they felt comfortable talking about the subjects. I used a semi-structured interview technique around a number of topics. These were: parents' experiences of intimate relationships, college campus culture and the intimate doings of peers, the students' own experiences with sex and relationships and the students' outlook on the future concerning career, family and relationship goals. I chose this sequence purposefully to build rapport in the initial stages of the interview, by first talking about less intimate topics and later discussing the most personal experiences. The interviews were recorded and took between thirty and seventy minutes. All interviews were fully transcribed. Respondents' names have been anonymized.

## HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS AND PARENTAL CONTROL

In recent decades, Hong Kong has seen drastic structural changes in its economy. In the initial stages of its economic development, Hong Kong had a large manufacturing base especially in relatively cheap consumer products. During the 1980s, much of this low-skilled factory work moved to China, leaving many low-skilled laborers in precarious economic conditions. At the same time, Hong Kong experienced an extraordinary growth in its service economy, predominantly creating two types of jobs: Humdrum and low paid service work at the bottom, and highly skilled and well paid white-collar jobs at the top. This economic transition, in combination with the underdeveloped social security system in Hong Kong, increased the importance of a college diploma for Hong Kongese youth. However, only a small fraction (about 22%)<sup>7</sup> of secondary school students can enter tertiary education facilities, and access is granted on the basis of students' performance on the centrally organized entrance examination, the HKDSE. As a result, there is extreme pressure for youth to attain high scores on the HKDSE.

This specific political economic milieu of Hong Kong is enmeshed with long-standing discourses that greatly value educational achievements. In ancient China, scholarly achievements were an important means of social mobility; they opened up the route to high-standing administrative positions. In Confucianism, these scholarly achievements were linked to moral excellence. Two sets of ethics existed: those for lay-people and a higher standard for scholars. The standard for scholars comprised a more stringent and extensive ethical code, which, when followed, could raise one's moral standing in society (Hwang, 1999:175). This set of ideas resonates within conceptions of education in modern-day Hong Kong, giving extra weight to the importance of a good education. Furthermore, the Confucian concept of 'filial piety' entails an obligation of parents to provide their children with a good education, while it is the children's obligation to obey their parents and other authoritative figures, like educators (Ng et al., 2002:140). Both authorities often demanded Hong Kongese youth to focus on education and refrain from intimate relationships with significant others in adolescence, which a surprisingly large number of students obeyed. Some secondary schools had a policy to sanction intimate relations between students.

*T: If the teacher would find out that you were dating, they would embarrass you in front of everyone.*

*JJS: Like what would they do?*

*T: Like, they were scolded in front of everyone.*

JJS: *Really? Have you ever seen that happen?*

T: *Yeah, when the teacher found out that my classmates in high school were dating, they were changed of their seat. Like, we have certain seats for our own, and they were changed of the seat, and he [teacher] put this couple together [...]. Then, everybody knew that they were dating, everyone and every teacher. So, it's quite embarrassing, and we sat with girls and girls and boys with boys [...]. So, only they sat together as boy and girl, so it's quite embarrassing and then they broke up (Tamara, senior student).*

At some secondary schools, young lovers were not only scolded in front of peers, but their parents would also be informed, and students would receive an official demerit. However, not all schools had such strict measures to prevent intimate liaisons between students, since this was not mandatory policy in all secondary education facilities. There were also many schools that did not need to implement this policy since they were single-sex institutions. In addition to educators, parents also kept a close check on students' intimate behavior, policing and precluding the intimate affairs of their progeny.

N: *[...] And also, at that time, my parents found out I have a girlfriend, and that is forbidden in my family.*

JJS: *Oh really?*

N: *Yes, because in Chinese traditional families they don't expect their son or their daughter to fall in love in the secondary school because, as I have said, the most important mission in your secondary school life is study.*

JJS: *Abhhaa.*

N: *Yes, because you have to get into the university. This is very important in Chinese society, I think. Or, in my family it's very important. So, when they found out I have a girlfriend, they don't allow me to go on with this relationship, and they asked me to break it up. So, I did (Nigel, junior student).*

Parents were often unaware of the intimate relationship of their child, but regardless, many students broke up their affair when the HKSDE arrived. The pressure to study hard for the exams and to secure access to tertiary education were so high that many students decided to break up their intimate relationships without parental interference. Few students formed intimate relationships in high school. When students were accepted to one of the universities in Hong Kong, however, another life phase began, that of college life, in which the parental pressure to study hard waned and in which identity exploration took precedence. This partly meant forming intimate relationships with significant others.

## CEOT POOL: THE SEXUAL REGIME ON UHK

College campuses often have a distinct culture, especially when they are residential. The presence of a large number of youth of similar ages, largely outside of the realm of parental control, seems to be the ideal conditions for a distinct identity to emerge. Within this arena of hundreds and at times thousands of watchful students, social control is often stark, and a high degree of conformity is enforced. Within this arena, sex and intimate relationships are often prime markers of distinction with the world outside campus. This rings true for most colleges in America and also seemed to resonate with college life at UHK.

*R: It's very interesting. In the campus life in HK university, there are five things: Five things we should do in our orientation camp, at least five things. You have to skip one lesson, which means you don't attend a lesson.*

*JJS: Just once?*

*R: [...] At least once, and the second thing is to live in a [student] residence, to live in a home, to enjoy your life, and the third thing is doing part time...*

*JJS: Like, part-time jobs?*

*R: Yeah, and you have to be in a committee or in a club or society, right? This is—in Chinese we call [this] soeng zong —上(soeng5) 莊(zong1)-, and this is a thing that... So, you have to commit yourself to some sort of organization and certain groups of people, and the most important thing is [...] that you should have [a] relationship, and this is called ceot pool —出(ceot1) pool-(Raymond, freshman student).*

These 'five things' were the imperatives of UHK college culture, the experiences that nearly all freshmen students desired. Culture can be used as a symbolic resource to mark distinctions between groups. Among students of UHK these markers were mainly used to demarcate boundaries between themselves and their peers outside of the college arena, rather than to mark a distinction with the adult world. On the contrary, many of the experiences that students tried to collect on campus seemed to prepare them for the responsibilities of adult life after college. Playing truant was about autonomy and making seemingly independent decisions, although it was often done to conform to peer expectations. A campus residency was about autonomy and independence from the family. A part-time job was about acquiring work experiences and learning about financial independence. In student organizations, students acquired the skills of, amongst others, organizing, networking and cooperating. And, in *ceot*

*pool* – 出 (ceot1) *pool*-, students learned about intimacy, sex and committed relationships. To *ceot pool* literally means ‘to get out from the pool of people who are being single’, in which ‘pool’ is a metaphor for being single. It could be used as both a verb and a noun.

*This is called ceot pool [...] this is like a metaphor. We are like fish in the pool, and our partners, our lover is the fisherman, and we have to wait. We have to be active and aggressive so we could make ourselves to get out of the pool, right? (Raymond, freshman student).*

*Ceot pool* is a relatively short transitional period between friendship or acquaintance and a committed relationship. It has a rather uniform script with numerous gendered rituals of romance, among which are an overly romantic proposition and a time for contemplation. Concrete stories of students about their *ceot pool* experiences gave insight into this script. One female student, Nora, reported that her *ceot pool* happened at the well-known Ferris wheel in Central Hong Kong, which is comparable to the London Eye. Chris and Nora had met in a student organization half a year prior, where both worked and had become friends. At some point in the year, Chris developed a crush on Nora, which she was blatantly aware of, as were her friends, who constantly reminded her of his feelings. One day Nora, Chris and a group of mutual friends went to the Ferris wheel at Central Pier. When Nora entered the gondola, which had room for about ten people, only Chris joined. She had a slight suspicion that he was about to make some romantic gesture. On top of the ride, the gondola stopped for an instance.

*N: [...] He picked out a mobile phone and then showed me a video. The video is about our photos and our story and some sentences, and then I, after watching it, I don't know how to answer because the last version is that 'will you be my girlfriend?' Or something. And then I, I just, I want to escape, but I can't and then I ask him: 'When did you make it?' To try to not directly answer his questions and talk about other subjects, other things. And then he answered me when he made the video and then [...] he picked out a paper, it is printed, some like, stupid idea, like a contract. There are some sentences here and [...] then he asked me to circle one, and there were only two choices.*

*JJS: So what were the two choices?*

*N: 'I am willing to be his girlfriend' and 'I am very willing to be his girlfriend' (laughing) (Nora, sophomore student).*

In the script of *ceot pool*, young men were expected to instigate the romance and young women were supposed to resist at first and only accept after continuous persuasions. In all but one of the cases of *ceot pool*, the man proposed an intimate relationship to the woman, even though she might have been the one who made the first steps towards a more intimate connection. Young women were thus more constrained in forging intimate relations than boys.

Seldom did a young woman accept the proposal immediately, and most asked for time to think before giving her word. In many cases, this 'time for contemplation' seemed like a ritual, since these romantic propositions seldom came as a surprise. In most cases, both parties were aware of the romantic interests of the other because they had talked about it, or because friends had informed them. The 'time for contemplation' was a meaningful rite, signaling a well-informed and considered decision. It showed that she was 'serious' about the relationship, meaning she was aware of the roles and expectations of a romantic liaison, of the personality and idiosyncrasies of the young man, and most importantly, that she was primed towards a long-term relationship.

The conversations within the time for contemplation highlighted the expectations and meaning infused in the dominant sexual script. Nora, for instance, wanted to clarify a number of rumors about her suitor within the time for contemplation. She had heard that a young woman was living in Chris' room who was not officially his roommate, and she wanted to know what their relationship entailed. She was convinced that the young woman was 'just a friend' after Chris showed her a texting exchange with that girl in which she asked for advice on how to romantically connect to another young man. Nora also inquired about a photo she had seen on social media a few months before, in which Chris walked hand in hand with another young woman. Nora wanted to know who that young woman was and if they were romantically involved. The young woman was a former classmate of Chris, for whom he, at the time, had romantic feelings. These feelings, however, belonged to the past. On the Ferris wheel, Chris had said 'I love you' to the astonishment of Nora. She wanted to know what love was to Chris. According to her, love was a state of intimate connection to be reached after years and years of romance. Chris and she had 'good feelings' towards one another, but for her, love was the outcome of a long-term commitment in which a couple gradually progressed through layers of intimacy, experienced as a move towards greater spiritual proximity. Chris and Nora also discussed the appropriate amount of sexual activity within a romance. According to Nora, light sexual activity, such as petting and kissing, was okay at a certain point in the affair. Sexual intercourse, however, was only appropriate after marriage, with which Chris concurred. These conversations of Nora and Chris

emphasized the expectations of monogamy and a long-term commitment tied to the enacted script and foregrounded a psychic unity above a sexual connection in the relationship.

There was a high degree of conformity in expectations of sex and relationships among the university students in my research. Nearly all students were primed towards long-term committed relationships that could potentially evolve into marriage, and they univocally believed that most of their friends shared this orientation. 'I would say most of my friends are in long-term relationships, that is my friends from secondary school, I don't know many people that are dating short-term (Ike).'

Students were less univocal about the sexual activities within these affairs, reflecting the reservations of many students to talk about these matters, even with close friends. Some students thought that only light sexual activity happened within these affairs. Others believed that peers had intercourse, although only when they had been in a relationship for a long period of time

*A lot of my friends think that it is okay to have sex with their boyfriends, but it should be a stable one, yeah. After dating for eight years, I think, and after that, they can go with their boyfriends and have sex with him, but not so fast (Do, sophomore student).*

Reports about sexual experiences are always fraught with uncertainty because of the stigmatized nature of the subject. This was especially relevant in the context of prudish Hong Kong. Few students reported experiences with sexual intercourse, even within long-term, committed relationships. Of the twenty-one female interviewees, four reported experiences with sexual intercourse –ranging from two to five partners. Seven of the twenty male interviewees reported experience with sexual intercourse, with the number of sexual partners ranging from one to three. Light sexual activity such as kissing and petting was acceptable for nearly all students within the context of long-term, committed relationships, but many students found sexual intercourse only acceptable within marriage.

Interestingly, a number of students expressed that their preference for sex within marriage was driven by a fear of pregnancy.

*JJS: You mentioned you had like three or four boyfriends before. Were these also sexual relationships?*

*I: Sexual relationships? Yes, but not sexual intercourse. Like, we kind of, I don't know, they are kind of afraid that I will get pregnant, or something, so we just, don't know what it's called in English, maybe dry sex or something? Just no sexual inter-course (Irene, sophomore student).*

This narrative of sexual abstinence was common among students of UHK and raises questions of the extent of knowledge about contraception that was available to youth in Hong Kong, despite most students having had courses on sexual education.

Sexual opportunities are, in most societies, tied to the availability of private space. This is particularly pressing in Hong Kong, where many inhabitants live in cramped apartments. This naturally had an impact on the opportunities for sexual exploration among Hong Kongese youth. Love hotels were plentiful within the city, but were relatively expensive and shrouded in stigma, and none of the students said they visited these places. Campus residency, however, offered new sexual opportunities for students from Hong Kong. For the first time in their lives, students lived outside the direct control of the parental gaze, and this meant new opportunities for intimate exploration. Although campus residency rules explicitly forbade man-woman sleepovers, most students in committed relationships slept in their partners' rooms regularly. Nevertheless, even then, precautions were taken by, mainly female, students so that the intimate contact did not escalate into coitus.

*E: It [sexual intercourse] won't happen for me, yeah.*

*JJS: Why not?*

*E: Because there are still roommates in the room, and I won't be with him when there's only two of us. Then I will escape, always (laughing). If there's only two of us in the dorm (Elza, sophomore student).*

Within *ceot pool* and the committed relationships that followed, women were responsible for keeping sexual boundaries, and the consequences of crossing these lines were infinitely more severe for women than for men. Within the college arena in UHK, a tenacious double standard existed.

## AN ORDERING OF SEXUAL SCRIPTS

Students at UHK were aware of other sexual scripts in the college arena besides *ceot pool*. Hookups, casual sex, one-night-stands, and short-term relationships were known to most students and occasionally enacted. However, one should not assume that the configuration of acts of these scripts, the meanings infused in them, the entwined vocabularies of motives and bodies of fantasies, translate into corresponding labels that European and American audiences are familiar with.

The different sexual scripts that students of UHK were familiar with had an

ordering. Long-term monogamous relationships were foregrounded and casual sex repudiated. Students of UHK used this continuum of long-term commitments versus casual sex to think about their own intimate doings and those of others. This ordering of sexual scripts could be used as a symbolic resource for constructing boundaries between themselves and others (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). Concomitantly, the ordering of sexual scripts could be used as a heuristic tool for reflecting on their own sexual practices and those of fellow students. For most students, casual sex was an abject and devalued practice that one should stay away from. In comparison with this sexual script their own intimate affairs seemed civil and righteous. A long-term monogamous relationship, on the other hand, was a desired script that, at least momentarily, lay out of reach for most students, and which posited their previous relationships as failed and unsuccessful.

Hooking up was a familiar term to some students, especially those that had been abroad, to America and Australia, or to those who had friends among the international students of UHK. However, only one student of the forty-one I interviewed claimed to have hooked up herself.

*One was with an exchange student from Texas. I met him through my friend who is a full-time student here, [UHK] and she decided to bring him to the party in LKF [nightlife district], and then everybody was drinking, and we were flirting around, and then we went back to his dorm and we had sex (Sandy, freshman student).*

Sandy was an outlier among the students I talked to, both in terms of sexual experiences and in terms of cultural background. Sandy came from an 'astronaut family', a household in which some of the individual members work and live in different countries (Skeldon, 1994:229) and lived parts of her childhood in the US. She was thus in many ways a cultural hybrid, familiar with American and Chinese culture and she had friends among the Hong Kong Chinese and international students.

Other students were not aware of the term but were aware of the practice, although they often lacked the specific vocabulary to denote this script and talked about it in terms of 'short-term relationships' or 'one-night-stands'. Nevertheless, students of UHK were aware of the idea that one could meet someone on an occasion –a stranger, acquaintance or friend- and have sex shortly after, for lust rather than from a longing for spiritual proximity, and that this could be devoid of claims to commitment.

*T: [Hooking up is] not really common, but it happens. [...] I've heard some cases of them of my friends, but most of them come... Maybe they have been to*

- America or have been studying [there] for a few years, studying elsewhere.*
- JJS: *I see, what did you hear?*
- T: *They talked about drinking and something happened casual, and kiss casual.*
- JJS: *What do you think of that?*
- T: *For me, I can't accept that (Tam, freshman student).*

Hooking up was nearly always the sexual practice of distant acquaintances or part of the sexual culture of other campuses; or, it was what people with other –mainly American and European- cultural backgrounds did. The hookup script was used by students of UHK as a symbolic resource to demarcate boundaries between them and other students.

At the same time, students used the hookup script to reflect on their own intimate practices and those of peers at UHK. In contrast to the abysmal sexual practice of hooking up, *ceot pool* and the committed relationships most Chinese students at UHK pursued, seemed responsible, civil and respectable. The ordering of sexual scripts was thus a resource students used to think about intimate relationships.

Although most students sought relationship experiences that were 'serious', in practice this was not always the case. The peer pressure to *ceot pool* was intense on UHK, and this often resulted in rushing into relationships. Some students found out that their affair was an ill match, that their personality was incompatible with their partner's, or that the two had very different interests. Other times, the relationship did not live up to the ideal of spiritual proximity that students sought. On many of these occasions, students broke up the affair, and these relatively short relationship experiences were construed as unsuccessful and 'childish'. Most Chinese students at UHK sought affairs that were 'serious', meaning that the relationships should be committed and long-term, just as the intimate relationships that most people in the adult world in Hong Kong pursued.

Students that had had a seemingly casual sexual relationship often construed these experiences in relation to the foregrounded sexual script of a long-term committed affair. Sophomore student Norton, for instance, had met a girl on campus in his freshmen year. She was about to leave on an exchange trip to a foreign country. In the week prior to her departure, Norton and she had a number of sexual escapades. This happened when the two of them were hanging out in his dorm room. In contrast to most hookups on US colleges, this was not fueled by alcohol. Norton felt viscerally embarrassed about the experience.

- N: *I have had some, did something, but we didn't have an official relationship.*
- JJS: *What happened?*

*N: Just... Do we have to talk about this? [...] I don't want to go in details, but it is just been... I have had some. I mean, so, we knew each other, and we liked each other, and we did not love each other, and so, we were just dating, but that's not really that 'kind' of dating.*

*JJS: You mean a 'hook up'?*

*N: Hook up?*

*JJS: A hook up is like a casual sexual encounter.*

*N: Not casual, we have had physical contact but it's just a very short period of time (Norton, sophomore student).*

Given the situation, Norton and his partner knew that their affair was going to be temporal. 'I think we both knew this relationship was going to be a short-term relationship, we never seriously talked about it.' And in contrast to the prioritized long-term relationships, his affair felt wrong and abject.

While in American constructions of manhood sexual conquest is a means of proving masculinity, for Norton, and other Chinese Hong Kongese students like him, this was not the case.

*JJS: Do you discuss that [sexual escapade] with your friends?*

*N: Just with one, but I didn't tell all the stories.*

*JJS: Why not?*

*N: I think that's not accepted in Hong Kong. I feel guilty, but that may not be the case in western countries, but that's in Hong Kong.*

*JJS: So, why do you feel guilty?*

*N: I am not really guilty, just not feeling really good. I don't think that [casual sex] is something to prove me to be a guy that is very strong in getting girls. I think that's, how to say, I rather prefer a serious one than a casual one, but I don't know why (Norton, sophomore student).*

Interestingly, Norton was familiar with a script of casual sex and with a particular discourse of masculinity in which sexual conquest is a means to prove manhood. He, however, distanced himself from this script and this discourse. In contrast to dominant masculinity of college men in America, sexual conquest was not a rhetoric to prove manhood for male students of UHK. In contemporary Hong Kong, traditional manhood ideals seem to persist. The *wen-wu* dyad of classic Chinese manhood either rejected sexual relations with women or acknowledged them within the context of commitment (Louie, 2002). While young men of Hong Kong are familiar with the sex as conquest discourse of masculinity, they do

not necessarily draw on this to make sense of their own sexual experiences, nor do they attempt to prove their manhood via sexual escapades. On the contrary, young Chinese men at UHK drew from a discourse that resonated with longstanding wen manhood ideals.

## THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF *CEOT POOL*

*Ceot pool* had a prominent position within college campus culture on UHK and was institutionalized within a number of social arrangements on campus. O-camps -orientation camps- were such institutes in which students were socialized in campus culture, and in which students learned about *ceot pool* and were actively encouraged to participate in it. O-camps were organized at the start of the academic year by the different departments and colleges. These were run by senior students with the approval of university administrators and were partly funded by the university. These camps lasted a few days in which groups of students engaged in all sorts of teambuilding activities –for instance city hunts and escape rooms- under the auspices of a mentor, a senior student. For many freshmen, these camps were the first introduction to college campus culture, and, of course, *ceot pool*.

Many of the games that students played within O-camps were, for instance, tailored to create ‘embarrassing moments and intimacy’ (Oran). In one of these games, freshmen had to pass a toothpick from mouth to mouth while holding their hands folded behind their backs. Another game was a ‘water fight’ in which freshmen threw balloons filled with water to each other. In the steamy hot Hong Kong summers, where youth wore few clothes, these ‘water fights’ resulted in a spectacle of semi-nude bodies. The ‘night talks’ were the most eminent institutionalized structure of relationship formation within O-camps. Within these gatherings, which happened during the hot summer nights, mentors actively tried to facilitate romantic couplings among students.

*We have a game called the ‘first impression’, and the boys and the girls are divided into two groups and the leaders will provide some questions. Like, have you ever been in a relationship with other girls or boys? Or, who is the most handsome boy? Or, who is the prettiest girl? And people in the different groups will be assigned a number like one, two, three, four or five, and the other group doesn’t know about the number. Like, for example, the question is: Which boy is the most handsome? And the girls will have a vote, but the boy doesn’t know who votes for him [...], but usually they will know who is voting for him or her because the leaders will just tell them to help them to ceot pool (Morten, sophomore student).*

The group leaders actively tried to couple freshmen students by eliciting who found who attractive and matching those with mutual interests. These couplings were between freshmen and between freshmen and upperclassmen –the staff on O-camps. Part of the allure of being a ‘mentor’ on O-camps, especially for young men, was its reputation for facilitating intimate connections with female freshmen students. In O-camps, some male upperclassmen used their status as senior students and the naiveté of freshmen to *ceot pool*. I heard one story in which a senior female mentor formed a relationship with a male freshmen student in O-camp, but students stressed that this was an exception. On UHK, and also within Hong Kong, coupling with a younger person is normative for men but not for women.

