

# What We Know and Where We Go from here: A Review of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Hookup Literature

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**Abstract** In this paper, we acknowledge and critique the absence of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) experiences in the recent proliferation of scholarship on “hooking up” among youth (aged 16 to 24). Although previous research has documented that LGB youth hookup at high rates (up to three-quarters of LGB youth), and oftentimes more than heterosexuals, the most basic aspects of hookups (e.g., motivations, experiences, and outcomes) have not been comprehensively explored. This is pertinent because young adulthood, in particular, is a time when young people explore their sexuality. Most scholarship on hooking up has focused on White heterosexual college students, mostly due to sampling constraints and impediments, and so we are left with a critical gap in our knowledge about LGB youth—a population that is typically at higher risk for sexual, mental, and emotional health issues. We begin by reviewing the literature on hooking up among heterosexual young adults as organized by four themes: hookup definitions/frequencies, contexts, motivations, and outcomes. We do this to explicitly highlight and contrast what little is known about LGB youth hookups. We then provide a research agenda that projects how future researchers can advance this area of scholarship and begin to fill

its gaps, while considering the hookup experiences of diverse LGB youth.

**Keywords** Hookup culture · LGB hookups · Casual sex · MSM · Sexual initiation

Hookups are engagements in casual sex (any sexual behaviors from making out to having penetrative intercourse; Epstein et al. 2009) that are oftentimes initiated with no expectation of commitment between strangers or friends not romantically involved (Reid et al. 2015; Snapp et al. 2015; Stepp 2007). Hookups are becoming increasingly normative in North America, especially among college students. In fact, media has continued to normalize these behaviors through the news, sitcoms, and movies (Garcia et al. 2012). Some scholars believe that hookups have replaced the dating scene for young adults (Bogle 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001), whereas others have found significant variability in the definitions of hookups by populations such as college men, who use the term “hooking up” to label sexual encounters with dating partners where commitment is not destabilized (Epstein et al. 2009). Adolescence and emerging adulthood is a particularly relevant developmental period related to hookup behaviors because many young people explore their sexual identities, attitudes, and behaviors during this time (Morgan 2013). Similarly, it is a particularly salient time for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals to explore their sexuality through sexual experiences and experimentation.

There is agreement among scholars that the research on hooking up is glaringly heteronormative (Armstrong et al. 2009; Bogle 2008; England et al. 2008; Heldman and Wade 2010; Rupp et al. 2014; Snapp et al. 2015). This narrowness is likely due to constraints in conducting parallel studies with LGB populations, which stems from heteronormative study

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designs and instruments that oftentimes presume heterosexual identities and include participants who engage in penile-vaginal sexual acts. Despite nearly two decades of research on hookups, little is known about the hooking up experiences of LGB individuals (and, even less so, transgender populations—which warrants separate investigations entirely). In a review of casual sex experiences among emerging adults, Claxton and van Dulmen (2013) noted that hookup research has transcended studying frequencies of hookups and instead now also focuses on the different forms of casual sex experiences (e.g., hookups, friends with benefits, one-night stands). This progression has not been reflected in scholarship that targets LGB young people. Additionally, most hookup studies focus on participants from college samples (and as such is reflected in our review), but this limits our knowledge about young people who do not attend college, are pre-college, or have graduated. As we will demonstrate, there is little foundational knowledge regarding even the most basic knowledge such as prevalence rates and motives of LGB youth hookups (college students or otherwise). As a natural consequence, research on hookups have by and large continued to ignore intersections among sexual orientation, gender, class, and race/ethnicity, as well as how these identities may contribute to differential hookup experiences and possibly unique health and well-being concerns among young adults.

Recent shifts pertaining to LGB sexual cultures and advancements in social acceptance and policy changes warrant a deeper investigation into whether the same patterns, motivations, outcomes, and experiences of hookups apply to LGB youth. Given that permissive attitudes toward hookups are related to endorsements of less traditional attitudes toward marriage, coupling, and monogamy (Paul and Hayes 2002), and GB men oftentimes report ideological beliefs in favor of non-monogamous casual sex partners (Worth et al. 2002), we ask: Might these beliefs—those that are different from many heterosexuals’—be related to different patterns and experiences in hooking up for LGB young adults?

