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Hookups

Youth sexuality and social change

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GENDER, SEX AND CHANGE IN THE BAY AREA

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).¹ 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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