The mentors also guided the conversation to prompt freshmen’s availability for intimate relationships.

*And at night time we have a campfire [...]. We talk [to] each other and we have group leaders for each group. They are the senior students. They will lead the groups, and they will start the conversation and ask questions, [like what is] your status and whether you already have a boyfriend or girlfriend (Oran, senior student).*

Within this setting, students reported on their experiences with romantic relationships and on their current relationship status. In student slang, A meant available and O was occupied, which was accompanied by a number that indicated how many intimate relationships a student had had. If one was not sure if the relationship with another person counted as a romantic affair, students described their status with C, meaning complicated.

Additionally, they discussed how much sexual contact they had had within these past relationships. Students reported on their sexual experiences on a scale from one to five, where one implied holding hands, two was hugging, three kissing, four petting and five intercourse. This institutionalized, public conversations about sex were exceptional and contrasted the status quo. Students seldom talked openly about their sexual experiences and only rarely confided with a close circle of good friends. But what these talks established seemed to fit with the conservative sexual culture of UHK. Research on sexual cultures on American campuses shows that students tremendously overestimate the amount of sexual activity of peers and that these overestimations normalize a culture of sexual promiscuity (Bogle, 2008:90; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:147). Most freshmen students of UHK had no experiences with sex, a fraction had had some light sexual activity in adolescence, and experiences with intercourse were a rarity. The night talks corrected any overestimations that students might have had of the sexual experiences of peers, and it normalized a peer

culture where sex was notoriously absent. Night talks about sex in O-camp were thus overly conservative in what they conveyed.

None of the students believed that young men inflated their numbers. Young women, on the other hand, were not sure about the truthfulness of the reported sexual experiences of their female peers and suggested that there might be some underreporting.

*JJS: Do you think they were telling the truth, or were they a little bit underestimating [it]?*

*T: Most boys are telling the truth, but girls I don't know (laughing) (Tam, freshman student).*

It seems plausible that the young women at O-camp were telling the truth, since hardly any sexual activity was reported by young men, and surveys about sexual experiences among youth in Hong Kong indicate that a small fraction of adolescent boys and girls have had intercourse (TFPAHK, 2011:81). What Tam's remarks show, along with those of other female students, is the presence of a double standard on UHK. Keeping one's virginity until marriage is still highly valued for women in Hong Kong. While premarital sex had no, or little, negative reputational consequences for young men, this was different for young women. Sexual experiences could severely damage their reputations and consequently their standing on and outside of campus.

Besides in O-camps, *ceot pool* was institutionalized in other social arrangements on campus. Departments, colleges and even some student societies ran Secret Angel Programs over the course of a few weeks at the beginning of the academic year. These programs were designed for students to meet other students. Two roles existed within these programs, that of the master and that of the angel. An organizing committee, often of senior students, coupled the participants with one another. Every student played both the master and the angel role. While the angel knew who the master was, the angel stayed anonymous to the master during the course of the program.

An angel did all sort of niceties for the master. He or she would send small gifts to the master, for instance sweets or stationary. On rainy days, angels left umbrellas outside of the master's classroom, so he or she could walk over the extensive UHK campus in the pouring rain without getting wet. Angels sent attentive and flattering text messages to masters and provided support and care. Oran, for instance, organized hiking trips for the faculty during the period of the Secret Angel Program. These events attracted little interest of fellow students, however, a small group of

friends always joined these trips. One of them was Oran's secret angel, who mobilized her friends to join and support the activities he organized.

The true identity of the angels was revealed at the end of the program at a party hosted by the organizing committee. Most of the matches were between young men and young women, but this was not guaranteed, hence masters were never entirely sure of the angels' sex. While students emphasized that these programs were primarily about fostering friendships, they did have an undeniable romantic undertone. This was apparent in the Secret Angel Program that ran between the engineering and nursing faculties, two disciplines with unbalanced sex ratios. While romantic coupling might not be the stated aim of these programs, it was undeniably a match-making institution. Most students reported that the Secret Angel Program did not result in continued friendships or romances. For Oran, however, it was a prelude to a friendship and eventually a long-term intimate relationship, and at the time of the interview the two lovers had plans of marriage.

## PEER CONTROL AND CONFORMITY OF GENDER AND SEX NORMS

Residential college campuses are often tightly integrated communities with strong peer control that demand a high degree of conformity from students. UHK was no exception, as the dominant sexual culture was rigorously maintained. This did not only occur through the institutes of relationship formation, but also resulted from peer control and peer policing of gender and sexual norms. Inappropriate gender behavior within the realm of courtship was policed by students by the invocation of certain abysmal symbolic identities. These 'abysmal specters' were cultural categories containing 'abject' gender practices within the realm courtship, incongruent with the dominant ideals of manhood and womanhood in *ceot pool* (Pascoe, 2007).

Social constructivist theorists of gender argue that gender constantly needs to be 'performed' within the interaction order to acquire its seemingly natural and coherent character. Gender is done as 'a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being' (Butler, 1990:43). Gender norms are constantly reinvigorated by actors within the interaction order. As Pascoe (2007) –drawing on Butler (1990)- argues, this endless invocation of gender norms is done by a continuous naming of an 'outsider', an abject category containing acts that fall outside the normative gender categories. By continuously naming the gendered outsider, actors 'do' gender. However, these 'abysmal specters' are also linked to gendered sexual norms.

Invoking the abysmal specter is thus not only about doing gender, it is also about continuously invigorating sexual norms. Like gender, these norms need to be made and remade continuously, and this is done by student of UHK through their labeling of abysmal specters.

One of these abysmal specters was the *gun jam* –觀 (gun1)音(jam1)- and the *gun jam bing* –觀 (gun1)音(jam1)兵(bing1)- category, which translate loosely to a goddess and the goddess soldiers. A *gun jam* in students' argot was an exceptionally beautiful young woman with many admirers –soldiers- who performed a gamut of tasks for her, for instance, taking her out for dinner, paying her bills, writing her academic assignments and buying her gifts. The relationship between *gun jam* and *gun jam bing* is inherently exploitative. *Gun jam bing* might think that all these acts of affection and care lead to a relationship with the *gun jam*, but this is never the case. The *gun jam* keeps her soldiers on a leash, always asking for additional favors without ever reciprocating them romantically.

*It is this concept that the girl has this many guys around her, and there's no intimate interest. It's just that people are following her to do stuff for her. But yeah, it's very common in local schools. Because she is super pretty, and she has a lot of followers, and they will do things for her because she is very popular and she's well looked up too (Sandy, freshman student).*

All students knew the category and used it to denote certain gendered intimate behavior that was incongruent with dominant ideals of womanhood on campus. Surprisingly, few students knew a *gun jam* first hand. She was often a distant specter that was prevalent on other campuses.

The typology of *gun jam* and *gun jam bing* could be used as flirtatious play. Students ironically called girls *gun jam*, or the more positive *neo san* –女(neoi5)神(san4) –*gun jam* without *gun jam bing*- to complement them on their looks. Young men used *gun jam bing* as a form of self-labeling, to playfully insinuate that they admired the young woman for her beauty. However, underneath this whimsical usage of the terms lay an underlying critique of a particular set of gender relations and sexual practices. No young woman, for instance, would use *gun jam* or *neo san* as a self-label. When I asked freshman student Sandy, who was obviously popular in the college dating scene, if peers called her a *gun jam* or *neo san*, she responded: 'No, I have admirers, but if I'm not interested I will just tell them.' The usage of the terms implied that courtship should never be exploitative, and female students should only flirt with men when they were 'seriously' interested in a committed relationship.

JJS: *So, is it a good or a bad thing to be a gun jam?*

M: *I think it's a bad thing, extremely bad.*

JJS: *Why?*

M: *Because the gun jam asks for service[s]. You have to help me do this thing, and [...] even [if] she has a boyfriend, she will ask for other boys to help her. It means she's not serious enough to have that relationship (Maria, freshman student).*

The symbolic specter of the *gun jam* and a *gun jam bing* and the way they were used was intrinsically a critique on young women's flirtatious play outside the context of a committed relationship. Such play was allowed in the relationship formation process but only if the young woman was 'serious', meaning that she was primed to form a long-term, monogamous dyad with a young man. Additionally, such play was allowed within the context of a committed, monogamous relationship. The continuous usage of the *gun jam* and *gun jam bing* categories therefore affirmed the long-term monogamous relationships as a dominant script on campus.

The *gun jam* category not only entailed a gendered critique on intimate practices that defied the dominant sexual script, it occasionally also criticized a particular femininity. This became apparent in my conversation with sophomore student Clint.

*The gun jam in Hong Kong likes to pretend to be an ABC. This means American-born Chinese. They pretend to be American or Canadian in their tongue, and actually they are not because they think that it is more attractive to be an ABC or BBC. Usually their hair will be very long, and they wear a lot of makeup, and their dress is very sexy, having short pants and low-cut shirts. That is one of the symbols for the gun jam (Clint, freshman student).*

The *gun jam* label at times seemed to coincide with the 'whore stigma' (Pheterson, 1996). 'Whore', in this case, is a label to denote a wide set of deviations from White middle-class ideals of womanhood, amongst which are sexual licentiousness, autonomy from men and immodesty in demeanor and attire (Pheterson, 1996:84). In contrast to the broad category of the 'whore', a *gun jam*, however, was commonly reserved to denote a specific type of inappropriate gender behavior, namely within the context of courtship between men and women. Students had a term for slut, *gei neoi* – 妓(gei6)女(neoi5) – meaning chicken and slang for prostitute. This term, however, was extremely vulgar, and students mentioned that it was seldom used to

denote fellow students. It was only used on rare occasions, when it explicitly referred to the sexual licentiousness of female students. The *gun jam* also bore close resemblance to the 'gold digger' construct, a common trope in the symbolic repertoire of American college students to denote exploitive behavior of women in intimate relationships. However, unlike the 'gold digger', the *gun jam* abstained from sex for material rewards but instead used her charm. At UHK this instrumental, materialistic femininity was devalued. Students thus utilized the *gun jam* concept primarily to denote inappropriate gender acts within *ceot pool*.

The *gun jam bing* typology, on the other hand, applied to inappropriate practices of men within their intimate interactions with women. While male students could playfully denote their own behavior with the *gun jam bing* construct, it was an abject identity when applied to others. The *gun jam bing* denoted a set of practices that was not viable for young men in the context of courtship, such as being overly accommodating, servicing and subjugated.

*JJS: Is it bad to be a gun jam bing?*

*C: Yes, definitely.*

*JJS: Can you give an example of a gun jam bing?*

*C: Well Jacob is definitely a gun jam bing, as a gun jam bing. You have a lot of duties. If you just hang out with a gun jam, you need to pay for her dinner. If the gun jam wants to go shopping, you will need to pay the bill for her, and that is why they are called gun jam bing (Clint, freshman student).*

The men and women touched by the specters of the *gun jam bing* and the *gun jam* felt the repercussions. Clint and Jacob, for instance, met each other on O-camp. While they initially got along well, Clint's stance towards Jacob changed after Jacob became accommodating and servicing towards a young woman. Jacob and his flirt became a source of mockery among his friends and this had social consequences.

*C: Jacob [...] was playing with other groups, with some girl that is really outgoing and likes to flirt with other boys, and we do not like that girl. So, we just created another group with me and the other girls, but I think Jacob didn't recognize that we created a new group, but since then we didn't post any pictures or have chats in that group, and we talk about things about Jacob and the girl in our new group.*

*JJS: So what didn't you like about the girl?*

*C: Well, in Hong Kong we have a new term which is called the gun jam, which means that the girl is really beautiful and smart, but the personality of the girl*

*is a bit bad because she loves to flirt with boys but not being together with the boy. So, that gun jam will have a lot of boyfriends, and she will have a lot of male friends around her, and that we call a gun jam (Clint, freshman student).*

Carrying the *gun jam* and *gun jam bing* labels could result in subtle forms of social exclusion. This was not radical exclusion, in that students withheld all contact with the stigmatized persons, but it meant that these defamed individuals were given cold shoulders, hampering their ability to forge friendships on campus.

Besides the *gun jam* and her *bing*, another prominent figure in the symbolic repertoire of college campus culture was the *gau gung* – 狗 (gau2) 公 (gung1) – literally meaning male dog and similar to the concept ‘player’ within American popular culture. A *gau gung* was a boy who aggressively and indiscriminately pursued a multitude of girls for intimate relationships, both successfully and fruitlessly.

*There is a stereotype of gau gung, something [like] describing a boy as a dog [...] because some boys like to flirt [with] many girls, and then we describe them as a dog [...] because when a dog wants to have babies, they will also run to other dogs to have reproduction. [...] So, we will describe those boys as dogs because they are just chasing other girls all around and keep flirting with them (Elza, sophomore student).*

Students used the term to denote a set of inappropriate acts by men in the intimate realm. Freshmen student Marion, for instance, triggered the interest of a fellow student on a college organized study trip to Thailand. During the trip, the young man became progressively closer to her and clearly signaled his interest. The unwanted attention continued after their return to Hong Kong. The young man kept sending messages, despite Marion ignoring his calls.

*He called me eleven times, and... my sister answered one for me, and she lets me hear his voice and hear what he's saying. My sister said 'oh she's in the bathroom', and the boy is saying: 'Oh please, oh please talk to me, let me talk to you'. It's so disgusting for me because it's kind of annoying for me. I think that is not normal approach. Yeah, and this is the first time I meet this kind of guy who is so desperate. That is called gau gung in Chinese, like, that means the boy is so desperate and their actions are so fast. [...] He sent me a few voice messages [that] last for three minutes, and I don't even want to listen. I don't want to hear that voice, and then I give [my phone to] some friends to hear, to listen to that, and then my friends said: 'Oh, he's really gau gung' (Marion, freshman student).*

The *gau gung* was an abject identity with which students denoted unacceptable sexual practices of men, such as an overly assertive, maybe at times even aggressive, pursuit of women, expressing a romantic interest shortly after meeting, and pursuing multiple women within a short time frame. The *gau gung* was a commentary on demoted intimate affairs on campus and affirmed dominant sexual norms. The usage of the term affirmed that intimate relationships should emerge within the context of a previously established friendship, in which the buildup towards a romance was cautious and slow. Within this script, a man should only express a romantic interest after thoroughly knowing and appreciating the woman's personality, and he should be primed towards a long-term commitment.

The *gau gung* category showed a vastly different college campus sexual culture from what is known from US counterparts. On US campuses, the 'player' is often, at least among young men, a high-status identity. On UHK a masculine status-enhancing dynamic of sexual conquest was largely absent, concomitant with conventional *wen-wu* ideals of manhood (Louie, 2002). When discussing the sexual double standard on UHK in relation to that of American college campus culture, one male student remarked the following:

*For the guys, it's not the same [in Hong Kong]. I mean for the guy, I think people would think that you're a bad guy, that you have a lot of relationships. So, [he's] dangerous people! But for the girls it's the same as [in] the western countries (Norton, sophomore student).*

Other male students were less explicit in their renunciation of players. Sophomore student Ike, for instance, mentioned that he respected players. The appreciation, in contrast to the American 'player', was not related to the sexual conquest of women itself, but to the good social skills that one needed in order to lure women into intimate and sexual affairs. 'I admire those players, because it is not easy to be a player. You have to be very charming (Ike).' According to Ike, there was a sexual double standard in college intimate and sexual culture on UHK. 'If girls are players, they are called sluts, or whore –*gei neoi* - and boys would just be playboys and the comments are less serious (Ike).' Non-monogamous sexuality was stigmatized for both young men and women on UHK, but the repercussions of such behavior were more serious for the latter than the former.

*Gun jam*, *gun jam bing* and *gau gung* were abject identities. These categories were not permanent identity markers, but were temporary labels that stuck to individuals who acted incongruently with dominant ideals of femininity and masculinity. These labels were symbolic tools to discipline gender inappropriate acts, especially within

the realm of intimate relationships. The *gun jam*, *gun jam bing* and *gau gung*, were symbolic entities with which students invoked and invigorated gender and sex norms. By drawing on these stereotypes, students continuously made and remade the ordering of sexual scripts on college campus, with casual sex at the debased bottom and a privileged long-term monogamous dyad at the top.

## YOUTH SEXUALITY AS REBELLION?

The sexual mores of youth often contrast those of the adult world, and this contrast is one of the defining markers with which distinctions between youth and adulthood are made. At times, this distinct sexual code of youth is a form of rebellion against the adult norms, which are perceived as formal, rigid and conservative. Adults, on the other hand, often see these distinct sexual codes of youth as ‘dangerous’ and ‘immoral’. This perspective on youth sexuality is particularly dominant in America, where youth construe their sexual norms as ‘liberated’ in contrast to the rigid sexual norms of adulthood. Adults, on the other hand, ‘dramatize’ youth’s sexuality and construe it as ‘risky’, flawed by uncontrollable urges that are potentially detrimental for adolescents’ emotional and relational development (Schalet, 2011:17). Students of UHK also had a distinct sexual culture, but to what extent was *ceot pool* a rebellion against adult sexual norms?

Before the students entered university in Hong Kong, their parents almost univocally forbade them to form intimate relationships. Instead, parents believed their children should devote all their time and energy to academic achievements. This form of ‘family governmentality’ made sense in the specific cultural and political economic environment of Hong Kong, in which families were responsible for their own material survival and scholarly excellence was culturally valued. When students entered university, however, nearly all parents changed their perspective on the desirability of intimate relationships for their children, and they inflicted a relationship imperative on their children. Most parents saw university as a suitable environment for their children to find a marriage partner, since it was an environment with many ambitious and talented youth who would likely secure a prosperous future. When students reached their early twenties, most family members started to pressure them to form committed relationships. This was especially pronounced around the Chinese New Year. In this festival, married relatives gave envelopes with money –red envelopes– to their single family members and inquired about their relationship status, often whimsically urging them to find a significant other, for instance, by saying ‘better to give this to others and not receive anymore’ (Marion).

I: *I want to have a family and I want to have children, and I have family pressure, because in the Chinese New Year my relatives will say: 'Oh, you are going to retire? What are you going to do?' 'Are you going to play grandson?' And then I say: 'hahaha,' [sarcastically] because I am not in a relationship.*

JJS: *Really?*

I: *It is kind of teasing, but also giving pressure (Ike, sophomore student).*

*Ceot pool* was a distinct element of college campus culture on UHK, but it did not contrast the adult sexual norms. The sexual norms on campus corresponded to those of the adult world, and parents and senior family members hoped that students would *ceot pool*.

The surveillance of the sexuality of youth was part of the practices of 'family governmentality' in Hong Kong. This was also the case in later years, when youth were enrolled in university. The focus of the surveillance differed for young men and young women. Within Confucian traditions, the continuation of the family lineage is of utmost importance and is the responsibility of sons (Hwang, 1999; Kong, 2004). Thus, family pressure to form relationships was more pronounced for young men than for women. On the other hand, male students were free to choose their own partners, while some women reported that their parents interfered with their choice of dates. One female student, Rachel (23), for instance mentioned that her parents strongly disapproved of her previous date. The young man was not a university student and her parents deemed it likely that he would have a lower income than her in the future. Down dating was generally not acceptable for women, and many parents were particularly adamant about this. Men, on the other hand, had no such restrictions. Dating with fellow university students was preferred, but none of the male interviewees mentioned indictments against dating a young woman of lower social economic status.

While virginity until marriage was not a concern for men, it was for women, and some mothers at times inquired about their daughters' sexual experiences and asserted the importance of keeping one's virginity until marriage. Some mothers in Hong Kong thus surveilled their daughters' sexuality severely, as Jackson and Ho (2014) also found. Sandy's story indicated that this surveillance of sexuality continued even when virginity was no longer an option. Sandy told her mother about her hookup experience in her freshmen year. Her mother's response was surprisingly understanding, even though she had repeatedly told Sandy about the importance of keeping one's virginity. Her mother even shared a similar experience she had had in her youth. Nevertheless, in the weeks following the revelation, her mother kept a close check on Sandy's activities.

- S: After a few weeks, she was more cautious when I was going out and meeting people because she would think that I was just going ahead and do things.*
- JJS: What would she do?*
- S: She would just ask me: 'who are you going out with? Where are you going? How long?' She wanted to know all these details, 'Is it a girl or is this a guy?' (Sandy, freshman student).*

For Sandy, these inflictions of her mother felt like signs of distrust and moral condemnation. Sandy did, however, alter her perspective on sex and relationships. 'Now I know myself a bit more. You have to experience these things to know what you are looking for. I wouldn't do it casually anymore' (Sandy). Sandy realigned her convictions about sex and relationships with the sexual mores of her parents. In the end, her mother's surveillance accomplished its intent.

Students did not rebel against the sexual mores of their parents' generation, but they often critiqued the lack of emotional intimacy and spiritual closeness in their parents' relationships. Students framed the relationships of their parents as being 'cold', which contrasted their aspirations for their own relationships.

- I: They [parents] were introduced by their friends, [...] and then they went on a date, and I don't know exactly how many dates they went on- maybe like two or three. They didn't meet very much, and then they got married. [...]*
- JJS: 2 or 3 dates?*
- I: Yes, but it was very normal in that time, [...] you would just get married in a very short period. Like nowadays, we want to know each other and see if we are suitable for each other, blablalba (Irene, sophomore student).*

Not all students' parents got married in such a short period of time, but, like Irene, most students saw a dramatic change in the relationship ideals of theirs and the previous generation. Their parents often got together out of filial obligation, while they partnered out of a sincere appreciation of their partner's personality and out of an intensely felt and cherished emotional proximity. For students, this latter motive was the only viable one for forging intimate relationships and thus, in a way, it devalued the authenticity of their parents' relationships. While sexual norms of students of UHK largely overlapped with those of the previous generations, their aspirational ideals differed. The 'transformation of intimacy' was a youth rebellion in Hong Kong.