How LGB young people understand and share their hookup experiences (Snapp et al. 2015) remains relatively unknown. The ways hookups have been studied historically have yielded very small LGB samples (Barrios and Lundquist 2012; Vrangalova 2014) and/or were not culturally relevant or appropriate for LGB young adults. For example, contexts for meeting potential sexual partners are likely to differ for LGB young people compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Kelly 2012; Snapp et al. 2015), and our current strategies for studying hookup culture undoubtedly miss these populations and perpetuate the erasure of their experiences. Kelly (2012) argued that more studies of LGB hookup are needed, and Rupp et al. (2014) have urged scholars to learn more about same-sex intimacies for non-college populations.

Even in a 2015 special issue on hooking up in the *Journal of Sex Research*, only one of ten articles in the issue focused

on LGB youth populations, and the authors defined sexual orientation by same-sex behaviors (see Garofalo et al. 2014). Given the existence of sexual health disparities and sexual risk behaviors for LGB individuals, such as higher rates of unprotected anal sex and sexually transmitted infection risk (Everett et al. 2014; Winetrobe et al. 2014), more information is needed in order to support positive sexual health and development among this understudied population.

Compounded with the lack of focus on LGB populations as a whole is the dearth of research that has focused specifically on non-male lesbian and bisexual youth hookups. Although an emerging body of research has focused on hookups among women (see Diamond 2005; Kuperberg and Padgett 2016a; Rupp et al. 2014; Savin-Williams and Diamond 2000; Wade 2017), there is a disproportionate focus on men, which perpetuates the sexual double standard throughout this area of scholarship (see Kreager et al. 2016; Zaikman et al. 2016). Research that does study the specific experiences of women has highlighted how their experiences are distinct from men’s, such as the practice of women kissing women, oftentimes for the enjoyment of heterosexual men (Yost and McCarthy 2012). Scholars also find that the practice provides a space for women to explore their sexuality and that some women had later established lesbian, bisexual, or queer identities as a result of experimentation with other women (Rupp et al. 2014).

Other research found that young men pursued same-sex sexual contact well in advance of labeling themselves sexual minorities, whereas women were more likely to label themselves sexual minorities before pursuing same-sex sexual contact (Savin-Williams and Diamond 2000). Furthermore, Wade (2017) explicitly highlighted the voices and hookup stories of women and provided their how-to narratives and lived experiences. By doing so, she was able to provide recommendations on how to understand and change the hookup culture from the perspectives of women. Given that heterosexual women report hooking up for different reasons and experience different outcomes than men do (such that men are more likely to endorse enhancement and peer pressure motives to hookup; for example, Snapp et al. 2014), and women are oftentimes urged to have casual sex more than men are (Rudman et al. 2016) in line with the sexual double standard (Kreager et al. 2016), we expect that these gender differences may be especially meaningful for individuals with multiple minority statuses, such as lesbian, bisexual, or queer women.

It is important to note that although we approach the operationalization of *LGB youth* particularly as defined through personal identity throughout our paper, nearly all existing research that stems from the field of public health has focused on the behavioral component of sexual orientation (e.g., men who have sex with men, although they do not necessarily identify as gay). Throughout our review, we urge readers to consider that for some sexual minority people who hookup, specific components of sexual orientation (i.e.,

personal identity, behavior, attraction) may be discordant, wherein young people who participated in hookup studies may not identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual as part of their personal identity, but rather instead have sex with the same gender at times. Because of this possible discrepancy, we note, where possible, how researchers operationalized sexual orientation in their studies.

We begin our discussion with brief reviews of relevant literature among young heterosexuals, which allows us to identify the fundamental questions and themes discussed within the field of hooking up. Based on this population, it is possible to examine current trends and psychosocial correlates of hooking up for the majority. These findings are presented in four themes: frequencies/definitions, contexts, motivations, and health outcomes. After the review of scholarship for each theme pertaining to heterosexual young people, we present the limited scope of scholarship that has focused on LGB young people.

