

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX: THE INFLUENCE OF A SEXY MEDIA DIET ON COLLEGE FRESHMEN'S
ENDORSEMENT OF THE HOOKUP CULTURE, PEER INFLUENCE, AND BEHAVIORS REGARDING
CASUAL SEX AND SEXUAL RISK TAKING

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the impact of college freshmen's sexual media diets (SMD) on the perception of their peers' sexual activity, endorsement of the hookup culture (EHC), hookup experiences, and sexual risk-taking behaviors.

A panel method approach was taken to investigate the influence of exposure to sexual media content across six different media formats (TV, movies, music, magazines, Internet, and social networking sites) on peer influence and sexual attitudes and behaviors. Likewise, the mediating effect of both peer influence and EHC were explored on the relationships between (a) SMD and hookup experiences and (b) SMD and sexual risk taking. Lastly, the moderating effects of gender, wishful identification, self-efficacy, alcohol consumption, concern for safe sex, number of sex partners, and relationship status were measured on the main relationships.

Results revealed that college freshmen who had high levels of exposure to sexual media content were more likely to accept the norms and expectations of the hookup culture, overestimate their peers' sexual activity, participate in hookup experiences, and engage in more sexual risk taking. The relationship between (a) SMD and hookup experiences as well as (b) SMD and sexual risk taking was mediated through EHC. Additionally, college freshmen who had less concern for safe sex, lower levels of self-efficacy, more sex partners, and who consumed higher volumes of alcohol were more likely to engage in sexual risk-taking behaviors.