## CONCLUSION

University Hong Kong had a distinct courtship regime called *ceot pool* that contrasted profoundly with the hook ups on American college campuses. *Ceot pool* was a relatively short time period in which two students moved from friendship or acquaintance towards a monogamous dyad. It had distinct courtship rituals in which the young man proposed a relationship and the young woman asked for a time for contemplation. Within this time, students talked about the expectations of the relationship, about the roles they wanted to play in each other's lives, about their ambition to morally and emotionally support each other, and about their desire for a deep spiritual connection. Sex was not a part of *ceot pool*. Sexual activity was only deemed appropriate within a committed relationship and only then when partners had been together for an extensive period of time. Within the committed relationship, a slow intensification of sexual activity coincided with a gradual buildup of emotional intimacy.

Sexual norms were rigorously maintained on UHK, partly through the institutionalized nature of *ceot pool* and partly through the high level of social control on campus. *Ceot pool* was entrenched within various social institutions on campus, such as Orientation camps and Secret Angel Programs, which rigidified the sexual regime. Furthermore, the UHK student body was a tightly integrated community, with thick and extensively entwined networks of students. As is often the case in such environments, social control was fierce, and this impacted sexual norms. The abject gender constructs of *gun jam*, *gun jam bing* and *gau gung* were invoked by students to police transgressions of sexual behavior and thus to instantiate dominant sexual mores.

While *ceot pool* was the regime of courtship on UHK, students were knowledgeable about other sexual scripts. These sexual scripts were part of the symbolic repertoire of students and were infused with moral values that positioned them in a hierarchical order. Hooking up was a known script on campus, but was debased and largely considered an ideational construct with which students reflected upon their own intimate doings. In comparison with the hookup script, their intimate relationships seemed successful and respectable. Grand narratives of modernity sketch a homogenization of sexuality and intimate relationships in the world. In these narratives, sex is increasingly decoupled from committed relationships. My research suggests that modernity in Hong Kong indeed meant that a script of casual sex was part of the symbolic repertoire, but this did not mean that it was an enacted practice. On the contrary, the hookup script on University Hong Kong was a symbolic resource with which students constructed boundaries between us and them,

between their sexual practices and those on American college campuses. Rather than a homogenization of sexuality in modernity, Hong Kong illustrates the opposite, as the globalization of sexual scripts increased the symbolic resources that students utilized to mark distinctions.

Seemingly similar changes in material, economic and juridical gender relations around the world do not necessarily result in similar changes in sex and intimate relationships, as grand narratives of modernity seem to suggest. In Hong Kong, just as in America, women have entered the labor force *en masse* and outnumber and outperform men in higher education. This enhanced the autonomy of women, however, has resulted in a slight, but not drastic relaxation of the restrictions on female sexuality. Within *ceot pool*, women were responsible for maintaining sexual boundaries, and the social consequences for breaking sexual norms were larger for women than for men. Despite the large inroads towards gender equality in Hong Kong, inequalities in norms regulating young men's and women's sexualities pertain.

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# 7

## THE 'GAME' IN HONG KONG: HOOKUPS OR DATES OR...?

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In recent decades, Hong Kong has experienced large changes in gender and intimate relations. The question explored within this project is whether this resulted in a decoupling of sex and committed relationships among youth. In the previous chapter, we looked at the dating culture of a college campus in Hong Kong. Students were familiar with the hookup script, but only a few had ever enacted it. For most students, hooking up was a symbolic resource with which they reflected on their intimate doings and demarcated cultural boundaries between themselves and 'foreign' students. In this chapter, I investigate sexual norms within another domain of youth: the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, comprising bars, clubs, restaurant, cafes and high streets. The focus will once again be on practitioners of the 'game'.

Players of the 'game' are an extreme case. Within the competitive professionalism of the 'game', a player displaying 'pickup skills' in the field accrues status among peers. One marker of skills is a limited timespan between first contact and sexual activity, as is the case in a hookup script. 'Game' practitioners, especially those deeply emerged in its competitive dynamic, were primed towards forging casual sexual relations with women. If anything like a heterosexual hookup culture existed within the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, I would expect to find it among these men.

The 'game' was allegedly brought to Hong Kong in the early 2000s by a British expat. Inspired by American 'pickup' coaches who were active online and the numerous news groups that had emerged in the US in which users in a particular locality shared the ins and outs of heterosexual competences, he started an English language Yahoo group for men interested in 'pickup' in East Asia. Initially, a small group of expat men learned about the news group via word of mouth and participated in it. These men used the forum to exchange theories on and strategies for forging sexual relations with Chinese women. Much of this material was bootlegged from American 'pickup' coaches, but some was creatively reworked and adapted to the

local context. The group also had an offline component. A group of active users met regularly within the nightlife of Hong Kong to play the 'game' together.

Membership grew after the publication of the international best seller *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* (2005), by Neil Strauss, but remained limited to around fifty active users and two-hundred participants in total. Since then the membership has changed; some members have left, others have come, but the total number of active users has remained roughly the same over the years. Not all of these users resided in Hong Kong. The news group was directed to men all over East Asia who were proficient in English. This mainly attracted two kinds of men: expats, predominantly White men in their late twenties and early thirties who had moved to the region for career opportunities, from Europe, America and Australia and overseas educated Chinese in the same age group. I prefer the term 'overseas educated Chinese' instead of the popular 'ABCs' –American born Chinese-, 'BBCs' –British born Chinese- and 'CBCs' –Canadian born Chinese-, because it more accurately denotes the life-circumstances of these men. Not all were officially born 'overseas', but nearly all were partially educated in an Anglo-Saxon country and had recently returned to China for career opportunities.

In 2007, the news group was transformed into an online forum by its founder, and three years later Herald, who came to be one of my key informants, took over its moderation. Access to the forum was restricted to members only. Neophytes had to write the administrator an email and explain why they wanted to participate on the forum. Then they received a phone call by the administrator to explicate their motives. This screening by phone was mainly to ensure that the forum attracted men who had the ambition to become active participants in the local community and also to keep potentially disruptive users away from the forum. For instance, it screened out critics of the 'game' and, more importantly, people working for the Chinese Public Security Bureau who might put the forum behind the Great Fire-wall. I do not know whether these fears were founded, but it did inspire the administrators to adopt the aforementioned screening protocol.

The 'East Asia Seduction Forum' –this is a pseudonym- was not the only online platform on heterosexual competences directed at English-speaking men living in East Asia. Numerous other forums existed, and most of these were run by 'pickup' coaches. These forums had a commercial component, although in most cases membership was free. Coaches used these forums to advertise and sell commercial products such as 'pickup' boot camps and self-help manuals. The 'East Asia Seduction Forum' was an outlier in this regard, since it was run by volunteers. Besides these English language platforms, Cantone and Chinese online groups on the 'game' also existed. One such a group was 'The Hong Kong Game' –this is a pseudonym- a very

active and reasonably sized Cantonese ‘pickup’ community of a few hundred active participants, affiliated with a commercial ‘pickup’ coaching program.

Although I visited a number of boot camps hosted by the ‘Hong Kong Game’ group and got acquainted with some of its members, my research focused on the ‘East Asia Seduction Forum’. At the time of writing my research proposal, I did not know about the existence of this Cantonese group of ‘game’ practitioners, and I only learned about them at the end of my first round of fieldwork. At that point, I fully immersed myself in the group of players of the ‘East Asia Seduction Forum’ and decided to maintain my focus on this group. From the numerous visits I made to this group of Cantonese players of the ‘game’, I infer that I would have come to similar conclusions if I had focused on the Anglo community of practitioners. Both communities were extreme cases: in both groups men were primed to casual sex, and these groups had comparable hookup rates. They did have different tactics and theories of ‘game’, so some research results would have been different.

Postcolonial structures of power shaped the sexual relations of the men of the ‘East Asia Seduction Forum’. Orientalist discourses informed the meaning that my interviewees gave to sexual dynamics between them and their interlocutors within the Hong Kongese urban nightlife and supplied them with a vocabulary of motives for why they the primarily engaged with Hong Kong Chinese women. ‘Orientalism’ is an Anglo-Saxon and European discourse of othering and distancing that construes the Orient -and more generally Asia- in conventional stereotypes, where the ‘east’ is what the ‘west’ is not. This body of knowledge is a product of political power structures that aim to establish dominance over Asia (Said, 1995[1978]). Asian bodies have often been eroticized within this discourse of othering, which concomitantly entails a de-erotization of White bodies. At the same time, post-colonialism informs the discursive framing of White men in Asia, at times construing them as ‘emissaries of the modern’, which can be a source of both admiration and moral denunciation (Henry, 2013; Hirakawa, 2004; Kelsky, 1999; Moskowitz, 2008).

Social scientists have developed quite an extensive body of research on the intersections between orientalism, and post-colonialism more generally, and sexual relations. Some have looked at how post-colonial discourses inform the longing for Asian female and male bodies by White men and vice versa (Hirakawa, 2004; Kelsky, 1999; Kong, 2002). Others have looked at how post-colonial power relations structure interracial sexual contact (Kong, 2002; Ho and Tsang, 2000). The latter approach has predominantly been taken in research on male same-sex contact. Fung (2005), for instance, argues that within interracial gay pornography, Asian men always play the submissive role as bottoms or servants. In research on same-

sex contact between Hong Kong and White men in London, Kong (2002) found considerable structural inequalities in these affairs. Hong Kong men nearly always abided by the lifestyle and language preferences of their White partners, who were often older, bigger and more conventionally masculine (2002:33). Others argue that the reconfiguration of political power due to decolonialization translated into a declining status position of White men in Hong Kong and, coincidentally, increasing power of Hong Kong men in negotiating diverse sexual roles in interracial contact (Ho and Tsang, 2000). A question to consider from this research is whether post-colonial power structures tilted the power balance within the erotic encounters of my interviewees. How did postcolonial discourses of othering inform the sexual and relational desires of my research subjects? And, to what extent did these discourses affect the bargaining power of them within intimate encounters?

In addition to postcolonial discourses, gender was another structure of inequality affecting the power balance within intimate encounters of my interviewees. Despite impressive inroads to improve the position of women in society, gender relations in Hong Kong remain unequal. In the domain of sexuality and gender roles within intimate relations, this inequality is obvious. The data discussed in chapter five pin-points that women's sexuality is more restricted than men's, and gender roles within intimate relations tie women to the domain of caring and nurturing. These gendered structures of behavior and concomitant discourses also affected the power balance within intimate relations of my interviewees and their Hong Kongese partners. The question is how this impacted the enacted sexual scripts of my respondents.

Within the array of sexual scripts that 'game' practitioners were knowledgeable of, a hookup was a prioritized format. They, however, perceived a tension between the blueprint for the sexual encounter that they preferred and what their female interlocutors favored. According to 'pickup' practitioners, their flirts favored a sexual script in which a romantic liaison espoused from a friendship and a gradual progression of physical and emotional intimacy coincided. This discrepancy in expectations of the intimate encounter gave rise to tensions within interactions that will be delineated in depth in a following section.

Despite the fact that 'game' practitioners perceived contrasting aspirations between them and their Hong Kong Chinese female interlocutors, they were primarily interested in Asian women and not other ethnic/racial groups within the urban erotic contact zone. Orientalist imaginaries colored their desires for Hong Kong Chinese women and Asian femininity. Within this narrative, Asian female bodies were sexualized and portrayed as hyper-feminine and contrasted with White female bodies, who were concomitantly desexualized and masculinized. Many of the Hong Kong Chinese women who players of the 'game' interacted with had little

interest in a sexual relation with them. This resulted in countless rejections. To make sense of these 'failed' opportunities, 'game' practitioners drew on another gender discourse, that of material and pragmatic Hong Kongese women. Gender discourses also tainted the ways that players approached 'pickup'. Discourses on Asian women's essence informed how they thought about their own manhood. What comprised an attractive masculinity with the field? And, how should they behave as men in order to forge sexual relations with Hong Kong Chinese women? These gender discourses shaped and informed the 'pickup' strategies that practitioners enacted within the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong. The second section of this chapter will delineate these gender discourses that 'game' practitioners drew upon.

Next, I explore the 'pickup' rituals and strategies of players of the 'game' in Hong Kong. Practitioners perceived a tension between dominant sexual mores within the urban nightlife and a hookup script. They, however, were primed towards casual sex. To forge casual sexual relations in a context where 'serious' dating was the norm, players of the 'game' enacted numerous 'pickup' rites and strategies. The last section of this chapter addresses these rituals and tactics and how practitioners dealt with violations of dominant sexual mores. After these three empirical sections, I reflect on the main question addressed in this chapter. What sexual scripts were enacted by players of the 'game' in Hong Kong. Did they hookup, date or enact other sexual scripts?

## CASE AND METHODS

During fieldwork, which comprised three visits to Hong Kong and a total of seven months of fieldwork, I got to know twenty-three 'game' players from the 'East Asia Seduction Forum' who resided, at least partially, in Hong Kong. I conducted scheduled interviews with fifteen of these men, and I interviewed eight men multiple times, ranging from two to three. I asked my interviewees whether they preferred that I record the conversations or take notes. With six respondents, I recorded the interviews, while I took notes with the nine other. All names in the chapter are anonymized. I also accompanied players of the 'game' in their attempts to meet Hong Kong Chinese women in the urban nightlife. Every Friday evening in Hong Kong, members of the 'East Asia Seduction Forum' met in a nightlife district and 'played the field' together. I attended most of these meetings during fieldwork. I also accompanied key informants in other routines of their everyday life. I shared an office with one of my informants and visited others at work. During their time off work, we spent numerous leisure hours together. For example, I accompanied informants on

hikes, boat trips and travels. This intimate hanging out resulted in a large number of informal conversations with informants that I documented in notes.

Most of my informants were active participants on the 'East Asia Seduction Forum'. They contributed their insight about various relevant topics for the forum. Some wrote field reports of their experiences with the 'game' in the Hong Kong nightlife; others wrote about heterosexual competences, such as 'pickup' strategies and grooming and styling; some contributed reviews of nightlife establishments, discussing which bars, clubs and restaurants were suitable locations to 'play the field'; many others commented on these posts. These writings were a valuable resource and an additional source of data in this research.

My informants were a diverse group of men. Of the twenty-three men I met in total, four worked or had worked as professional 'pickup' coaches, and nine other men were long-term practitioners (between one and three years). Most of the data in this chapter comes from these informants. The ten other practitioners were neophytes of the 'game' who had been involved with this community for less than a year. Ten of my twenty-three informants identified as White and were born and raised in Continental Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia. Eight informants identified as ethnically Chinese and were raised and educated within Australia, America or the United Kingdom. One informant identified as half White and half Chinese and was born and raised in America. Another man identified as African-American, and two men were non-Chinese Asians who were born and raised in Hong Kong. Additionally, one man had spent his whole life in Hong Kong and identified as Chinese. For all but one of these men, English was the main language they used in their everyday interactions, and five spoke Cantonese fluently.

The paragraph above illustrates the ethnic diversity of this group of players of the 'game', and this diversity, albeit to a lesser extent, was also apparent in their class backgrounds. Two men came from upper-middle-class backgrounds, nineteen from middle-class families and two from working-class families. This classification is based on the professions of my interviewees' parents and their own educational and professional careers. My respondents' ages ranged from twenty-four to thirty-six. All of my informants had professional careers within the city and –aside from those who worked commercially as 'pickup' coaches– were employed in industries such as finance, consulting, sales, law, and education. None of these men had migrated to Hong Kong for the 'game'. Some had been involved in 'pickup' communities in Europe, Australia or America, while others had taken an interest in the 'game' in Hong Kong. Even the men who worked as 'pickup' coaches had initially moved to East Asia for their professional careers at the time.

## A PERCEIVED TENSION IN ORDERINGS OF SEXUAL SCRIPTS

A discourse on sexual morality within the urban erotic contact zone in Hong Kong existed among my interviewees. This discourse implicitly elaborated on the dominant script of intimate coupling within the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, as it was perceived by players of the 'game'. This does not mean, however, that only one sexual script existed within this realm nor that players of the 'game' thought that the Hong Kong Chinese women they interacted with only knew about one sexual script or were all primed for 'serious' dating. They were aware that multiple sexual scripts within the urban nightlife of Hong Kong existed, and that the women they interacted with were also aware of the variety of scripts, and some might even be primed towards casual sex. In the following section, I elaborate on this discourse of sexual morality in the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, according to my interviewees. I also describe the sexual scripts prioritized by my informants. I argue that the latter did not always correspond with their discourse on sexual mores within the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, and this resulted in challenges.

Their discourse on sexual mores in Hong Kong emphasized that partners would meet via an established social connection. 'Asians don't talk to strangers, so when girls are approached they might actually freak out a little and don't really know how to react', explained 'pickup' coach Martin. Most of my interviewees did not have an extensive network of Hong Kong Chinese acquaintances. They looked for sexual partners in the urban nightlife, and this became a challenge.

In the eyes of 'game' practitioners, light sexual activity enacted in public was inappropriate in Hong Kong. Chinese-American player Jack, for instance, thought that 'grinding' was acceptable in America but not in Hong Kong. Most players also considered other forms of explicit sexual touching in public, for instance kissing, to be inappropriate. Practitioners also believed that some sexual acts carried different meaning within the city-state. Herald, for instance, reflected on his effort to kiss in public:

*I'm starting to re-assess the role of kiss closing in game in Asia. Historically, I always saw the kiss close as part of a sequence of events in the sarge. It is a way to show that you are getting where you want to go. In London, for example, I would quite often kiss close a target the first time I met her. In Asia, I think this mindset is damaging me. [...] It feels that often an on-the-lips k-close is a big deal for a target here, and she doesn't want to do it with someone she has only recently met, and definitely not in front of her friends or other people.*

Much 'pickup' advice emphasized a relatively quick escalation of sexual acts. In the contexts where most 'game' practitioners had their first heterosexual experiences, in Europe and America, enacting such acts in public would not attract much attention. Players thought that this was different in Hong Kong, and this was another potential source of strife.

'Game' practitioners did not see a decoupling of sex and committed relationships in Hong Kong. On the contrary, they believed that sex remained confined to a relationship context.

*They [Chinese men and women] have this idea that you are supposed to make a confession of love before sex happens. Yeah, it's violated all the time, but it's sort of like the three-day rule in the 'west'. It's violated all the time, but there is still this belief that it is the right thing to do (Martin).*

The flipside of this norm was that casual sex conflicted with dominant sexual mores. 'Pickup' coach Martin, for instance, mentioned that within Hong Kong –and this applied to most of continental East Asia– '[...] it is more difficult to get SNLs [*same night lays*] than in the "west", here the game is more long term'. Same night lays in players' argot comprised a sexual encounter with a person who was a perfect stranger the day prior to the encounter. 'Long-term game' implied a relatively long period between first contact and sex, which lasted at least multiple days but was more likely to be weeks, months or even years. Within this time, there was a gradual buildup of emotional intimacy and a slow progression of sexual activity. Most of my interviewees did not want to play by these rules, and this was another challenge for their 'game'.

According to my interviewees, most women in Hong Kong construed courtship as a phase that would culminate in a committed relationship and eventually marriage. This contrasted with how dating was historically perceived in the US, where it was first and foremost a fun, leisure activity of youth (Bailey, 1988:25). In contrast, in Hong Kong, a citywide representative survey of youths reported that dating was primarily a means to build an intimate relationship, preferably leading to marriage, and was secondly a leisure activity undertaken for its own merit (TFPAHK, 2011:70). This was also understood by my interviewees.

*In other countries girls often regard dating as a fun activity. But in China I have found that girls regard dating that will not at least possibly lead to marriage as essentially a total waste of their time. They have low or no appreciation of other benefits such as it gives them new experiences, can be fun in itself and so forth. On*

*this basis, they often presumptively define the relationship themselves in default and essentially challenge you to disagree. This can be as little as a couple of weeks into regularly seeing each other (Herald).*

Game 'practitioners' perceived dating in Hong Kong as a serious activity that should escalate to a stable, committed relationship that could potentially evolve into a marriage. As Herald mentioned, many of his partners rightly felt that their understanding of the intimate encounter differed from his.

My interviewees' discourse on sexual norms in Hong Kong revealed a particular ordering of sexual scripts in the city-state. The players of the 'game' perceived the dominant script to foreground a slow progression of emotional and physical intimacy between friends and culminate in a committed relationship and eventually marriage. Many players in Hong Kong adhered to a different ordering of sexual scripts. In particular, practitioners who were heavily involved in the competitive field of the 'game' prioritized an ordering of sexual scripts that in many ways was the inverse of the dominant ordering of scripts in the urban erotic contact zone of the city. The players' ordering of sexual scripts was mediated by a 'logic of professionalism', and this was also the case in Hong Kong. Players competed for status, honor and money in their specialized universe, and hierarchies between them arose on the basis of ostentatious displays of heterosexual competences in the 'field'. This meant that players had an incentive to enact sexual scripts that were uncommon within the local context. 'Pickup' coach Matthew, for instance, reflected on his position within the field:

*Being put in a position where I am supposed to be good, it has been quite good for my 'game' because it pushes me to do stuff that I previously would not have even tried, so for example my quickest pull ever is seven minutes. And that was like walking into a club. My opener was like, eye-contact and then make out with a girl, and dance and grind for about two minutes, and then I just grab her arm and pull her out. We barely talked, my hotel was less than five minutes from the club, which helped.*

'Pushing oneself to do stuff that one previously would not have even tried' implied demonstrating a stark control over the social environment through strategic manipulation of self and others. Through this control of the environment, one consciously and ostentatiously engineered a sexual encounter. This principle of the 'game' often resulted in a discursive erasing of female agency. In the stories of players, women were often construed as subjects with little control over the encounter; they were played by the skillful practitioner. This was usually an

unrealistic representation of the actual dynamics of the encounter, but this strategy and how it was described reflected players' intentions. It portrayed them as the almighty puppeteers of the interaction order and as men with the heterosexual competences to skillfully 'play the field'. Within their interactions, this principle of the 'game' had a different effect. It meant that players often sought 'flashy' sexual encounters that markedly differed from the dominant sexual script within the urban erotic contact zone in Hong Kong.