## Theme 1: Frequencies and Definitions of Hookups

### Heterosexual Young Adults

Most research from the past 15 years has consistently found that more than three-quarters of young adults engage in at least one hookup during college. In a 2012 review, Garcia and colleagues reported that between “60% and 80% of North American college students” reported “some sort of hookup experience” (p. 163). Other recent scholarship has estimated that between 70 and 85% of college students hooked up at least once (England et al. 2008; Paul et al. 2000; Reiber and Garcia 2010). One review explored younger populations and found similar rates: among 12 to 21 year-olds, about 70% of respondents reported engaging in uncommitted sex in the past year, and another study found that a fifth of a sample of 7th, 9th, and 11th graders had uncommitted sex (Grello et al. 2003). In one of the most recent investigations into sexual motives and hooking up among college women ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ , range = 18–23 years-old), 82% of the sample ( $n = 221$ ) reported having at least one hookup partner, and the number of hookup partners in the overall sample reported ranged from 0 to 32 (Schneider and Katz 2017). One study also found that the average number of hookup partners among college students was 10, and that the median number of hookups was 7—of those who hooked up, the range of hookups spanned 1–70 (Paul and Hayes 2002). Despite traditional notions that women and men may have different levels of interest in commitment, studies confirm that heterosexual women and men in college hookup at about equal rates (Garcia et al. 2012; Reiber and Garcia 2010). However, other research has found that while men and women perceive similar benefits to hooking up, women prefer dating over hooking

up compared to men, who preferred hooking up over dating (Bradshaw et al. 2010).

When Paul and Hayes (2002, p. 642) first surveyed 187 college students about their hookup experiences, they operationalized the behavior as “a sexual encounter (may or may not include sexual intercourse) between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances, usually lasting only one night without the expectation of developing a relationship.” Since this time, many studies have used this definition or adapted it to fit their own research with heterosexual samples of young adults (Lewis et al. 2012; Schneider and Katz 2017). However, more recent research has found that different definitions of hooking up (e.g., only one time or longer and more casual) are related to diverse reports of self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction among college students (Vrangalova 2014).

Variations in what sexual behaviors actually constitute a hookup continue to be found across studies. For instance, Fielder and Carey (2010) found that nearly every college student who reported hooking up engaged in kissing their partner. In another study, about one-third of college students engaged in penetrative sexual intercourse in the context of their hookup (Reiber and Garcia 2010), which demonstrates the range of behaviors in the aforementioned 70–85% of young people who hook up. In a more recent study, heterosexual men and women similarly categorized only certain behaviors, such as penile- vaginal intercourse, as “definitely sex, whereas other sexual acts, such as oral-genital contact or mutual masturbation, are not as consistently categorized as definitely sex” (Sewell and Strassberg 2015).

### LGB Young Adults

In the LGB youth hookup literature, scholars have not typically used the term hookup in their methodologies that assess sexual experiences. An exception is a study that analyzed responses from 274 gay men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.3$ ) and 5106 straight men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.1$ ; Barrios and Lundquist 2012). Barrios and Lundquist (2012) found that gay men were significantly more likely (74%) to hookup (measured by the question: “Use whatever definition [of hooking up] you and your friends use”) than were straight males (64%). Among this sample, gay men had an average of 4.63 anonymous sex partners compared to 3.37 reported by heterosexuals.

Because most research has not clearly operationalized hooking up for LGB populations, we know very little about how LGB youth define hookups, or how often they hookup. Foundational evidence that targeted men who have sex with men (MSM) has suggested many young LGB people report anonymous sex with several different partners, sometimes in risky settings (Hirshfield et al. 2015).

## Theme 2: Contexts for Hookups

### Heterosexual Young Adults

Reviews of hookup literature have noted that the majority of hookups are facilitated by social settings such as parties, bars, and fraternity houses (Garcia et al. 2012; Paul and Hayes 2002). Specifically, in Paul and Hayes' (2002) early study of 187 college students, 67% of hookups were reported to have been initiated at parties, more than half (57%) were initiated at fraternity houses, and a smaller number of college students hooked up at clubs or bars (10%). In 2008, England and colleagues found that many hookups in their heterosexual sample of over 4000 college students were initiated in co-ed dorm rooms. Some of the most recent evidence available—data from 22 colleges across 12,068 hookup encounters—suggested that almost two-thirds (60%) of hookups among heterosexual individuals were initiated through in institutional settings, such as bars and parties (Kuperberg and Padgett 2014), but fewer women who hooked up with women met in bars (16%) compared to straight women (30%) and straight/sexual minority men.