This orientation to the game, however, was not shared by all players I encountered. The 'logic of professionalism' was especially prevalent among players immersed in the competitive dynamic of the field. Neophytes of the 'game' often had a different orientation to sex and relationships. Jack, for instance, like most neophytes, hardly ever pushed for one-night-stands but instead preferred to initially propose a date for a later time and slowly progress through layers of emotional and physical intimacy. Similarly, Giorgio, in spite of having a string of sexual partners in Hong Kong, hardly ever pushed for a hookup. Instead, his standard blueprint was to meet girls in the nightlife, flirt and take numbers, instigate a text conversation and schedule a date that might end in a sexual encounter. However, the more players became immersed in the 'game', the more the logic of professionalism structured their actions within the field.

The logic of professionalism, the imperative to demonstrate a stark control over the sexual field, led players to push the flirtatious interactions with women towards a sexual script that opposed dominant sexual norms. This would often be a hookup script. For professional players like Matthew, the logic of professionalism became a leading imperative in their interactions with women within the 'field'. For men like him, having sex with women shortly after meeting was a powerful rhetoric of expertise in the 'game', especially in a context where sex within committed relationships was the norm. Hence, in a context where dating was the norm, such as Hong Kong, hookups were an especially desired sexual script among (semi-) professional players of the 'game'.

This latter groups of practitioners often experienced a tension between their preferred sexual script and that of the Hong Kong Chinese women they interacted with. Their 'seduction' strategies often aimed to win women over to make them acquiesce to a sexual script that violated dominant sexual norms. These strategies, however, were not only informed by a perceived tension between what they wanted and what the women they interacted with wanted in the urban erotic contact zone. Gender discourses about the roles of men and women in intimate affairs also informed these strategies. These discourses need to be delineated in order to understand the 'seduction' strategies of players of the 'game' in Hong Kong.

## GENDER DISCOURSES

The strategies through which my interviewees aimed to 'pickup' women and enact sexual scripts that conflicted with dominant sexual mores in Hong Kong were informed by gender discourses of their specialized universe. Four gender discourses existed among my informants, two of masculinity and two of femininity. The first discourse of masculinity of the in-group was referred to as *alpha* manhood. This was the cherished ideal of manhood that my informants aspired to. The discourse on *alpha* manhood had many similarities to the discourse of 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area, described in chapter four, but there were also important differences. To do justice to these differences, I describe the *alpha* manhood discourse of my interviewees in Hong Kong in detail later in this section. The other discourse of masculinity was of *beta* manhood, which directly contrasted with the *alpha* ideal.

There were also two discourses of femininity that were often drawn upon by my informants. There was a discourse on East Asian womanhood and another on 'western' or 'White' femininity. The terms 'western' and 'White' were used interchangeably by my respondents and referred to women who were culturally different from 'local' East Asian womanhood. This was not necessarily tied to phenotypes or place of birth. These terms were used to denote White American and European women, American-Chinese women, British-Chinese women, Australian-Chinese women, or Hong Kong Chinese women who had been educated in Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries. An orientalist imaginary informed these gender discourses, drawing on longstanding stereotypes of passive, submissive and hyper-feminine Asian womanhood and emasculated Asian manhood, which contrasted dominant, hegemonic 'western' manhood.

*Alpha* manhood was a 'hegemonic masculinity' within the specialized universe of the 'game'. It was dominant vis-à-vis subordinated beta masculinity and vis-à-vis femininities (Connell, 1995). According to my interviewees, being *alpha* was what made a man attractive to women, and nearly all players' practices in the field were informed by this discourse of masculinity.

First and foremost, being *alpha* meant to control and maintain dominance over one's inner-world of thoughts and emotions and the outer world of social interactions. This obsession with control and dominance over the inner world showed, for instance, in a few players' interest in NLP, Neuro Linguistic Programming. NLP is a behaviorist paradigm, of dubious scientific standing, in which practitioners seek control over the emotions of the self and others through enacted rituals. Being *alpha* also entailed a constant striving to dominate and control women and other men in the interaction order. This is illustrated, for instance, in how 'pickup' coach Matthew responded to a breakup with his Chinese girlfriend at the time.

*She accidentally left her phone with me one day and messages pop up. And I look at it and then I talked to her about it. And I found out she lied about it, and I said 'look you got twenty-four hours to make up your mind, him or me'. And she came back twenty-four hours later and she said 'Look, I am very sorry. I just think I should be with him. I mean my grandparents know him. We have been together for a long time. It's like three years and yet I just think I should be with him. I do really like you, but I still love him'. And in my brain something really weird happened, where I thought, 'Wait a minute. I am not leading the situation. I am not taking control. I am basically making my responses on her. This is fucking stupid'. And I totally changed. I said, 'Look. No! I have made up my mind. You are going to break up with him and you are going to be with me. That is how things are. There is no question, this is just how it is'. And this is when I started really to develop frame control, really start to have a basic understanding of what it is, right? So, she was like 'okay' and she did (Matthew).*

Masculinity has always revolved around the dominance and control of women and other men, but within 'seduction communities' this was magnified tenfold. This was particularly the case among players of the 'game' in Hong Kong. They construed Asian womanhood as being inherently 'docile' and 'submissive' to men. Hence, for these men, being 'dominant' was particularly relevant in their discourse on *alpha* masculinity.

Dominance also showed in the aggressive heterosexuality that players of the 'game' exhibited. *Alpha* men would allegedly have a carnivorous appetite for sex and should feel no shame and remorse in assertively, and at times aggressively, pursuing women. 'Pickup' training often taught shy men to leave their anxiety behind and to ostentatiously show their heterosexual desires. 'Pickup' coach Matthew, for instance, described an exercise he frequently gave his students.

*I gave my students an example. I said 'just walk up to the girls and tell them you want to fuck them'. And they were like 'I cannot do that. Girls get angry, girls will tell you to fuck off. It will never happen'. And I am like 'No! She probably won't fuck you, but she will kiss you if you try'. And they were like 'It is not possible'. And I said 'Just watch'. So, I did this with three or four girls and the fourth girl, she was like 'haha'. And then she said something bad about my bandana and she was like 'No girl would do anything with you when you got that bandana. It is ugly'. And I am like 'You are full of shit. I bet that you want me to fuck you when I wear that'. And I pulled her in and made out with her. And I am like 'This is easier than I thought'. And then all the students were 'Oh, it is magic and shit'. I didn't think the girl was*

*going to slap me and get angry, I thought mainly I get a lot of rejections and this was a good response and it happened a lot more frequent than I thought (Matthew).*

While aggressive heterosexuality demanded a conspicuous interference in the world, another marker of *alphaness*, stoicism, implied an emotional withdrawal. This was particularly relevant in situations in which ‘game’ practitioners were rejected harshly or received criticism from women or other men for their predatory behavior. An *alpha* male would allegedly be emotionally unaffected in these situations, and players of the ‘game’ put in a lot of ‘emotion work’ to achieve this goal (Hochschild, 1979). American player Nick, for instance, while reflecting on his own learning curve within the ‘game’, insisted that his stoicism towards rejections was one of his main achievements. Practitioners who showed emotional insecurity and dependence on woman were the counter example. This was supposedly the behavior of *beta* males and something players of the ‘game’ tried to avoid at all costs.

Play and adventure were important elements in the discourse of *alpha* masculinity, concomitant to American ideals of manhood (Kimmel, 1996; Rotundo, 1993). In contrast, Hong Kong femininities and masculinities, according to ‘game’ practitioners, were unexciting and dull. Most Hong Kong Chinese men and women allegedly lived routine lives of work, shopping, school and family. ‘All women I meet seem to have little going on in their lives’, Herald mentioned. Martin agreed: ‘Asian girls tend to have very boring lives’. According to ‘game’ practitioners, their seemingly adventurous and playful lifestyles made them attractive to Hong Kong Chinese women.

An *alpha* masculinity incorporated many markers of conventional European and American manhood ideals, however some signifiers distinguished this particular discourse from more orthodox predecessors. One example was the eminence of emotional expressiveness for players of the ‘game’, albeit formulated within restricted and highly functional terms. An *alpha* male was a skillful conversationalist, who could entertain people, emote and relate to them, with the purpose of ‘playing the field’. Other signifiers of a player’s *alpha* masculinity drew on contemporary metrosexual manhood ideals, such as the importance of grooming and fashion and a trained and tanned physique. The discourse of masculinity among players in Hong Kong thus drew on conventional constructions of manhood, while incorporating more contemporary ideals.

The discourse on *alpha* manhood among players in Hong Kong differed in certain aspects to that of ‘game’ practitioners in the Bay Area. In the latter, humor and the ability to banter flirtatiously were much more valued as markers of manhood than in Hong Kong. This had to do with language issues. A large portion of the

Hong Kong Chinese women with whom players of the 'game' interacted were not proficient in English, and few of my interviewees had mastered Cantonese. Even those who did often spoke English while they played the 'game'. Because of these language difficulties, the 'game' in Hong Kong was less focused on the capacity to make women laugh. Being dominant and controlling the interaction, however, were more important markers of manhood in Hong Kong than in the Bay Area. This related to corresponding discourses on Asian womanhood, which centered on 'submissiveness'.

For my interviewees, *beta* masculinity was the opposite of *alphaness*. This was linked to men who were allegedly incapable of ostentatious dominance and control, were shy and introverted and showed no sign of aggressive heterosexuality. This discourse of masculinity was often used to refer to Hong Kong Chinese men. This narrative of effeminate Asian men is nothing new and has often been a part of orientalist discourse. By construing Asian men as effeminate, as half man, half women, American and European men have always felt superior and legitimated to dominate and rule over them. It was striking that even ethnically Chinese players of 'western' upbringing equated 'local' Hong Kong Chinese men with *beta* manhood, drawing on a discourse whose origin lay in European and American imperialism.

East Asian femininity, in this Orientalizing discourse of 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong, was portrayed as hyper-feminine, sensuous, shy, warm, caring and empathetic, and this construct of hyper-femininity informed the intimate longings of players of the 'game'. Herald talked about his perception of the ideal role of women in an intimate partnership. '[...] Listening to you as a man, [...] or calm you down, or simply make you feel supported and cared for'. Within his vision, concomitant with many other 'game' practitioners, men should take on the role of the traditional patriarch. 'I think that [homemaking] is really something women can do and they can only do it as part of a two-parent family [...] the homemaking function can only exist properly where it works in synergy with some sort of security-providing function which is the role of the male'. According to Herald, and most other 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong, East Asian women were better suited to play this role than 'western' women.

Nearly all players in Hong Kong were solely interested in East Asian women, and for most men, this interest was fueled by a desire to be dominant within a sexual relationship.

*For most of the guys that I met, or my friends, or other people, being recognized as a man, or more like the man role, where you are, you know, the leader. You set the framework and then the woman, the lady, will bring a lot into it, right? I'm not*

*talking about issuing commands and the other partner executing what you are saying. It's not like that at all. It's like what you bring in the picture that is totally different. [...] She will bring emotions, cuteness. She will bring her persona, she will bring her style. [...] It's a lot of things that she will bring in, but still you will set the framework, right? And she will not be debating whether your framework is good or not (Giorgio).*

Hong Kong Chinese women were attractive for players of the 'game' because of their supposed hyper-femininity. These men, without exception, longed for a hyper-masculine role of dominance and control, and Asian women would supposedly acquiesce to this arrangement. 'Pickup' coach Matthew, for instance, boasted about his current relationship with a Chinese woman. 'She is very feminine [...], she is very willing to please me and do what I want, so if I tell her don't do this but instead do this, she is willing to do it. She understands gender roles really well'. This longing for Asian women was enmeshed in hegemonic masculinity 'as the pattern of practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:832). For these men, Asian women were attractive because they supposedly accepted a hyper-masculine presentation of self and, more importantly, perceived them as hyper-masculine in ways that would not be acknowledged in Europe, America and Australia.

Changing gender relations in the 'western' hemisphere fueled 'game' practitioners' longings for hyper-feminine Asian womanhood. They lamented about the lost privileges of men in the 'western' part of the world. In the feminist revolution, women in America, Europe and Australia had stood up against traditional patriarchal intimate and sexual relations and demanded equal treatment. Some men resisted and some still refuse to grant them this equality, and 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong were part of that group. They repudiated 'White' femininity, and most women in America and Europe would probably reject them, so they directed their efforts towards Asian women.

*In terms of the differences between American women and Asian women, it seems that Americans highly value 'freedom', which leads to things like the feminist revolution where women wanted more power, freedom and independence. So, I guess it's no wonder why you get a lot of 'western' women who respond like rude bitches, who are overly opinionated and fussy and who want to act like 'one of the boys'. Not that it is right or wrong, but it's just a big contrast compared with Asian girls in general. [...] 'Western' women [have] gained a lot of masculine strength, due to feminism [...], which fucks up the true roles of men and women. Also, with a lot of media claiming that men are monsters and sickos makes us men suppress our true masculinity. Not*

*allowing to beat up women, to shut them up etc. Which I don't claim is a good thing, but it was a tool that was used in the past until it was taken away. Then, we didn't know what to do anymore (Thomas).*

This 'men as victim' rhetoric has been part of men's movements for a long time (Carrigan et al., 1985:567), with complaints about feminist critiques of masculinity that supposedly portray men unfairly as 'sickos' and 'monsters'. This feminist critique supposedly leaves men confused and insecure with their role as men, who are the 'real' victims of changing gender relations. This reasoning was a reoccurring theme within 'seductions communities' and among 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong. It gave meaning to their residency in the city-state and their interest in intimate affairs with Hong Kong Chinese women.

For players of the 'game' in Hong Kong, 'western' womanhood was the daunting other. It was associated with women who had challenged and changed patriarchy in Europe and America and who, in the process, had taken on conventional markers of masculinity, such as independence and assertiveness. My interviewees almost unanimously despised 'western' women and emancipated Asian women. One reoccurring comment about overseas-born Chinese women was that they were 'bitches', 'because they have spent too much time in the "west"' (Herald). 'Western' femininity, for 'game' practitioners, was a contagious identity, which could corrupt and defile an allegedly pristine hyper-feminine Asian womanhood. In the eyes of my interviewees, this corruption occurred through prolonged contact with emancipated woman, for instance, in schools, at work or during an extended stay in places like America or Europe.

A dominant trope in the city-state, and one that is often reflected in mainstream media, is that of 'Hong Kong girl' *gong nui* (港女), a demanding, pragmatic and materialistic girl who is exceptionally vain (Chu, 2014, 139; Ho, 2014:166). 'Game' practitioners drew on this trope to explain the motivations of Hong Kong Chinese women in intimate relationships. 'The materialism in Hong Kong is absurd', said Herald. More players of the 'game' shared in the complaint against demanding Hong Kongese women who were obsessed with material goods. Nearly all players had stories about Hong Kong female partners demanding goods or money at some stage in the relationship. Herald, for instance, mentioned receiving an email from a partner in which she asked for a contribution to her holiday. Others had similar stories of female partners asking for phones, bags, jewelry and designer clothes. This trope of materialistic Hong Kongese women informed the meaning players gave to experiences with intimate relationships in the city.

'Game' practitioners saw the sexual field in Hong Kong as a marketplace, where women traded their sexuality for money, in line with classical sociological theories on 'western' marriage dynamics (Becker 1973; 1974). Appearance would allegedly determine women's value, and this asset depreciated with age, as 'pickup' coach Martin explained:

*Girls tend to have the highest value at 23, like it's still okay for them not to be married. They will just wait what comes by and try to get the best prospect. So, when the girls are at their highest value, they tend to be the most difficult. Like, why waste their time with people of little value, when they can get a rich Chinese guy who will provide for them the rest of their lives?*

There is a saying in China that asks: 'who wants Christmas cakes after the 25th?' This suggests that no man would want to marry a woman above the age of twenty-five. Women in China are under enormous social pressure to marry at a young age, and men tend to seek marriage partners who are in their early twenties (Fincher, 2014). There is much less of this pressure in Hong Kong, but 'game' practitioners nonetheless thought that women in the city-state were primed to marry, and women's bargaining power within the sexual field was directly tied to their appearance and their age.

Martin, like other players, thought that women who were perceived as beautiful had more power in defining the terms of the relationship than other women and vis-à-vis men. Their power was due to the variety of options they could choose from, and as a result, they would set a high price on their beauty and sexuality. Herald, for instance, commented about a Chinese girl he pursued and who worked as a television host for a Chinese broadcaster: 'These are the types of girls I like', he said. 'She will take a lot of time because every guy wants to sleep with her'. According to players of the 'game', women, by default, wanted a long-term relationship, not a casual hookup, –in line with a battle of the sexes reasoning as described in the introduction– and women perceived as beautiful were supposedly in a powerful position to define the terms of the intimate encounter.

According to players of the 'game', Hong Kong Chinese women would supposedly sell their bodies to the highest bidder. Even in a long-term intimate relationship, commitment only lasted until there was a better offer. Matthew reflected upon a previous breakup. '[...] Eventually things broke down with this one girl and I found out later that was because she started a new job, and she was surrounded by like millionaires, and millionaires were a better option than me in terms of getting married [...], so that is why she lost interest'. Marriage was allegedly the relationship par

excellence to secure financial resources for women, and hence Hong Kong Chinese women ultimately sought rich husbands that were willing to provide for them. Despite the negative terms that 'game' practitioners used to describe the alleged materialism of Hong Kong Chinese women, they almost exclusively sought out these materialistic women as sexual partners. An irony of the 'game' was that practitioners bemoaned the materialism and the concomitant material demands of Hong Kong Chinese women in intimate relationships, while at the same time lamenting women's independence in America, Europe or Australia. Players neglected the fact that the financial independence of women meant that they no longer needed a partner for financial security, and that material aspirations became less prominent within intimate relationships for women. Nonetheless, for 'game' practitioners, women's emancipation was more daunting than materially exploitive relationships.

'Game' practitioners drew on this trope of materialistic Hong Kongese women, in particular, to explain 'failures' within their intimate affairs. The trope was often used to explain why many women were not interested in them, or why some women broke off their relationship, and why some women left them for other men. The trope of 'materialism' could account for situations when Hong Kong Chinese women acted in dissonance with their alleged hyper-femininity.

## SEXUAL STRATEGIES OF 'GAME' PRACTITIONERS IN HONG KONG

My interviewees unanimously thought that hooking up ranked low in the dominant ordering of sexual scripts in Hong Kong. They, however, often aimed for casual sex instead of 'serious' dates, perceived as courtship primed towards committed relationships. 'Game' practitioners had numerous interactional strategies to reconcile this perceived tension in the prioritized sexual scripts between them and their Hong Kong Chinese female partners. These strategies would allegedly win women over and make them acquiesce to a casual sexual relation. These strategies confronted four challenges: (1) Hong Kong Chinese lovers met one another through friends; (2) overt displays of affection and light sensuous touching happened in private; (3) sex should happen within a relationship context; (4) dating was 'serious'.

### *(1) Meeting partners via friends*

My interviewees assumed that Hong Kong Chinese women met their sexual and romantic partners via friends. However, most of these men did not have an ex-

tensive network of Hong Kong Chinese acquaintances from which to draw their sexual partners. This meant that they had to meet women who were unconnected to them, and the targeted meeting ground was the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong. These meetings happened in bars, restaurants and clubs, while waiting in lines in shops, or on the street. 'Game' practitioners had two common interactional strategies for meeting potential sexual partners in Hong Kong: One was to be direct, coercive and persistent in one's approach; the other was to forge friendly relations with different social groups through which they could connect to potential sexual partners.

Herald was a proponent of the former. He often disregarded etiquettes, walked straight up to a targeted woman, complimented her on her looks and initiated a light-hearted conversation. At times, this was accompanied by physical coercion, for instance by groping her arm or blocking her route. I made the following observations while accompanying Herald and Steward in the urban nightlife:

*Herald, Steward and I sauntered through a bustling nightlife strip. The aim of the night was clear: they were there to meet women. Two young women walked behind us. Steward winked at Herald, in a gesture of collegial understanding and turned around excitedly.*

*'Do you girls know what the best club in the city is?' He asked rapturously. Herald immediately moved over to the youngest of the two women.*

*'I really love your dress', he said and promptly took her hand and lifted it above her shoulder. The young woman wore a see-through fishnet dress with a yellow neon bikini underneath. She smiled provocatively.*

*'What is your name?' Herald asked.*

*'Angie', she said, 'what is your name?'*

*'Herald', he said and introduced Steward and me to her.*

*'You look very sexy in this dress', Herald continued, 'Where are you going dressed like this?' The young woman explained that they were going to a summer theme party.*

*'Aha, that's why you're wearing so little', Herald commented ironically. 'Let me look', and he lifted her arm up again. 'So, what is this?' He plucked at her dress. 'It's a fishnet, and you wear some very kinky underwear'.*

*'It's a bikini', the young woman corrected him. Then Herald pointed towards a small tattoo on her arm.*

*'Have you been to Thailand? That's a Thai tattoo that you have there'. She had not been to Thailand.*

*'And where else do you have tattoos?' The young woman looked over at her friend and said a few frolic words in Cantonese. They both laughed. Herald insisted he wanted*

*to see the hidden tattoo. She obviously did not want to show him. Herald then asked the other young woman if she could take a look and describe it to him. This caused some more hilarity. Then the young women had to leave. They were going to a club nearby and might join us a later that evening.*

This dominant and assertive behavior often triggered a hostile reaction from the social group of the targeted recipient. Sometimes they would try to pull her away or to stand between the player and the targeted woman. Either way, Herald, and a few others like him, marginally acknowledged the protective friends and continued the interaction until either the woman freed herself from his grip and walked away, or the protective friends gave up and left.

This protectiveness of social groups in the nightlife in Hong Kong was a re-occurring theme in conversations among players of the 'game'. Practitioners often exchanged advice on how to deal with protective groups of friends. At times, this was done in semi-formal organized meetings, in which a group of practitioners came together, often in a bar, and discussed tips and tricks of the 'game'. These meetings were also opportunities for 'pickup' coaches to promote their courses by giving free advice as previews of their teachings. During such a seminar, I jotted down the following notes:

*Barry rose his arm.*

*'Yesterday I went really well with a girl in front of the 7-11', he said. 'Do you remember!' addressing the men who the previous night were in his company. 'Like I was kining hard, but then one of her girlfriends came in and literally pulled her away from me', Barry said in anguish.*

*'Well', Matthew responded, 'the way I would have handled that is, before the girl is actually coming in and ruining your set, when you see her coming, I just step towards her, and say "you're racist".'*

Calling interfering bystanders out on their supposedly judgmental and close-minded attitude was at times effective. Some individuals ceased their attempt to end the interaction. By framing the other as the closed-minded bigot, players publically shamed the interfering other in an attempt to silence them.

Another interactional technique that 'game' practitioners used to gain the acceptance of the targeted woman's social group was to ostentatiously construct the 'definition of the situation' in such a manner that it would be impolite to decline their advances (Goffman, 1990[1959]:21). Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is applicable to players, which is indicated by the many dramaturgical

terms in their argot. Furthermore, they construed their actions in the 'field' as a theatrical performance and themselves as rationale agents, strategically managing and influencing the impressions of their interlocutors. Game 'practitioners' often introduced themselves amicably to a group within the urban nightlife. For instance, they might initiate contact with a friendly pat on the back or a high-five, followed by proclamations that one 'was pleased to make new friends today' and compliments that their interlocutors had such an 'open-minded and cosmopolitan attitude'. According to players, for a successful hookup, it was necessary to win over the acceptance of the targeted woman's social group. Thus, most practitioners made an effort to establish trust with and gain the approval of the woman's social group.

By and large, the main admonishment on how to deal with interrupting bystanders was to be persistent. Players should not give up until the woman they accosted walked away and ignored them completely, which is illustrated by the following observations:

*Outside of the club two young women leaned against a wall. Steward addressed them. 'Hey!' he said, 'Do you two know any place where we can eat?' The young women deliberately looked the other way.*

*'Like, a good place where we can get street food? You know street food? Do you like food?' Street food?' Steward said, noticeably getting anxious by the lack of response. A young man, who stood nearby and who presumably was an acquaintance of the young women interrupted the address and positioned himself between Steward and the women. Steward started talking to him, asking if he maybe knew any good street food stands. The young man, who had his back towards Steward, did not respond. Steward leaned to the side and tried to make eye-contact with the women. He kept gibbering about street food, but neither the women nor the young man responded. Steward, who by now had lost heart, stopped his attempt. Herald stepped forward and encouraged him to 'just keep on pushing'. Steward complied; with refreshed courage, he commenced on a monologue about street food. The young man, who still stood in between Steward and the women, turned around and raised his voice now. 'Why don't you just go away?' he exclaimed angrily.*

*'Hey man', Steward responded defensively, 'I'm just talking to your friends here. Maybe you know a good place to get some food now?' The young man, who was obviously fed up with the situation, put his arms around the two young women and escorted them a few strides away. Steward turned around and joined Herald and me. Herald complemented him on his performance. Steward had been 'holding his ground', and, so Herald emphasized, this was how one should deal with interrupting bystanders.*

Sociologist David Grazian (2007) argues that the young men's collective pursuit of women in the urban nightlife is a ritual of impression management to signal a masculine identity to other men. This is obvious in the description above; the 'game' was 'collective pedagogy' to perform 'hegemonic masculinity' within interactions with men and women (Wacquant, 2004:99-127). In collective pedagogy, individuals learn by way of direct mimesis of fellow practitioners. In the context of the 'game', groups of practitioners are hierarchically structured on the basis of 'pickup' skills. Senior members instruct juniors on the proper execution of a performance, and juniors, in return, accept this pedagogical advice without question. Herald, by his seniority in the 'game', takes on the role of mentor and teaches practitioners lower in the hierarchy how to enact a domineering, persistent, masculine performance. In this sense, the 'game' teaches men how to perform 'hegemonic masculinity' within interactions in the urban erotic contact zone.

'Game' practitioners in Hong Kong formulated and enacted other interactional tactics to meet women. They would align with a social group of high standing in a particular setting and try to introduce this group to others. Within the 'game', the most popular group in a setting was the most vivacious and joyful collective. This was the group that others wanted to join and interact with. This understanding of social dynamics reveals a surprising parallel with micro-sociological theories of 'emotional energy' and 'collective effervescence' as formulated by Collins (2004). Players tried to align with the groups generating the most collective effervescence in a place and to utilize this energy to connect to others. Alternatively, individuals tried to perform a vibrant and elated persona that would give the impression that one was the 'sociability star' of the evening (Collins, 2004:252-254), the person that others allegedly wanted to interact with. Giorgio, for instance, often went to business networking events. He did not intend to meet potential business partners but to meet women to hook up with. In these gatherings, he would talk to anyone, particularly to other outgoing and joyful characters. He would make eye-contact with new arrivals, greet them merrily and exchange a few warm words. He would join the bubbliest collective and introduce them to other groups, especially those with attractive women. 'Game' practitioners utilized the emotional energy of group dynamics to evade etiquettes and meet new women, who could potentially become bed partners.

Other players also used the principles of collective effervescence and emotional energy to formulate similar strategies. Australian-Chinese player Paul described his strategy as '*social circle game*', meaning that he would meet women via his network, through indirect introductions. He had befriended two wealthy Hong Kong Chinese gentlemen through a club promoter in Hong Kong. Paul often accompanied these

two gentlemen, who would spend money like water, to high-end clubs in the city. They bought expensive tables and enough drinks to quench the thirst of a large flow of other socialites. Floor managers within these establishments often took on roles as social connectors, introducing other groups, particularly those with women perceived as beautiful, to the big spenders. Mears (2015) describes this practice as a trade in 'girl capital'. Through his place in the entourage of these two big spenders, Paul often met women who he would occasionally hook up with.

Many players of the 'game' met women through indirect introductions in their social network. Having a social connector as a friend who could introduce you to a variety of other social groups was an asset, and most players had the ambition to meet people that could fill this role. Giorgio, for instance, had a number of female friends who worked as flight attendants. He did not intend to hook up with these women but befriended them in the hope that they would be able to connect him to their colleagues, for instance, in the nightlife or at private parties. Similarly, Herald had befriended a female make-up artist who gave him access to fashion shows. Through this association, Herald hoped to meet the women that ventured to these gatherings.

### *(2) Sexual modesty in public*

Intimate contact in dating and hooking up on college campuses in the US has, and has always had, a public character. Renowned were the 'petting parties' in the mid-20th century America (Bailey, 1988:80; Fass, 1977:265), and in the time of hookup culture, grinding on the dancefloor has become a norm at college parties (Ronen, 2010; Wade, 2017:31-38). The 'game' also has an incentive to enact sexual acts in public. The particular context of the 'game' is a competitive field where hierarchies among players are based on displays of heterosexual competences. Enacting sexual acts in public, in front of other players, signals expertise in the 'game'. Most practitioners in Hong Kong, however, thought that such public displays of sexual contact conflicted with dominant sexual mores in the urban erotic contact zone. This translated into two main approaches: the first approach, to which most players adhered, was to restrict the amount of sexual contact in public; the second approach was to break social conventions.

In most 'pickup' self-help literature, men are advised to be physical from the start of the interaction and to gradually build up intimate touching from then onwards. From the get-go, players are told to touch frequently, so that there is no dramatic intensification of intimate touching. They should proceed to kiss and progressively build up the sexual intensity of this physicality thereafter, so that physical arousal is stimulated from the start (Elise, 2005:59; Krauzer, 2014:320-322; Mystery, 2005:143). Most

of this advice has been written for American audiences in which at least some light sexual activity is acceptable in public. Some practitioners followed this advice in Hong Kong and realized that quite a few women became uncomfortable with this behavior. One way players tried to sooth this situation was to feign ignorance. As 'pickup' coach Matthew advised, 'you can always play the culture card, say "look in my culture we are very physical with each other. It means that we like each other a lot"'. Practitioners invoked the trope of cultural difference in the hope that it would allow them a safe passage through restrictions on public sexual acts in Hong Kong.

Other practitioners were more sensitive to local sexual mores and would not initiate overly sexual touching in public. Giorgio, for instance, thought that 'making-out in public can work against you'. It could potentially disrupt the interaction, as a physical cue that did not fit in the context-specific sequence of acts that comprise a sexual script, and could potentially dissolve the sexual tension between partners (Gagnon and Simon, 1973:20-21) 'Making out in public puts too much pressure on the girl', Giorgio said, showing his awareness that many women felt uncomfortable about breaking this sexual norm. Instead, Giorgio, and other players like him, would restrict the amount of physical intimacy enacted in public to some light sensuous touching of the arms and legs.

A common strategy that players used to intensify the sexual touching without breaching etiquettes of public sexual acts was to retreat to a more private area, referred to as '*going for isolation*' in the argot of the 'game'. This could be any spot with a certain degree of privacy, such as a location out of public view, a secluded area within a bar, a hidden spot on the streets, or a private room. A common interaction strategy of 'game' practitioners was to lead their partner to such a secluded area without being clear about their intentions. As 'pickup' coach Martin described, 'to baby-step them through the isolation process'. He explained:

*'Let's go outside, you know. It's hot! It's loud! Or whatever! Let's go down the streets to the community store! Let's just go for a walk this way!' 'How far?' 'Just a couple of blocks.' Five blocks later, 'I thought you said it was a couple of blocks'. 'O, yeah, it is just another couple of blocks'.*

Eventually, a player would lead his partner to a private location to have sex, which was often his house or a hotel. One main concern for players was what they called '*logistics*' or the steps needed to move from a public to a private location. When they could afford it, practitioners preferred to live in a centrally located place, close to urban erotic contact zones, so that they could easily walk home from the bustling nightlife scene.

(3) *Sex is grounded in long-term monogamous relationships*

Arguably, the largest disjuncture between the hookup script and the dominant sexual script among the Hong Kongese partners of my interviewees was the relationship context in which sexual activity occurred. In the hookup script, sex happened in a casual relationship, without expectations of sexual exclusivity, emotional intimacy or commitment. In Hong Kong, however, sex within a long-term committed relationship was the norm. This disjuncture in the context of the relationship in which sex occurred was often a source of strife between players and their Hong Kong Chinese partners. The players frequently aimed for sex in a casual relationship within hours or, at the most, days after meeting; however, they presumed that their partners often expected an exclusive and committed relationship first, which would slowly develop into a sexual affair thereafter.

By and large, being dominant and persistent in their interactions was the most advocated interaction strategy for 'game' practitioners to use to have sex shortly after becoming acquainted with their partners. This was often spoken about as 'leading'. The adage of most players was to keep the interaction going and to push for sex until their partner would acquiesce or walk away. Players shared stories amongst each other to emphasize the importance of this mantra within the 'game' and to show what persistence meant within a 'pickup'. During fieldwork, I made notes about the following story that Herald shared to illustrate these points.

*In a nightclub, Herald addressed a young woman, who was celebrating a birthday with a large group of friends. The young woman and Herald had some intimate moments of kissing and fondling in the club. Herald, however, quickly ran through these details. The most important events happened later that evening, an experience that taught him 'a valuable lesson about persistence and about feeling awkward'. The young woman and Herald had joined the birthday group. None of these individuals had acknowledged him, no introductions, no conversations, and not even a glance. They had not told him to go either but just completely ignored him. While his partner was facing the group, Herald stood behind her holding her hand, whispering in her ear. This lasted for about fifteen minutes, a period in which he felt 'extremely awkward'. Afterwards, they had danced and kissed and caroused some more, but the events that Herald wanted to emphasize happened at the end of the night, when the music had stopped and the patrons were leaving. Upon exiting the club, Herald and his flirt had run into her friends again. Again, this resulted in a long conversation between her and her friends in which Herald stood by aimlessly for a period that felt like hours'. At some stage, Herald hailed a cab and suggested that they would leave. She concurred.*

In these epic tales of sexual conquest, 'game' practitioners often emphasized the strenuous hard work that went into a sexual encounter, the sly tactics they had used, the challenges that they had to overcome, and what persistence meant within the interaction.

'Game' practitioners also used strategies that aimed to attenuate their partners' potential apprehensions about casual sex. One way that players tried to achieve this was through what they called *framing*. This is a discursive technique in which they aimed to awaken and invoke particular character traits in their partners, which were conducive to rebelling against social conventions. In one of the informal seminars hosted by 'pickup' coaches in Hong Kong, which I briefly referred to earlier, I made the following notes:

*'If you want the girl to go home with you she needs to have the right frame,' Steward said. 'Like, she needs to feel adventurous, or open-minded. These are the frames you have to install in her'. Steward gave an example, 'When I open a set of girls, I usually say to the cutest one: 'I bet you're the bad girl'. Some girls will try to deny this, or might act quite offended. You can neutralize this by saying: 'It's okay to be the bad girl'. Usually, I make her pinky swear. 'I know you're the bad girl, but let's keep it a secret'. Or you can qualify her for being open-minded, for example, when she tells you about the places she has travelled to. You can say 'with all that travelling you must be open-minded'.*

Players of the 'game' in Hong Kong had numerous other *framing* rituals, some addressed their Hong Kong Chinese interlocutors, others their fellow players, and/or their partners. One ritual that was directed towards other players and their partners was to tell them that they looked like a 'married couple', even when they had just met. This *framing* ritual would allegedly facilitate familiarity and trust among the targeted conversationalists and would spur them to think of their relationship as a sexual one.

Players had difficulty conceiving that women might be interested in casual sex. Denying the sexual agency of their partners placed an emphasis on their virile prowess. Through their competent heterosexual performances, women's sexual desires were awakened and inhibitions attenuated; women's sexual desires were not immanent and 'natural'. The behaviorist paradigm, which suggests that one can invoke character traits through the performance of certain magical mantras, aided one's discursive positioning as competent heterosexual. Similarly, the engineer vocabulary of 'installing' frames emphasized the sexual agency of 'game' practitioners.

Players of the 'game' believed that engaging in casual sex could negatively

affect the reputation of both men and women in Hong Kong. My respondents unanimously thought that a 'player' was a repudiated identity within Hong Kong, whereas it could be a high-status identity among young men and women in Europe and America. 'Game' practitioners in Hong Kong thus aimed to shield themselves from the 'player' label through 'impression management'; they tried to foster the impression that they were primed towards 'serious' dating and not casual sex. During fieldwork, I made note of a story by Giorgio. He had gone on a date with a young woman who he had met at a networking event. During the date, Giorgio engaged in numerous acts of 'impression management'.

*During the date, she asked 'do you go out often?' According to Giorgio, you had to be careful in answering this question, since she was implicitly asking how many times he went to LKF, Lan Kwai Fong, an urban erotic contact zone. LKF had a reputation for sexual licentiousness. She also commented on a picture he had posted on Facebook. It was a picture of a boat trip with Giorgio in swimsuit sitting between twenty young women. She wanted to know who these women were. According to Giorgio, this again was a 'test'. She fished for clues about his sexual history. He answered by saying that they were 'just friends'. Then she asked him what his longest relationship was. According to Giorgio, she wanted to know if he was boyfriend material. He purposefully exaggerated the length of his longest intimate affair. At home, in his apartment, the strife continued. At the moment Giorgio tried to kiss her, she said: 'I do not kiss guys unless they are my boyfriend'. According to Giorgio, this was probably not true. All she wanted to do, however, was give the impression that she was not an 'easy girl'. 'I like you for not being easy', Giorgio responded, 'it is nice that you do not kiss random guys. I respect that, you are a good girl'. That night the two kissed and fondled, although they did not have penetrative sex.*

Giorgio tried to foster the impression that he was an 'average' guy, primed to serious relationships and was definitely not a player. His aim was to play along with the 'definition of the situation' that his female interlocutor had of their encounter (Goffman, 1990[1959]:21), which constructed the sexual script they followed as one of serious dating rather than a casual sex encounter.

Alleged struggles between women and 'game' practitioners often continued in the bedroom. Many stories were shared about encounters in which women resisted intercourse initially but eventually acquiesced in response to players' adamant persuasion and mood-changing tactics. In the argot of the 'game', resistance in the bedroom was called *LMR*, or *Last-Minute Resistance*, and players were of the opinion that this phenomenon was 'particularly severe' in East Asia. A number of discour-

sive strategies were enacted to attenuate this alleged resistance of women, some of which entailed *framing*, telling certain stories that could allegedly change a woman's perspective on the meaning of sex and, subsequently, her willingness to hook up. 'Pickup' coach Martin, for instance, described the efficacy of a particular story. He would tell his partner that his mother would often say that 'sex was like having a hamburger. If you feel like it you should have one'. According to Martin, this discursive framing of sex like a snack established:

*[that] it is normal for me to have sex, sex is supposed to be something enjoyable, sex is not really a big deal, [...] it is an important part of human life, and it is something that is supposed to be fun. It is not serious in the sense of 'oh, you know, we got to have a commitment to someone'. And the last element is the fact that I can talk about my mom's sex life. It means that I would not consider you being bad for having sex, because even my own mother enjoys it.*

Through these stories of alleged struggles for casual sex and tactics to overcome them, practitioners signaled a competent masculine identity. By overcoming supposed challenges, they signaled mastery, agency and control over the environment and in particular over women.

Stories about *LMR* and how to overcome this were the most frequently shared narratives among 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong. Some of these stories comprised *framing* rituals, while others elaborated on different tactics, for instance on ways to progressively overcome a woman's sexual inhibitions. These stories were shared in face-to-face meetings and also online, on the 'East Asia Seduction Forum'. On the latter, Ryan wrote about a sexual adventure he had had, of which the following is a fragment in which he elaborated on his way of dealing with his partner's resistance:

*You basically tell the girl that you want her to trust you and feel comfortable with you. You say that if she ever says, 'Stop', that you will indeed do just that. At this point, I had one arm around her shoulder and another one wrapped around her perky ass. I then said, 'Here, try it out. Say, "stop".' And then I reached under her shirt and started feeling her ample breasts.*

*She said, 'Stop', but it was too weak. She was laughing and calling me sneaky.*

*So I said, 'No, not like that. Like you mean it'.*

*She finally said, 'STOP'.*

*'Okay', I said, and completely detached myself from her and rolled away. [...] This was the first time I ever did it, but it worked like a charm. There were countless times when she'd say, 'No, no'. But I knew I could keep on going because the magic word*

*was 'Stop'. She did say stop a few times, and I did freeze-outs, like I said I would. But it was awesome because she could live out her domination fantasies, and I could proceed aggressively knowing that she was all right with it.*

*Freeze Outs*, in the argot of the 'game', were instances when a player momentarily stopped his advances and feigned disinterest. These were retributions for her unwillingness to acquiesce to his advances, and according to players, they make women feel encumbered and as a consequence set aside their initial inhibitions to have sex. Practitioners of the 'game' had an incentive to position themselves as the demiurge of the interaction order. Hierarchies among peers were made on the basis of an ostentatious display of heterosexual competences. Their cunning strategies allegedly influenced women's will. The thought that their flirts were strategizing agents too was inconceivable. This ritual allowed men to position themselves as competent heterosexuals, while it allowed women to foster the impression of sexual respectability, since they maintained sexual boundaries and were not easily 'seduced'.

#### *(4) Dating is 'serious'*

While before sex, most 'game' practitioners framed the encounter as a date that would potentially lead to a committed relationship, after sex, impression management took a different form, and the norm was to frame the affair as 'casual'. This 'asshole strategy' becomes salient in a story of Giorgio. In a previous passage on framing rituals, I referred to his attempts to rebuff the 'player' label and foster the impression that he was potentially interested in a long-term, committed affair. After that evening with light sexual activity, Giorgio contacted the young woman again, in an effort to reframe their encounter. He sent her a text in which he made it clear that he was not interested in a committed relationship and that all he could offer was friendship. Giorgio's intent was to make her acquiesce to an arrangement of serial hookups: an on-demand sexual relation devoid of expectations of commitment. His strategy was to purposefully frame their relationship in opposition to her preferences to get her to accept second best, a casual arrangement.

Giorgio, like most players, continuously juggled numerous hookup arrangements with different women, called *regulars* in the argot of the 'game'. Nearly all practitioners believed that these affairs were exclusive on their partners' side, while they had a variety of different *regulars*. Most of my respondents went to great lengths to hide these other *regulars* from their partners because it was generally assumed that Hong Kong Chinese women would not tolerate a non-monogamous liaison. At times, these assumptions were correct. A number of young women ended contact

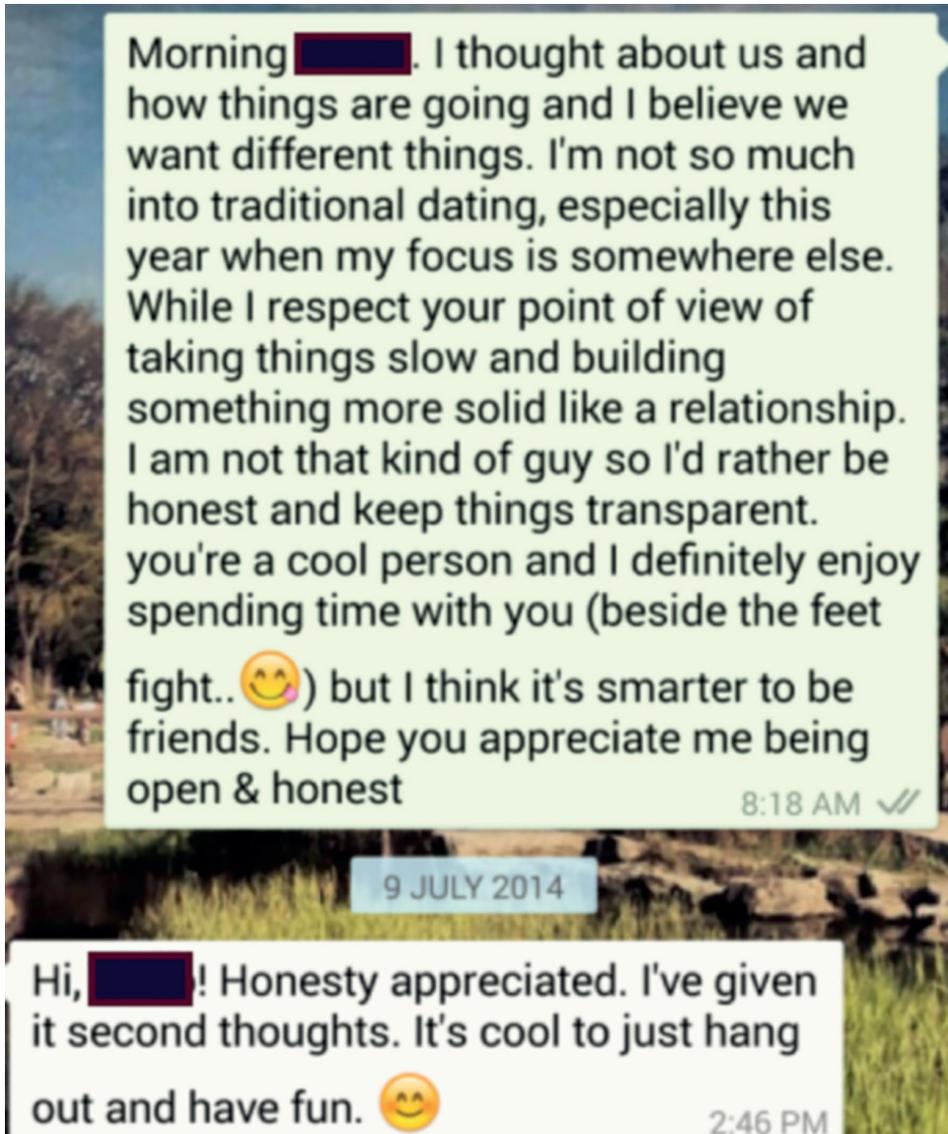


Figure 2: Screenshot from Giorgio's smartphone text exchange (2014).

after hearing about the existence of other sexual partners, but most of the time these assumptions remained assumptions. It seemed that 'game' practitioners could not conceive of a world in which young Chinese women did not care about monogamy and might also prefer different synchronous casual sex partners.

Many tales circulated about *regulars* who at some time demanded commitment. Players were of the opinion that Hong Kong Chinese women were primed towards marriage, and that they would expect a proposal at some stage, even when their relationship was initially framed as casual. By leaving the option of a potential marriage open, for instance by saying ‘I can see us marrying sometime in the future (Herald)’, and at the same time postponing the actual proposal to an indefinite future, players aimed to stretch the duration of a casual arrangement, even though they usually believed that these affairs would not last. It was true that most *regular* arrangements did not last longer than a few months, or at the most a few years. ‘Game’ practitioners presumed that they broke up because their partners longed for commitment and marriage. They rarely thought of other reasons why their partners would end the affair.

## ENACTED SEXUAL SCRIPTS AND WOMEN’S AGENCY

Hong Kong Chinese women were not passive dupes of the deceptive and coercive tactics of ‘game’ practitioners, despite the latter’s tendency to deny women’s agency in their narratives of intimate encounters. At times, the intimate encounters between Hong Kong Chinese women and my interviewees followed a hookup script, and from the stories I heard, some women seemed to take the initiative. Despite the dominant sexual mores in the city-state, at least some Hong Kong Chinese women subverted restrictions on their sexuality and lived out their own fantasies of casual sex.

While I expected that postcolonial power structures and patriarchal gender relations would noticeably tilt the power balance within the intimate encounters of my informants and their partners in the former’s favor, the reality was much more complex, and the power discrepancy was not always that clear. In the vast majority of ‘pickup’ attempts, Hong Kong Chinese women resisted and brushed off ‘game’ practitioners, and in other instances women flirted enthusiastically and often negotiated a definition of the situation that differed from players’ intentions. This is illustrated by the numerous sexual scripts of Hong Kong Chinese women and practitioners that paralleled contemporary dating in America. The couple would, for instance, meet in the nightlife, flirt and exchange contact details, but nothing sexual would happen that evening. At a later stage, they would meet again and follow an interaction blueprint that bore close resemblance to a conventional first date, going for drinks and dinner, visiting a music club and maybe going for a dance.

Concomitant with contemporary dating in America, heavier sexual activity, such as intercourse, oral sex and at times anal sex, happened within the dating relationship, often on the first date. The stories of my interviewees showed other resemblances between contemporary dating in Hong Kong and in America. The arrangements were seen as vestibules to an exclusive relationship; in many tales, claims to sexual exclusivity arose, and these were nearly always made by women. Many 'game' practitioners expected sexual exclusivity from their *regulars* too, but beliefs about men's promiscuous and women's monogamous natures were so ingrained that they hardly ever questioned the alleged monogamy of their partners. Stories about the dating arrangements of players also indicated a parallel to contemporary dating in the US, whereby the dating arrangements in Hong Kong were construed as portals for marriage. They were considered a phase in which partners explored their suitability as a marriage match. In many tales, Hong Kong Chinese women inquired about a potential marriage at some stage in the dating relation.

Most of the intimate encounters of 'game' practitioners and the Hong Kong Chinese partners followed a contemporary dating script. Other sexual scripts, however, were at times enacted, for instance hookups, but this was an exception rather than the rule. The dominant sexual norms in the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong precluded casual sex. Sex remained rooted in relationships. Although Hong Kong has seen many similar changes in gender and intimate relations as America, hooking up has not become a common and acceptable practice among youth in Hong Kong.

## CONCLUSION

Changed gender relations in continental Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world fueled 'game' practitioners' orientalist longings for Asian women in Hong Kong. The accomplishments of second-wave feminism brought about large changes in gender relations in many European and Anglo-Saxon countries, beyond the domains of education and work, into the realm of intimate relationships. Many American and European women no longer accept inequality in intimate liaisons, demanding equal treatment, equal opportunities and an equal division of labor at home. This has led to a 'rebellion' among some groups of the male population, including 'game' practitioners, who lament about the loss of male privileges that has resulted from the accomplishments of feminism. This discourse on 'men's lost privileges' informed the intimate longings of players of the 'game' in Hong Kong. A sexual longing for Asian women was not the main motivation for moving to East Asia for

my interviewees, as they all moved to East Asia for career opportunities. However, once they had settled in the region, the discourse on 'men's lost privileges' gave them a vocabulary of motives for why they looked towards Asian women and not towards expats from continental Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries. The irony of 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong was that they longed for casual sex and cherished and applauded hookup culture, while they simultaneously repudiated the changes in gender relations that made hooking up possible for young women.

'Game' practitioners' disapproval of shifts in the power balance between men and women in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world fueled orientalist imaginaries about a supposedly pristine hyper-feminine Asian womanhood that was unencumbered by gender change. In this orientalist discourse, East Asian women were what 'western' women were not: sensual, submissive, tender, petite, warm and caring, and primed to the family instead of careers. This supposedly hyper-feminine other created opportunities for performing a hyper-masculine identity, signaled by dominance, control and virile prowess, which reflected a self-image that 'game' practitioners cherished. These orientalist conceptions of self and other also informed my interviewees' behavior within intimate encounters with Hong Kong Chinese women and their expectations of these affairs. It resulted in an imperative to be dominant, persistent and coercive in their intimate encounters with Hong Kong Chinese women, in an effort to define the terms of sex and their attempts to control the meaning of the sexual act. While I have limited data on the postcolonial discourses informing Hong Kong Chinese women's longings, expectations and behavior in their intimate encounters with 'game' practitioners, I tentatively postulate that these discourses also shaped their practices and subjectivities in the intimate encounters. Some research on interracial sexual contact shows that East-Asian women draw on post-colonial discourses in their intimate encounters with White men (Kelsky, 1999; Moskowitz, 2008), and this was apparent in Hong Kong.

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# CONCLUSIONS

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Dating and hooking up in America have always been specific regimes of recreational sexuality for youth, although the sexual practices in dating remained lighter. In the early 20th century, youth developed as a distinct identity from adulthood, with its own institutions and its own culture. This culture incubated within the autonomous youth enclaves of residential colleges, which were largely devoid of parental control. Sex was a prime marker of this new youth identity that distinguished it from adulthood. In the adult world, sex was confined to stable committed relationships and primed to procreation. In youth culture, sex was a recreational, public status game that was embedded in casual relationships. In Hong Kong, a distinct youth identity also developed in which intimate relationships were a prime identity marker. Sex, however, was not a marker of distinction between youth and adulthood; instead, it was the aspirations within the relationship that distinguished relationships of youth from those of adulthood. On the surface, it initially appeared that youth in Hong Kong had an autonomous space in which to develop a distinct youth culture. However, a more thorough inspection revealed that the elder generation maintained a firm grip over this cultural domain, which included youth sexuality.

In recent decades, many sociologists have started to explore the new sexual regime of hooking up on US college campuses. The rise of this new sexual culture has been linked to the gender imbalance on many current-day campuses (Bogle, 2008; Heldman and Wade, 2010:328; Kimmel 2008:202; Regnerus, 2012). In this 'battle of the sexes' argument, hooking up is construed as a male sexual norm. Women, on the other hand, are supposedly primed towards sex in committed relationships. This line of reasoning argues that men have the power to define the terms of sexual encounters because they are a minority on campus and are in short supply in the sexual economy.

Another line of reasoning links hookup culture to the specific infrastructure of college campuses (Allison and Risman, 2014; Bogle, 2007; Ray and Rosow, 2010). In these environments, a large number of youths live outside of the parental gaze,

surrounded by peers of the same age who are nearly all sexually active and unmarried. The tight social integration in these places generates a sense of trust and a feeling of familiarity among students, which makes the campus arena feel like a safe haven for socializing and sexual experimentation. College is a time of relatively few obligations, and an alcohol-fueled party is always around the corner. Hookup culture flourishes in these specific infrastructural arrangements.

Both arguments are problematic. The battle of the sexes argument supposes that hooking up is a male sexual standard, while research on female students shows that as many women as men want to hook up (Hamilton and Armstrong, 2009). Furthermore, the reasoning is somewhat simplistic; both men and women can have a variety of relational and sexual aspirations, and individuals can long for casual sex and emotional intimacy at the same time (Paik, 2013:177). The infrastructural argument is also insufficient to explain the emergence of hookup culture. The infrastructure on most college campuses has changed little in the last decennia, while college sexual culture has changed dramatically. Other social changes must thus account for the rise of a new sexual culture among youth.

In this project, I have tried to infer the conditions in which hookup culture emerged. I have historically contextualized the changes in sexual regimes among youth in America. The transition from dating to hooking up coincided with dramatic changes in gender relations, in which women gained power and control on many fronts, including their bodies and their sexuality. At the same time, the changing economic tide in the 1970s increased economic insecurity. Educational achievements became more relevant for attaining a middle-class lifestyle. This gave rise to an imperative among youth to devote their college years to self-development. The demands of committed relationships could potentially jeopardize this project. These conditions enabled hooking up to emerge as a dominant norm on numerous college campuses.

A question I addressed in this research is whether hookup culture is specific to college campuses. I have explored this question in my chapters on 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area. (Semi-) professional players are primed to casual sex and skim the urban erotic contact zones for sexual adventure. If hookup culture existed outside of the college arena, I expected to find it among these men. I found that even the most accomplished 'game' practitioners did not hookup that often. For hookup culture to emerge, other conditions need to be present. The specific infrastructural arrangements of college campuses, as adherents of this theorem argue, could be essential for hooking up to emerge as a dominant norm of intimate coupling among youth. I have researched this idea more thoroughly by looking at a commuter college in the Bay Area, which lacked many of the infrastructural arrangements linked

to hookup culture. Indeed, hooking up was not an omnipresent part of college life for most students at this institute. Hooking up occurred, but it was linked to specific nodes of student life that were not easily accessible; it nested in the college party scene that largely happened off-campus, in the houses of upperclassmen. The specific spatial arrangements of residential colleges form the infrastructure in which hookup culture can emerge, while larger social transformations are foundational to this new sexual culture.

Scripts of youth sexuality travel, for instance, through the global dissemination of popular cultural productions and via the transnational movement of people. In this project, I have explored whether the hookup script has been appropriated by youth in another corner of the world. Hong Kong has seen many similar changes in gender and intimate relationships as the US, and on the surface, seemed to have a fertile matrix for a decoupling of sex and committed relationships. This process, however, has not occurred in the domains of youth culture that I investigated in the city-state.

Sexual arenas comprise a variety of 'sexual scripts'. Some of these are prioritized and enacted frequently, while others are held in disregard and mostly avoided. This is a tenet running through the empirical chapters within this book. College students and 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area and Hong Kong were knowledgeable about a variety of different sexual scripts and drew on a variety of these in their intimate interactions with others. This, however, did not mean that all of these sexual scripts were enacted as frequently as others, and some sexual scripts were prioritized. The dominant script within a particular field often referred to a specific regime of intimate relationships, for instance 'hooking up' on American college campuses or '*ceot pool*' on college campuses in Hong Kong; however, there were other familiar, though less practiced, sexual scripts that were also enacted in these arenas. The concept of 'orderings of sexual scripts' does justice to the variety and organization of different sexual scripts that are positioned in relation to a dominant or normative script in the symbolic repertoire of people within a specific field. Changes in sexual cultures can be conceptualized as a re-configuration of this ordering of scripts. This conceptualization points to the question of how the ordering of sexual scripts within specific fields changes. Thus, it questions how a particular sexual script that was once marginal becomes the dominant norm of intimate interactions within a specific field.

In the United States, the partial transition from a regime of dating to one of hooking up coincided with changing power relations between the sexes, whereby women gained power vis-à-vis men in work and education as well as their intimate relationships. Within the dating regime, women had relatively little power over the

intimate encounter. Men initiated dates, decided on the activities and how much money he would spend and ultimately defined the terms of the relationship (Bailey, 1988:110). A woman could rebuff or acquiesce to the arrangement, and in the latter case agreed on an exchange. She had to repay the investment of her partner with attention, care and often some light sexual activity. Dating was comparable to an economic exchange in many respects. The more a man spent, the more he could expect in terms of emotional and sexual services. Penetrative sex, however, was off limits within dating, and women were responsible for maintaining this boundary. This is exemplified by the story of a female student of the University of Michigan who got raped on her date in the late 1940s. Both the perpetrator and the victim got suspended from the university. Officials reasoned that she had brought this situation upon herself and was thus responsible for the committed 'vice' (Bailey, 1988:91). The structural gender inequality in dating limited women's options to set the terms of the intimate encounter. This was especially pronounced in sexual matters, with a much smaller range of acceptable sexual activities for women as compared to what was acceptable for men. Furthermore, it was the woman who was responsible for maintaining sexual boundaries and who carried the burden when borders were crossed.

In the sixties, the relation between the sexes went through great upheaval. An extended period of economic growth spurred a demand for workers. Women were needed in the labor force, especially in white-collar jobs. Women entered the labor market and higher education *en masse*. At the same time, a new cultural wind blew through America and brought feminist politics to the forefront. This led to a grand reconfiguration of the power balance between the sexes. Women gained power vis-à-vis men on many fronts: women increasingly worked in paid employment, had high educational attainments, and demanded new arrangement in intimate relationships that granted them more control over the terms of the encounters and over their own bodies. From the 60s onwards, dating progressively lost its ground in youth culture, and a new sexual code took root with a new configuration of sexual scripts.

The changing power balance between men and women resulted in what sociologist Cas Wouters calls an 'informalization' of contact between the sexes (2012:104). Relationships between young men and women became marked by higher degrees of openness, less formality and more emotional intimacy than male-female interactions of the previous generation. Friendships between young men and women started to be more common in the sixties, and this was obvious in the campus arena, where socializing in mixed peer groups became a frequent sight (Bogle, 2008:20; Horowitz, 1987:226). This is still the case today. At the moment when relationships between the sexes became less formal, a new prevalent sexual script emerged on college campus:

two friends or acquaintances would have sex without expectations of commitment or a more in-depth development of emotional intimacy.

From the 1970s onwards, a drastic restructuring of the American economy increased job insecurity, financial precarity and economic inequality. In this new economic environment, the relevance of educational qualifications for financial security increased. Many young Americans experienced enhanced pressures to get the most out of their college years. They prioritized the educational attainment needed to secure a well-paying job, the accumulation of precious social capital, the development of a broad range of social and cultural skills for today's complex work environment, and additionally, their enjoyment of these years of relative freedom as much as possible. Among college youth, the self-development imperative felt pressing. Students experienced college as a time in which they uncompromisingly needed to focus on their own development, and committed relationships were seen as events that could jeopardize this project.

The importance of the self-development imperative was eminent for the students I spoke with at BAU. For both middle and upper-middle-class students, college was a time to focus on their own interests, make new friends and experiment with sex. Committed relationships, according to students, demanded compromises and large time and emotional investments. They conflicted with 'students' expectations of college life as a time to be uncompromisingly 'selfish'. Structural economic changes in the latter half of the 20th century shaped a college culture in which a self-development imperative was paramount. Privileged students, in particular, prioritized investing in their own identities and securing their futures before committing to a partner. In this new environment, college students valued sex outside of a relationship context. They prioritized a sexual script that allowed for sexual experimentation without the emotional and time investments of a committed relationship. Within this context, hooking up became a dominant script within the college arena.

The aforementioned social, cultural and economic changes did not solely affect college students. The power balance between men and women changed throughout society, and increased precarity and economic insecurity made practices of self-development more relevant for all Americans (McGee, 2005). In this dissertation, I asked if these macro-social, cultural and economic changes spurred the development of hookup culture among youth outside of the college arena. The chapters on 'game' practitioners in the Bay Area indicate that this did not occur. Although players of the 'game' were primed to hookup and dedicated time to study and practice the pursuit of such sexual adventures, few practitioners had frequent casual sexual encounters. Furthermore, many of these sexual escapades followed a sexual script that was unlike the college hookup script. Instead, it followed a rather gradual progression of

emotional and physical intimacy. This shows that hookup culture is not omnipresent in urban erotic contact zones but is likely confined to specific spatial niches such as college campuses.

College campuses in America are often rather autonomous 'youth villages' with tightly integrated social environments, severe peer pressure and a high degree of conformity (Wouters, 2012:297). Particular infrastructural arrangements on campus result in a distinct environment in which hookup culture can flourish. One of the most important conditions is a large and active social scene with an abundance of alcohol-infused partying. A number of studies, including my examination of intimate relationships on BAU, show that hooking up predominantly happens in this party scene (Allison and Risman, 2014:108; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Bogle, 2008:167). Not all colleges in the US have a dominant party scene, which seems to be particularly present at large residential State colleges that offer an abundance of easy majors (Bogle, 2008; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013). One reason why BAU lacked a dominant hookup culture was because of the absence of a pronounced party scene on campus. Alcohol and drug-infused parties happened in the homes of students living outside of the campus arena. These parties were often small scale and restricted to a close circle of friends of the hosts.

Residential patterns also impact the ecology of hookup culture. Students living at their parents' homes seldom hooked up. An adage of American parenting is 'not under my roof', which is a rule that children should not have sex in their parents' homes (Schalet, 2011). This maxim is an effort by parents to control the sexuality of teenagers and young adults, in the hope that they will not engage in serious sexual activity until later in life. Furthermore, on-campus residency often resulted in tightly integrated communities with a dominant peer culture and severe social control. This is illustrated by Armstrong and Hamilton's (2013:190) finding that some students who were not initially interested in partying and hooking up were drawn into this scene by peer pressure. Tightly integrated residential colleges also establish a 'general sense of familiarity' and trust between students, facilitating their casual interactions and hookups (Bogle, 2008:132). At BAU, only a small fraction of the total student body lived on campus, while most students were dispersed around the city, living with peers or with parents. The student community was loosely integrated, social control was shallow and the sexual culture was diverse.

Not all students hookup, even though this is a dominant script in the sexual culture on many college campuses. Hooking up is largely a practice of upper and middle-class students, while working-class students often find it a foreign sexual practice and are primed to committed relationships (Allison and Risman, 2014; Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Bogle, 2008:61). This link between social class

and sexual culture was also pronounced in my study on intimate relationships at BAU. Privileged students were primed to the party and hookup scene because it resonated with their understanding of college life. Working-class students had a different understanding of college and relationships. Moreover, a larger fraction of these students resided in their parents' homes, and this greatly affected their opportunities to partake in the party and hookup scene around campus.

In the campus arena, socioeconomic structures and infrastructural arrangements impacted hookup culture, along with the development of students' career trajectories. I found that freshmen students in particular are primed to party and hookup, while upperclassmen were far less interested in this scene and more geared towards committed relationships. This resonates with other studies that found a similar trend in the development of students' sexual careers (Allison and Risman, 2014:111; Wade and Heldman, 2012). The reputation of college life as a time marked by fun, excitement, parties, relative freedom and sexual play is appealing for young men and women in America. This understanding is partly acquired as a result of experiences of American adolescence, during which many youths are subjected to authoritative parental control that drastically limits their social and sexual experiences (Schalet, 2011). When they enter college, this parental control diminishes, and youths are free to explore the excitement of college parties and sexual play. As students progress through college, they often 'grow out' of the party and hookup scene. They move from a position in which sexual codes were enforced by authoritative control to one where they are maintained through self-regulation (Wouters, 2012:103-104). In college, the adult sexual codes within a relationship context are replaced by a new sexual code of uncommitted sexual experimentation. Slowly, as students progress through college, the adult sexual code is accepted again and is maintained through self-regulation rather than authoritative, parental control.

21st-century hooking up is markedly different from the conventional dating of mid-20th century America. However, some dynamics are found in both regimes. A lot has been written on the persistence of gender inequality in hookups. The tenacious sexual double standard of dating persists in hookup culture, male and female sexuality continuous to be judged along different standards, and the sexual practices in hookups are more geared towards men's sexual pleasure than that of women (Armstrong et al., 2012:456; Currier, 2013:717; England et al. 2008:535; Kalish and Kimmel, 2011:147). More parallels can be drawn between the dating and hookup regimes. Dating, like hooking up, is a public status game between competitors in which popularity could be won. At BAU, this status dynamic of hookup culture existed in the party and hookup scene, although the lack of social integration and the weak social control at BAU made this dynamic less visible and less pressing,

compared to the popularity game of hookup culture described by other authors (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Sweeney, 2014; Wade, 2017).

This connotation of hooking up as a status game found even more vehement expression in 'seduction communities'. Within these groups, the competitive dynamic of hookup culture was magnified tenfold, enhanced by its professionalism. Sexual adventures within this distinct field acquired a similar dynamic as that seen in sports; it was a game played between competitive players in which money and status could be won. 'Game' practitioners construed their trade as a highly technical craft, like most sportsmen see their game, comprising techniques of the body and mind that could be learned through dedicated study and incessant, repetitive practice. Like in sports, virtuosi showed in the performance of field-specific techniques of the body, the ability to read the 'game' and strategically maneuver within the field, control it, and ultimately outcompete other players by setting records.

## A COMPARISON BETWEEN SEXUAL REGIMES

Hong Kong has seen many similar socioeconomic changes as the US. The booming economy in the second half of the 20th century encouraged many women to find paid employment, and tertiary education has expanded tremendously and attracted an increasing number of female students. At the same time, financial insecurity is rampant and remains a freighting specter for many Hong Kongese, increasing the relevance of higher educational attainments for youth. The intersection of these forces shaped intimate life in the city-state, and some trends in gender and intimate relations parallel developments in America, while others are markedly different. Concomitant to America, the age of first marriage has risen tremendously in Hong Kong, fertility rates have dropped, divorce rates have increased, and premarital sex is more accepted as are diverse sexual practices (Davis and Friedman, 2014). On the other hand, child birth outside of wedlock is infrequent, and sex remains rooted in committed relationships to a much greater extent than in the US.

A changing economy has made labor market-orientated self-development among youth in Hong Kong increasingly relevant. Chinese parents, compared to their American counterparts, were vehement in inculcating this imperative on their children. The adage of Hong Kong parenting was 'no boy/girlfriend at all'. Hong Kong parents not only tried to control their children's sexuality, like American parents, but they aimed for a more total form of control over their children's activities. By setting rules against romantic relationships, Hong Kong parents tried to channel all of their children's energy and focus towards school work. The increasing complexity

of the economy and the lack of social welfare provisions in the city-state heightened the relevance of high educational attainments for maintaining, or rising, class positions. In this period of continuous economic insecurity, parents held a tight grip on their children and, by means of soft and hard persuasion, encouraged them to study hard and secure a prosperous future. This prioritization for youth to acquire skills and qualifications to benefit their future prospects in the competitive labor market continued in college, although this was less through authoritative control by parents and more through self-regulation. Most students continued to work hard in university and joined all sorts of student organizations to learn skills that would benefit their future employment. This self-development imperative seemed similar to that seen in the US at first, but it did not translate into a hookup culture at colleges in Hong Kong.

In contrast to the US, the dominant sexual script at college in Hong Kong was one in which an intimate relationship developed out of a longstanding friendship, and a gradual buildup of emotional intimacy coincided with a slow progression of sexual activity. Intercourse was confined to a committed relationship and preferably marriage. This, however, did not mean that students were not aware of the hookup script. The hookup script was largely a symbolic entity that students referred to in reflecting on their own relationships and those of peers. Hooking up had a low position within the ordering of sexual scripts on campus. It was a debased practice, seldom enacted, and in comparison to hooking up, their own intimate practices seemed successful and acquired a veneer of respectability. Hookups were seldom enacted at UHK, but the sexual script offered insight. Students used it as a symbolic resource for identity politics, to construct boundaries between themselves and peers in America and Europe.

In the US, the sexual norms on college campuses differed greatly from those in the urban erotic contact zone outside of this arena. At college, hooking up was a prevalent sexual script, while in the urban erotic contact zone it was not. In Hong Kong, however, sexual norms at college seemed to overlap with those in the urban nightlife. In both settings, hookups seldom happened and the sexual code was that emotional and physical intimacy should progress slowly and in tandem. The chapter on 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong gave insight into the dominant sexual mores of the urban erotic contact zone in Hong Kong. These men were not representatives of a mainstream sexual culture but were an extreme case. 'Game' practitioners in Hong Kong, just like their counterparts in the US, were primed to hookup and actively sought casual sex encounters with Chinese women. Within their attempts, they often violated sexual norms within the city-state, and their violations elucidated the dominant sexual code within this arena of youth.

The dominant sexual mores in Hong Kong corresponded in some ways to a conventional dating script of mid-20th century America, but there were also important distinctions. Both regimes had stringent gendered rituals of romance. A man asked a woman out, usually paid for dates, opened doors, escorted her home, and initiated light sexual contact. In Hong Kong, however, dating is first and foremost a vestibule for a committed monogamous relationship that ideally evolves into marriage, although this does not always happen. Dating in Hong Kong is generally a short transitional period between friendship and a committed relationship, in which partners make their romantic interest in each other explicit, talk about the expectations of a relationship, open up to each other emotionally, and decide if they wanted to be a couple. In contrast, dating in the US was first and foremost an arrangement that allowed for 'safe' sexual experimentation, comprised of sexual stimulation but not intercourse, which remained associated with adult sexual practices. Dating in mid-20th century America was a status game between competitors in which popularity could be won. It was about consumptive leisure in the public spaces frequented by youth. The dating relationship, at least in the last phase of the dating era, was exclusive, and partners often stayed with each other for months or years without an expectation that this would evolve into an engagement and marriage (Bailey, 1988:51).

In order to understand differences in intimate cultures of youth in Hong Kong and America, it is important to understand the power balance between the sexes and how it has changed. In America, the extraordinary achievements of the gender revolution translated into a lifting of restrictions on female sexuality, which made hookup culture possible. Although women have also gained much ground in Hong Kong, sexual norms in the city-state are still profoundly different for men and women. Sex outside of a relationship context is much more accepted for men than for women. Women's sexuality is more strictly controlled, and penalties for sex outside of relationships are more severe for women than for men. Gender relations in Hong Kong are more similar to mid-20th century America than to the current state of affairs, for instance in ideals concerning role-patterns in the family. The dominant sexual regime of contemporary youth in Hong Kong, however, is markedly different from the dating regime of mid-20th century America. How can we understand the differences in the two sexual regimes?

Within Hong Kong, as well as in America, college campus life had its own cultural institutions and a distinct student culture. This was exemplified in the eminence of 'the five things students needed to do in college', which all students were familiar with and most students enacted. In this distinct youth culture at University Hong Kong, forging intimate relationships with peers, to *ceot pool*, was important.

This was perceived similarly to dating in the sense that both were used by youth to mark their differences from the adult world.

Like many college campuses in America, the campus of University Hong Kong was a tightly integrated community with a dominant culture and intense social control. This tight social integration of student life at University Hong Kong resulted in a stringent peer control of gender and sexuality. In my analysis of the symbolic gender identities *gun jam*, *gun jam bing* and *gau gung*, I showed that these functioned as mechanisms of control, with which students policed the gender and sexual behavior of fellow students and through which they reinvigorated dominant sexual norms on campus. Women who signaled a relational interest in a variety of men were prone to the *gun jam* label and risked stigmatization and marginalization on campus. Similarly, men who made explicit advances on more than one woman risked the *gau gung* label and faced similar penalties. Thus, these labels also controlled their sexuality and revived the norm of long-term committed relationships. The stark social integration of University Hong Kong resulted in a stringent social control, through which dominant sexual norms were maintained.

Alongside these profound similarities in the social conditions in Hong Kong and America, there were tacit differences. Colleges in America had always been rather autonomous 'youth villages' outside of the realm of parental control (Wouters, 2012:297), while in Hong Kong, parental control never waned completely. A large part of the student body at University Hong Kong continued to live in their parents' homes. Furthermore, campus residency in Hong Kong was often for one or two years, after which students moved back to their parents' homes. Even those students residing on campus often moved back to their parents' homes for a number of days per week. In the small city-state, it was never a long commute between the university and the residences of students' families. Hong Kongese youth thus remained in the sphere of parental control, which prolonged the adult grip on youth sexuality. In contrast, American students moved away from parental controls when they entered college.

The highly institutionalized nature of relationship formation on the Hong Kong campus implied that the norms of the older generation resonated in students' intimate culture. University Hong Kong had notorious institutions of relationship formation, such as O-camps and Secret-Angel-programs, in which students were encouraged to *ceot pool* and form an intimate relationship with peers. These institutions were conservative by nature. They solidified patterns of interaction and consolidated the norms of previous students. Furthermore, these institutions operated under the auspices of university administrators, who belonged to an older generation. By supporting these arrangements, they made sure that the sexual norms es-

poused in these institutions corresponded with those of their own generation. Older generations maintained their control over your sexuality through these conservative institutions for forming relationships at University Hong Kong.

## HOOKUP CULTURE AND 'SEDUCTION COMMUNITIES'

'Seduction communities' are a heterosexual male reaction to the rise of hookup culture. In the dating era, men and women experienced different restrictions on their sexuality. Men were expected to push for and engage in sex, while women were expected to withhold sexual intercourse until marriage. In hookup culture, sex outside of a relationship context became the norm for both men and women. For the first time in history, women were actually sexually available in uncommitted and unrestricted relationships devoid of emotional intimacy. In theory, hookup culture is a heterosexual men's paradise; in reality, however, it poses new challenges for young men. Sexual relations with women have always been central to heterosexual manhood, especially in young adulthood. Heterosexuality needs to be proven constantly, and in hookup culture this is achieved through the continuous sexual conquest of women. In the dating era, men could hide behind the adage that women were not sexually available, but in the hookup era this is no longer the case. Young adult men need to hook up in order to prove their heterosexual manhood. While some men succeed, often due to their good looks, high-class background and sophisticated social skills, many others do not. These are the men that flock to self-help groups to learn the heterosexual skills to hook up with women. 'Seduction communities' are such self-help groups.

While 'seduction communities' are fueled by a fantasy of the omnipresent possibilities of hookup culture, the vast majority of 'game' practitioners do not hookup often. Only the most skillful players of the 'game', and this was a fraction of the total population of practitioners, had frequent sexual adventures. In chapter four, I explained that most of these adventures followed a blueprint that resembled a contemporary dating script more than a college hookup. These encounters often had a gradual buildup of emotional intimacy that coincided with a gradual intensification of physical intimacy over a number of hours and often over a number of days, despite dedicated and persuasive efforts to speed up the process. This shows that hookup culture is not omnipresent among youth outside the college campus arena. Dominant sexual norms, at least in the urban erotic contact zone of San Francisco, resonated with a contemporary dating script. Hooking up

is thus predominantly the practice of college students in tightly integrated and autonomous youth communities.

In 'seduction communities', hookup culture is thus primarily a fantasy about unlimited potential sexual possibilities. This is understandable in the US, where a large percentage of young adults have been to college or have at least heard about college culture from friends or the media. The tales of fantastic, free-for-all sexuality among youth fuel the fantasies of young men within and beyond the campus arena. Some come to expect that hooking up is the norm in intimate interactions with women within and outside of the college context. It is particularly peculiar that young adult men fantasize about uncommitted sex with women in societies where dominant sexual norms, even those on campuses, do not allow for casual sex. 'Game' practitioners in Hong Kong, for instance, fantasize about casual sex with Hong Kong Chinese women, while a hookup script is not prevalent among youth in the city-state. This fantasy about casual sexual adventures with East Asian women is informed by Orientalist imaginaries.

Orientalism conveys a discourse about the East and the exotic, sensuous Asian women that are sexually available to White men. Perhaps Orientalism has always sustained a fantasy about casual sexual relationships with Asian women. Authors like Flaubert and Burton have written about myriad sexual adventures with Asian women. Regardless of these historical continuities, an Orientalist imaginary continues to color the sexual fantasy of expat men, as shown in my chapter on 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong. For these men, Orientalist fantasies about sexually available Asian women spurred their interest in 'seduction communities' in Hong Kong. This cultural fantasy about Asian women, however, was not confined to White expat men. Some of my respondents were Chinese men who had spent their formative years in the Anglo-Saxon world. They also drew on this orientalist fantasy about Asian femininity to explain their interest in Hong Kong Chinese women.

The lamented loss of male privilege in the 'west' is intimately entwined with this Orientalist fantasy about Asian women. In some ways, 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong were correct in that gender relations had changed astonishingly in the last half a century in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world. While most people in the 'west' welcomed these changes with open arms, some men turned their backs to gender change and lamented the days of unchallenged patriarchy. This was the case for 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong. They bemoaned changing gender relations and bore grudges against White women in particular. While residing in Hong Kong, they had no interest in women from Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, and this was not confined to White women but also included Asian women who had lived in these regions. In Hong Kong, 'game' practitioners sought a hyper-feminine partner

that could grant them unrestricted male privileges in intimate relations. This was more available to them in Hong Kong than in Europe, America and Australia. Ironically, 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong applauded hookup culture but denounced the same forces that made casual sex possible for women. Feminism spurred changes in the power relations between men and women and resulted in more relaxed restrictions on women's sexuality. 'Game' practitioners celebrated the latter, but they condemned the reconfiguration of power between men and women.

The reality of intimate relationships in Hong Kong was at odds with the Orientalist fantasy of sexually available Asian women. 'Game' practitioners went to great lengths to pursue Hong Kong Chinese women for casual sexual adventures. At times, these strategies were successful, but usually they were not. 'Game' practitioners offered an extreme case to investigate the dominant sexual mores of the urban erotic contact zone in Hong Kong. Their pursuit of casual sexual adventures often resulted in a violation of sexual mores, and these violations illuminated the codes for intimate coupling. The hegemonic sexual script in the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong entailed a gradual progression of emotional intimacy that coincided with a gradual intensification of sexual activity. Intercourse, however, was confined to committed relationships and preferably even marriage. Hookup culture in Hong Kong largely remained an ideational construct, which was true for both students of UHK and 'game' practitioners in Hong Kong.

## FINAL REMARKS

Dating and hooking up were distinct sexual regimes of youth in America. The adaptation of the dating regime by the middle classes coincided with the development of youth as a distinct and autonomous life phase with its own institutions and its own culture in the early 20th century. As specialists started writing about youth as a distinct life phase, with its own psychology, its own development trajectory and its own trials and tribulations, youth began to think of themselves as having a distinct identity. A number of developments increased segregation between youths and adults. Changing demographic patterns in the family meant that youth grew up in families with brothers and sisters of the same age; the expansions of tertiary education meant that an increasing number of young Americans spent a number of years in youth enclaves of residential coed facilities. In this important period in their lives, youth lived outside of their parents' homes and beyond parental control, in a setting where they were surrounded by peers. These 'youth villages' were tightly socially integrated communities with a dominant culture that was maintained

through stark social control. Within these distinct environments, an autonomous youth culture could develop, devoid of the control of older generations. Within this youth culture, sexuality became a prime identity marker and offered a regime of intimate relationships that contrasted the sexual codes of the adult world. Dating and later, hooking up were recreational sexualities, contrasting the committed and durable bonds of adulthood.

Like in America, college men and women in Hong Kong had a distinct youth culture with its own institutions. However, youth culture in Hong Kong was not autonomous from the adult world like it was in America. The older generation had a firm grip on the terms in which a youth identity developed, and this extended to the realm of sexuality. This grip manifested itself on campus through a prolonged residence in parents' homes and through dominant institutions of relationship formation. Sexuality was not a prime identity marker of Hong Kongese youth; instead, they distinguished themselves from older generations in terms of their aspirations in their relationships. Hong Kongese youth construed the intimate relationships of older generations as cold, formal and rooted in tradition. Instead, the younger generation valued close emotional ties with their partners and warm, tender relations with their intimate relations, based on a sincere appreciation of their partner's personality.

Interestingly, hookup culture in the US has not resulted in an increase in the number of sexual partners of youth. One would expect that the prevalence of casual sex across myriad American college campuses would imply that youth are having sex with a larger number of partners. This seems evident when compared with an older generation who predominantly confined sex to the context of committed relationships. However, the contrary seems to be happening. In comparison to older cohorts, youth are engaging in intercourse later, and they have fewer sexual partners. These trends in youth sexuality does not seem to be confined to the US, as recent research in The Netherlands shows (RSAN, 2017). I have offered a tentative explanation for this trend in this dissertation and argued that the changed power balance between men and women resulted in a 'culture of sexual consent', suggesting that youth are increasingly careful about engaging in sexual activities. This desexualization of youth is a trend that demands a closer examination. Why is it occurring? Under what conditions do youth engage in sex? And, how is sexual abstinence perceived among youth?

During fieldwork, new technologies to find intimate partners were adopted by the masses. Applications like Tinder and Happn attracted millions of users worldwide, in the course of months. Initially, my plan was to incorporate a chapter on how youth have used these new technologies in my research, but this was too am-

bitious for the current project. I believe, however, that this is a fascinating area for future research. A re-occurring theme in popular media is that this technological innovation fueled a culture of casual sex. This needs to be explored more thoroughly. In particular, research should address the dependencies between sexual scripting and technologies. How do technological affordances condition sexual scripting? And, on the other hand, what inspires the designers of these applications? How do sexual regimes shape the design of technological aids for intimate coupling?

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# SUMMARY

## HOOKUPS: YOUTH SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A hookup is a sexual encounter that can include different sexual practices, ranging from kissing, petting and oral sex to intercourse. The sexual encounter is usually devoid of expectations of commitment and emotional intimacy. In recent decades, hooking up has become a prevalent script of intimate coupling on numerous American college campuses. Little is known, however, about whether this sexual culture is prevalent among youth in the direct surroundings of colleges, for instance in urban erotic contact zones. Youth around the globe learn about hookup culture from the media. Has this resulted in an appropriation of the hookup script in other regions that experienced similar changes in gender and intimate relationships like the US?

These tenets are explored in this multi-sited, qualitative study of youth sexuality in the Bay Area and Hong Kong.

In the social sciences, two strands of research have dominated studies of hooking up. In the first, persistent gender inequalities in hooking up have been delineated. In the second, the alleged social, psychological and physiological 'risks' of hooking up are investigated. Much less is known, however, about the conditions under which hooking up became a prevalent script on numerous American college campuses. A common line of reasoning suggests that the rising gender imbalance on many American college campuses has fueled a culture of casual sex. This argument starts from the presumption that young women want committed relationships, while young men want casual sex. Since young men are a minority on most campuses, they are in short demand and hence can define the terms of their intimate encounters. This reasoning, however, is problematic since recent research shows that many college women prefer hookups to committed relationships. Another theory links the particular infrastructural arrangements on campuses to a culture of casual sex. For the first time in their lives, young men and women live outside of their parents' home, surrounded by peers, most of whom are sexually active and unmarried. Youth are in a similar place in their lives and have similar aspirations. On campus, an

alcohol-infused party scene is never far away. As a result, a culture of casual sex is omnipresent. These infrastructural conditions, however, have been present on American college campuses for about a century and can therefore not explain the emergence of hookup culture.

Young men and women in America developed a distinct sexual culture at the start of the 20th century. This coincided with the emergence of youth as a distinct life-phase, separate from adulthood, with its own institutions and its own culture. At that time, adults and young Americans were increasingly physically separated. A developing American economy demanded a skilled labor force, and college education expanded. Many young Americans experienced a period in their lives in which they lived away from their families and among peers on residential college campuses. These autonomous youth enclaves were incubators of youth culture. Sexual norms became an important marker of distinction from adulthood. Dating emerged as the sexual culture of middle-class youth.

The sexual norms of dating were unequal for men and women. For men, it was acceptable to have sex outside of a relationship context. For women, however, this was not the case. Only light sexual practices were acceptable in dating for women, and women were responsible for maintaining sexual boundaries. A gender revolution occurred in the second half of the 20th century. Women entered tertiary education en masse, found paid employment in increasingly higher-paid positions, and demanded to be treated equally to men, and this extended to the realm of intimate relationships. As a result, sexual norms started shifting, and premarital sex became acceptable for both men and women. Increasingly, youth experimented with sex outside of a relationship context. During college, youth prioritized their own development above committed relationships. A worsening economy fueled this development imperative. College qualifications became more important for securing a middle-class career, and youth experienced these years as a period primarily devoted to attaining educational qualifications and the development of their own identities.

The development imperative was eminent for the middle-class students in my research at BAU, a commuter college in the greater Bay Area. For these young men, college was primarily a time devoted to exploring life-style options, experimenting with sex, and building friendships. Committed relationships were experienced as a potential threat to these self-development projects. Many students, men and women alike, prioritized the hookup script on campus above a committed relationship. However, not all students hooked up. It was the sexual culture of middle-class youth. Working-class students had a different understanding of college and prioritized committed relationships above hookups. Furthermore, many working-class students lived with their parents and could not easily access the party and

hookup scene around campus. Not all middle-class students, however, hooked up regularly. Hooking up was enmeshed with the college party scene. This scene, at the commuter college BAU, existed in the adjacent neighborhoods of campus at house parties hosted by predominantly sophomore and senior students. Many students found it difficult to access this scene regularly and did not hookup that often. In contrast to many other American colleges, an active and easily accessible social scene was lacking at BAU. Infrastructural arrangements mattered for the emergence of hooking up as a dominant norm on campus. A large residential community of students and an active and accessible social scene proved to be important conditions for hookup culture to emerge.

Hooking up was the sexual culture of college-going youth, but outside of this arena, this sexual script was even less common. I investigated the intimate affairs of so-called 'game' practitioners. These men studied and practiced flirtation and sexual escalation and actively sought these encounters in the urban-erotic contact zone. These men were an extreme case; they were primed towards a hookup script. The 'game' was a competitive field in which players competed for status and money. Status hierarchies between 'game' practitioners were made on the basis of enacted heterosexual competences. Hooking up regularly signaled expertise in the 'game', and a high status in the community of 'game' practitioners could earn players money. Game 'practitioners' thus had a professional interest in hooking up regularly. If a hookup culture existed in the direct surroundings of college, I expected to find it among these men.

Hookups, however, even among competent 'game' practitioners, did not occur frequently, and most sexual encounters abided to a contemporary dating script. The latter script has an extensive screening protocol in which interlocutors communicate a broad range of identity markers to determine their suitability as a match, such as life-style interests, personality traits and social-economic status. While in the hookup script 'emotion work' aims to thwart the development of emotional intimacy, many of the rites enacted within the 'game' tried to foster an emotional tie between interlocutors. For example, there were strategies to stretch the experiential dimension of time and efforts to emotionally relate to each other. In the 'game', this deepening of emotional intimacy often coincided with a gradual intensification of physical intimacy. The prevalent sexual script in the 'game' was not all that casual.

Scripts of youth sexuality travel internationally. On the surface, Hong Kong has seen many similar changes in gender and intimate relationships as America. Women have entered tertiary education and the labor force *en masse*, the age of first marriage has increased, the acceptance of premarital sex has risen, and diverse sexual cultures have emerged. At the same time, college-going youth experience a

pressing development imperative. High educational attainments are essential for securing a middle-class lifestyle in Hong Kong. This, however, has not resulted in a decoupling of sex and committed relationships among youth. Students at UHK were aware of the hookup script, but they seldom enacted it. Hooking up was a symbolic resource, used by students to reflect on their own intimate practices and in relation to which their own intimate affairs seemed respectable and civil. Hooking up was the sexual practice of foreign students. Hong Kongese students used the hookup script as a resource to construct boundaries between themselves and other students. *Ceot pool* was the sexual regime on campus in Hong Kong. *Ceot pool* was a transitional phase between an acquaintance or a friendship and a committed relationship, in which individuals explored their interest in a committed affair and their suitability as a couple. Light sexual practices remained confined to a committed relationship context, and most students only accepted intercourse if their affair was likely to evolve into marriage. Women were held responsible for the safeguarding of sexual boundaries. *Ceot pool* was institutionalized within the campus arena. During orientation-camps, students were encouraged to *ceot pool*, and college departments organized Secret-Angel-programs to facilitate intimate coupling among students. These institutes were conservative in nature and functioned under the auspices of the university administrators. UHK was a tightly integrated community, and peer control was stark. The sexual norms on campus were maintained and policed by students through the invoking of symbolic gender identities of the *gun jam*, *gun jam bing* and *gau gung*. Flirtation was only accepted when students had an interest in a committed relationship. Students were assiduous in policing sexual norms on campus, and transgressions could result in marginalization and subtle forms of exclusion.

In the immediate surroundings of college, sexual norms corresponded with those at UHK. 'Game' practitioners, like their American counterparts, were primed to casual sex. Their contempt for gender change in the 'west' and orientalist imaginaries infused their longing for Hong Kong Chinese women. Despite their interest in hookups, they seldom found casual sex in the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong. Their attempts to hookup with Hong Kong Chinese women in this environment resulted in violations of sexual norms. These norms held that sexual partners should meet via acquaintances, sexual activity should not be enacted publically, sex was confined to a committed relationship context, and dating should be primed towards a committed relationship that could potentially evolve into marriage.

Hooking up, like conventional dating of the mid-20th century, emerged as the sexual regime of middle-class youth in autonomous enclaves of residential campuses. In these youth villages, young Americans lived among peers, outside of the direct

control of parents. In these autonomous enclaves, a sexual culture developed that differed from adult sexual norms. Outside of the campus arena, sexual norms of youth corresponded to those of adults. In the college campus hookup regime, sex is mainly recreational and devoid of expectations of finding a life-long partner. In contrast, the sexual norms of the adult world link courtship to seeking a marriage partner and confine sex to a relationship context. Hooking up is a key identity practice of college-going youth, which distinguishes youth from adulthood.

In Hong Kong, a distinct college campus culture existed. Sexual norms, however, were not a defining marker of youth culture. Instead, the sexual norms on campus corresponded with those of the adult world. College in Hong Kong, despite the residential campus context, was not an autonomous youth enclave. The older generation maintained a firm grip over the terms in which a youth sexual culture could develop through the institutionalized nature of relationship formation on campus. In contrast to the US, sexual norms in the direct surroundings of campus corresponded with those on the college campus. In the urban erotic contact zone of Hong Kong, like on campus, the prevalent sexual script entailed a coupling primed towards a committed relationship. In this script, a gradual intensification of physical intimacy coincided with a gradual progression of emotional intimacy. Intercourse was confined to a relationship context. The aspirations of their relationship were used by youth to demarcate their practices from those of the adult world. While their parents coupled out of respect for tradition and their relationships were emotionally cold and distant, youth coupled out of a sincere appreciation of their partners' personalities and aspired to a warm, emotionally intimate and caring relationship. Thus, a youth culture in Hong Kong developed around relationship aspirations rather than sexual norms.

# SAMENVATTING

## HOOKUPS: YOUTH SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Een 'hookup' is een ambigue term. Het is een seksuele interactie waarin verscheidene seksuele handelingen, of een combinatie daarvan, kunnen plaatsvinden. Het kan gaan om kussen, strelen, orale- en penetratieseks. De seksuele interactie wordt gekenmerkt door het afwezig zijn van verwachtingen omtrent commitment en emotionele intimiteit. In de laatste decennia is 'hooking up' een veelvoorkomend seksueel script geworden op Amerikaanse studentencampussen. Weinig is echter bekend over in hoeverre deze seksuele omgangsvorm ook wijdverbreid is onder jongeren in de directe omgeving van het studentenleven, bijvoorbeeld in het stadse nachtleven. Jongeren over de hele wereld hebben via de media kennisgenomen van de hookupcultuur van het Amerikaanse studentenleven. Echter, in hoeverre heeft dit ervoor gezorgd dat jongeren buiten de VS dit script toe-eigenen; in het bijzonder in regio's waar overeenkomstige veranderingen in intieme- en genderrelaties hebben plaatsgevonden als in de Verenigde Staten? Deze onderzoekslijnen worden in deze vergelijkende, kwalitatieve studie van seksuele jeugdcultuur uitgewerkt. De casussen komen uit de San Francisco Bay Area en uit Hong Kong.

In de sociale wetenschappen zijn twee benaderingen in de studie van hookupcultuur dominant. Enerzijds zijn er onderzoeken die de hardnekkige genderongelijkheid in 'hookups' aan de kaak stellen. Anderzijds zijn er studies die de veronderstelde sociale, psychologische en fysiologische risico's van 'hooking up' onderzoeken. Veel minder is echter bekend over de sociale condities waarin 'hooking up' een veelvoorkomend seksueel script op vele Amerikaanse universiteitscampussen kon worden. Een vaak geopperde verklaring is dat de veranderende samenstellingen van de studentenpopulatie hier debet aan is. In de laatste decennia zijn er op veel campussen meer vrouwelijke dan mannelijke studenten gekomen. Hierdoor zou een lossere seksuele omgangsvorm gebruikelijk zijn geworden. Deze verklaring veronderstelt dat jonge vrouwen een vaste relatie willen, terwijl jonge mannen losse seksuele contacten willen. Doordat de jonge mannen op veel universiteitscampussen een minderheid vormen zouden zij een sterkere onderhandelingspositie hebben,

waardoor een losse seksuele omgangsvorm op veel campussen dominant kon worden. Deze verklaring is echter problematisch, omdat uit recent onderzoek blijkt dat veel vrouwelijke studenten 'hookups' prefereren boven vaste relaties. Een andere verklaring wijst naar de bijzondere infrastructurele samenstelling van universiteitscampussen. Voor de eerste keer in hun leven wonen jonge mannen en vrouwen buiten het ouderlijk huis, omgeven door leeftijdsgenoten van wie de meesten seksueel actief en alleenstaand zijn. Zij zitten in een overeenkomstige levensfase en hebben gelijkende aspiraties en ambities. Bovendien is er op veel campussen een levendig sociaal leven, waarin drank en feesten een grote rol spelen. Als gevolg van deze omstandigheden zou er een cultuur van losse seksuele contacten ontstaan. Ook deze verklaring is discutabel. Universiteitscampussen hebben al vele decennia dergelijke infrastructurele omstandigheden, terwijl de hookupcultuur een recent fenomeen is. Deze verklaring is dan ook niet afdoende om de opkomst van hookupcultuur te duiden.

In het begin van de 20ste eeuw is er onder jongeren in de Verenigde Staten een eigen seksuele cultuur ontstaan. Deze ontwikkeling viel samen met het ontstaan van 'jeugd' als een aparte levensfase, die verschilde van volwassenheid, en die zijn eigen instituties en eigen cultuur had. Rond de eeuwwisseling leefden jongeren en volwassenen in toenemende mate gescheiden van elkaar. De groeiende Amerikaanse economie had behoefte aan geschoolde arbeiders, als gevolg hiervan werd het universitaironderwijs uitgebreid. Veel jonge Amerikanen woonden hierdoor een periode op universiteitscampussen in het bijzijn van leeftijdsgenoten en weg van hun familie. Deze autonome 'jeugd dorpen' waren incubatoren van jeugdcultuur. Seksuele normen waren een belangrijk middel om een verschil met de wereld van volwassenen te markeren. Het 'daten' ontstond als de seksuele cultuur van jongeren uit de middenklasse.

De seksuele normen in de datecultuur waren ongelijk voor mannen en vrouwen. Van mannen werd het geaccepteerd als zij seks buiten een vaste relatie hadden. Voor vrouwen, daarentegen, was dit niet het geval. Alleen 'lichte' seksuele handelingen waren acceptabel voor vrouwen in het daten. Vrouwen werden verantwoordelijk gehouden voor het overschrijden van seksuele grenzen. In de tweede helft van de 20ste eeuw vond er een ware genderrevolutie plaats. Vrouwen gingen *en masse* studeren, werken, en kregen steeds beter betaalde banen. Velen van hen eisten een gelijke behandeling als mannen, ook in intieme relaties. Als een gevolg hiervan begonnen seksuele normen te veranderen en werd seks voor het huwelijk acceptabel voor zowel mannen als vrouwen. In toenemende mate gingen jongeren experimenteren met seks in losse contacten. Gedurende hun studentenjaren gaven jongeren prioriteit aan hun eigen ontwikkeling en dit werd belangrijker gevonden dan het vinden

van een vaste relatie. Verslechterende economische omstandigheden versterkten dit zelfontplooiingsimperatief onder studenten. Een universitaire graad werd in toenemende mate belangrijk voor een middenklasse carrière, en de studiejaren gingen in het teken staan van het verkrijgen van een diploma en het ontwikkelen van een eigen identiteit.

Uit mijn onderzoek bleek dat voor veel middenklasse studenten van 'Bay Area University' het zelfontplooiingsimperatief leidend was. BAU was een zogenaamd 'commuter college'; een universiteitscampus waar slechts een klein gedeelte van de studenten op de campus woont. Voor de jonge mannen uit de middenklasse die ik interviewde waren de studiejaren hoofdzakelijk een tijd om verschillende interesses en levensstijlen uit te proberen, om te experimenteren met seks en om vriendschappen te sluiten. Vaste relaties werden gezien als een potentiële bedreiging voor dit zelfontplooiingsproject. Vele studenten, zowel mannen als vrouwen, verkozen een 'hookup' boven een vaste relatie. Echter, niet alle studenten deden mee aan de hookupcultuur. Dit was de seksuele omgangsvorm van jongeren uit de middenklasse. Studenten uit de arbeidersklasse hadden een ander begrip van waar de studiejaren om draaiden en gaven de voorkeur aan een vaste relatie. Bovendien woonden veel studenten uit de arbeidersklasse bij hun ouders en hadden daardoor minder makkelijk toegang tot het feestgedruis rond de universiteitscampus en de vele 'hookups' die daar plaatsvonden. Echter, ook niet alle middenklasse studenten namen deel aan de hookupcultuur. Deze seksuele escapades ontstonden hoofdzakelijk op studentenfeesten. Deze feesten vonden voornamelijk plaats in de aangrenzende buurten van BAU, bij ouderejaarsstudenten thuis. Veel studenten, vooral de eerstejaars, vonden slechts sporadisch hun weg naar deze feesten en hadden daarom weinig 'hookups'. In vergelijking met andere Amerikaanse universiteitscampussen was een toegankelijke feest- en hookupscene niet aanwezig op BAU. Dit kwam hoofdzakelijk door de infrastructurele omstandigheden op de universiteitscampus. De aanwezigheid van een grote studentenpopulatie die op campus woont en een toegankelijke sociale scene bleken essentiële voorwaarden te zijn voor het ontstaan van een hookupcultuur.

'Hooking up' was de seksuele cultuur van studenten, maar buiten deze context was deze seksuele omgangsvorm minder gebruikelijk. Ik heb onderzoek gedaan naar de seksuele interacties van zogenaamde 'spelbeoefenaars'. Dit waren jonge mannen die het flirten en het aangaan van seksuele interacties bestudeerden en praktiseerden, en die 'hookups' actief najaagden. Deze mannen waren een extreme casus, zij hadden een bovengemiddelde interesse in 'hookups'. Het 'spel' was een competitief veld waarin spelers het tegen elkaar opnamen en waarin status en geld gewonnen konden worden. Statushiërarchie tussen spelbeoefenaars werd gemaakt op basis

van de heteroseksuele competenties die zij in hun intieme interacties met vrouwen lieten zien. Het regelmatig hebben van een 'hookup' gaf blijk van expertise in het 'spel'. Dit gaf status in de gemeenschap van spelbeoefenaars, en spelers met een hoge status konden geld verdienen door middel van het geven van versiercursussen. Spelbeoefenaars hadden dus een professionele interesse in het frequent hebben van 'hookups'. Als er een hookupcultuur zou bestaan buiten universiteitscampussen, dan zou het waarschijnlijk bij deze mannen zijn.

'Hookups' kwamen echter zelden voor, zelfs bij competente spelbeoefenaars, en de meeste van hun seksuele interacties volgden een hedendaags datescript. Dit script heeft een protocol waarin gesprekpartners veel van hun interesses, persoonlijkheid en hun identiteit aan elkaar laten zien om zo te bepalen in hoeverre zij een goede match zijn. Terwijl in het hookupsript partners 'emotiewerk' doen om een zekere gevoelsmatige afstand te bewaren, zijn veel van de handelingen in een hedendaags datescript erop gericht om een gevoel van emotionele nabijheid te creëren. Enkele voorbeelden hiervan in de seksuele interacties van spelbeoefenaars zijn strategieën om de gevoelsmatige tijdsduur die men samen doorbrengt te verlengen en pogingen om zich op een emotioneel niveau tot elkaar te verhouden. In het 'spel' ging dit verdiepen van emotionele nabijheid tussen gesprekpartners meestal samen met het intensifiëren van fysieke intimiteit. Het meest voorkomende seksuele script van spelbeoefenaars was dus helemaal niet zo los en ongedwongen als een hookupsript.

Seksuele scripts uit de Amerikaanse jeugdcultuur zijn over de hele wereld bekend, zo ook in Hong Kong. Op het eerste gezicht heeft er in Hong Kong een soortgelijke verschuiving in gender- en intieme relaties plaatsgevonden als in de Verenigde Staten. Ook in Hong Kong zijn vrouwen in grote getale gaan studeren, gaan werken, en trouwen zij gemiddeld op latere leeftijd. Ook is de acceptatie van seks voor het huwelijk toegenomen en zijn er diverse seksuele culturen ontstaan. Tegelijkertijd ondervinden jongeren, zeker degenen voor wie de universiteit binnen hun mogelijkheden ligt, een stringent zelfontplooiingsimperatief. Een hoger onderwijsdiploma is ook in Hong Kong essentieel voor het bereiken van de middenklasse. Dit heeft echter niet geresulteerd in een ontkoppeling van seks en vaste relaties in de jeugdcultuur. Studenten van de 'University Hong Kong' waren bekend met het hookupsript, maar zij deden dit zelf niet. Voor hen had het hookupsript een symbolisch waarde, zij gebruikten het om er mee te reflecteren op hun eigen intieme affaires en in relatie tot welke hun eigen intieme gedragingen respectabel en beschaafd leken. 'Hooking up' was de seksuele omgangsvorm van buitenlandse jongeren. Studenten uit Hong Kong gebruikten het hookupsript om een symbolisch grens tussen henzelf en andere studenten te markeren. *Ceot pool* was het seksuele regime op de University Hong Kong. *Ceot pool* was een transitiefase

tussen een vriendschap, of het zijn van kennissen, en een vaste relatie. In deze fase polsten studenten hun interesse in een vaste relatie en hun compatibiliteit als partners. ‘Lichte’ seksuele handelingen werden acceptabel gevonden in de context van een vaste relatie en de meeste studenten vonden geslachtsgemeenschap alleen geoorloofd als hun huwelijk aanstaande was. Vrouwen werden verantwoordelijk gesteld voor het bewaken van seksuele grenzen. *Ceot pool* was geïnstitutionaliseerd op de universiteitscampus. In de introductiekampen, georganiseerd door de faculteiten aan het begin van het studiejaar, werden studenten aangemoedigd om een vaste partner te vinden. Ook organiseerde deze faculteiten zogenaamde ‘Secret-Angel-programma’s’ om het relatievormingsproces tussen studenten te faciliteren. Deze instituties waren van nature conservatief en werden georganiseerd met goedkeuring van universiteitsbestuurders. UHK was een hechte gemeenschap en de sociale controle tussen studenten was sterk. De seksuele normen op de universiteitscampus werden onderhouden en bewaakt door studenten door middel van het aanroepen van symbolische genderidentiteiten, zoals de zogenaamde *gun jam*, *gun jam bing* en *gau gung*. Flirten was alleen gewettigd als een student een serieuze interesse in een relatie met een andere student had. Onderling werd deze norm stringent bewaakt en studenten die zich er niet aan hielden riskeerden subtiele vormen van marginalisatie en uitsluiting.

In de nabije omgeving van de universiteitscampus golden overeenkomstige seksuele normen als op UHK. Spelbeoefenaars, net als hun Amerikaanse collegae, waren bovenmatig geïnteresseerd in het aangaan van losse seksuele contacten. Hun minachting voor de veranderingen in genderrelaties die in het ‘westen’ hebben plaatsgevonden en een oriëntalistisch vertoog kleurden hun verlangen naar intieme relaties met Hong Kongese vrouwen. Ondanks hun interesse in ‘hookups’, vonden zij zelden losse seksuele contacten in het nachtleven van Hong Kong. Hun pogingen om ‘hookups’ te bewerkstelligen met Hong Kongese vrouwen resulteerden in overschrijdingen van gedragsnormen. Deze normen hielden in dat seksuele partners elkaar leerden kennen via gedeelde kennissen, dat seksuele handelingen alleen in een privésetting ondernomen moeten worden, dat geslachtsgemeenschap alleen in de context van een vaste relatie fatsoenlijk is, en dat het daten er op gericht moet zijn om een vaste partner te vinden die een mogelijke huwelijkskandidaat is.

‘Hooking up’, net als het conventionele daten van het midden van de 20ste eeuw, ontwikkelde in de autonome jeugdenclaves van universiteitscampussen als het dominante seksueel regime van jongeren uit de middenklasse. In deze omgeving woonden veel jonge Amerikaanse mannen en vrouwen bij elkaar en buiten het blikveld van het ouderlijk gezag. In deze autonome jeugdenclaves ontwikkelde een

seksuele cultuur met diametraal andere seksuele normen dan die van de wereld van volwassenen. Buiten de universiteitscampus, daarentegen, correspondeerden de seksuele normen van jongeren met die van volwassenen. In het hedendaagse hookupregime op universiteitscampussen is de seks hoofdzakelijk recreatief en staat het los van verwachtingen omtrent het vinden van een vaste partner. De seksuele normen van de wereld van volwassenen staan daar in veel opzichten lijnrecht tegenover. In die wereld is hofmakerij verbonden met het vinden van een vaste partner en wordt seks normaal en goed gevonden zolang dit in een vaste relatie gebeurt. 'Hooking up' is een vooraanstaande identiteitspraktijk van studenten, waarmee zij zich distantiëren van de wereld van volwassenen.

Ook In Hong Kong bestond er een specifieke jeugdcultuur op de universiteitscampus. Echter, de seksuele normen waren hier niet iets wat deze cultuur onderscheidde van de wereld van volwassenen. De seksuele normen van jongeren en volwassenen vertoonden zelfs grote overeenkomsten. De universiteitscampus was niet een autonome jeugdencave in Hong Kong, ondanks dat vele jonge mannen en vrouwen hier samenwoonden. De oudere generatie had ook op de campus controle op de jeugdcultuur. Dit bleek, bijvoorbeeld, uit de geïnstitutionaliseerde relatievorming op de campus. In tegenstelling tot de VS, kwamen de seksuele normen op de universiteitscampus overeen met de normen zoals die in de nabije omgeving van deze setting golden. In het nachtleven van Hong Kong, alsmede op de universiteitscampus, was het gebruikelijke intieme contact gericht op het vinden van een vaste relatie. In dit script vond een gelijktijdige en graduele intensifiëring van emotionele en fysieke intimiteit plaats. Geslachtsgemeenschap werd slechts billijk gevonden in een vaste relatie. Niet de seksuele normen, maar de ambities in de relatie van jongeren verschilde met die van de wereld van volwassenen. Terwijl hun ouders een relatie aangingen omdat dit van hen door naasten verwacht werd, en terwijl deze relaties over het algemeen koud en afstandelijk waren, kozen jongeren hun partner vanwege diens persoonlijkheid en hadden zij de ambitie om een warme, zorgzame en emotioneel intieme relatie te onderhouden. De ambities in de relatie waren dus onderscheidend in de jeugdcultuur in Hong Kong, niet de seksuele normen.





# NOTES

## CHAPTER 1

- 1 This is calculated by comparing San Francisco's demographics from 2000 and 2015 (USCB, 2000d; USCB, 2015c).

## CHAPTER 2

- 2 Number taken from university website.
- 3 A rough estimate is the percentage of students at BAU receive financial aid; this is approximately 60%. This aid comes from a variety of federal and state financial programs, each with different eligibility criteria, some of which grant aid to students with family incomes up to 150,000 dollars. It is safe to say that working and middle-class students comprise 60% of the total student population.

## CHAPTER 3

- 4 According to the National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2010, 3.9 % of twenty-five to forty-four-year-old men had five or more opposite-sex sexual partners in the year of research (Chandra et al., 2012:13). On the surface, this seems to correspond with the ratio of players with consistent sexual adventures within 'seduction communities' in my study. However, of the eight skillful players the number of opposite-sex sexual partners in the last year ranged from eighteen to eighty-two.
- 5 Matthew is a 'pickup' instructor in East Asia and this story is set in this region. It is, however, the most comprehensive and compact illustration of demonstrating agentic prowess within the 'game' through story-telling. This dynamic was also found in the sexual stories of 'pickup' coaches in the Bay Area.

## **CHAPTER 4**

6 Emonthly newsletter, June 2014.

## **CHAPTER 5**

7 Student enrolment of first-year-first-degree (FYFD) places of UGC-funded programs as percentage of average population in the relevant age group (age 17-20) (UGC, 2016).