Kuperberg and Padgett (2014) also found important gender differences in contexts for initiation. For example, men were more likely to meet hookups in institutional settings, such as in dormitories, and those who met their partners in these settings were twice as likely to have sex on their dates. On the contrary, women most commonly reported utilizing friend recommendations and common interest groups to find their hookup partners. Surprisingly, Kuperberg and Padgett also found that very few hookups and dates were initiated through Internet connections. However, more recent evidence has indicated that heterosexual partners meet casual sex partners on dating apps, such as Tinder, although love is also a strong motivation for using these apps as well (Sumter et al. 2017).

Particular contexts are associated with increased number of hookups. For example, spring break is a time when young people engage in hookup behaviors (Josiam et al. 1998); indeed, research has found that young people plan to engage in casual sex during planned holidays (Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1998). College students ( $N = 1468$ ) also report choosing a range of hookup partners: 54% chose friends, 24% casual acquaintances, and 14% ex-partners (Lewis et al. 2012).

### LGB Young Adults

Understanding the context of LGB youth hookup requires an examination of evolving social zeitgeists that underpin the experiences of being lesbian, gay, or bisexual in global societies. In the last 10 years, specific to the North American context, there has been a progressive shift in cultural attitudes and acceptance of LGB people in the United States (World Value Survey 2014). Since this time, emergent spaces have been

created that allow conversations, networking, platonic meeting, and sexual encounters for LGB individuals, which result in both positive and negative social and sexual opportunities (Hawkins and Watson 2017).

LGB youth have been challenged with the inability to locate sexual partners (Mustanski et al. 2011), which is associated with unsafe sex practices, such as having sex in anonymous places (Garcia et al. 2012). Although sexual stigma against individuals who are LGB has been dissipating slowly in North America, young people still experience harassment and marginalization at high rates in school (Corrigan and Matthews 2003; Murchison et al. 2017). Closeted identities inhibit the formation of friendships or identification of sexual partners. Historically, young gay men have met others in anonymous places such as bathhouses and bathrooms, which is partially driven by antigay prejudice (Seage et al. 1997). However, contemporary advances in technology have changed the way many LGB individuals meet each other (Mustanski et al. 2011), which may have implications for how they negotiate hooking up.

LGB youth utilize the Internet and online spaces to make initial contact with potential hookups despite the stigma that is sometimes attached to meeting sexual partners online (DeHaan et al. 2013; Kuperberg and Padgett 2014; Mustanski et al. 2011). The number of LGB individuals who meet online has increased exponentially since the late 1990s (for an overview on the role of the Internet in sex for gay and bisexual men, see Grov et al. 2014). In the aforementioned study by Kuperberg and Padgett (2014), 12,068 casual sex experiences of 18–21 year-olds were analyzed and the authors found that students with same-sex partners were more likely to meet online than their counterparts and that women met less frequently in bars. Among 274 gay and 5106 heterosexual college men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20$ ), nearly 10% of gay men reported meeting their hookups online, compared to less than 1% of heterosexual men (Barrios and Lundquist 2012). These same gay participants were nine times more likely than straight men were to meet their partners through a personal ad or dating service (Barrios and Lundquist 2012).

In another study, Rice et al. (2012) found that 76% of 195 participants (aged 18–24) reported used Grindr (a Smartphone app to find sex and dates) to find their sexual partners. Another study found that half of their sample of 431 young men who have sex with men (YMSM) spent more than 2 hours a week on the Internet looking for casual partners (Bauermeister et al. 2011). In a recent study analyzing 12,065 college students who responded to the Online College Social Life Survey, nearly 1 in 5 men who hooked up with men and 6% of women who hooked up with women met online; for heterosexual men and women, the rate of hookups facilitated by online services were less than 2% (Kuperberg and Padgett 2016b). Finally, in a study of 1902 YMSM in Australia, the most common way for young people (under the age of 24) to meet sexual partners

was mobile apps (75%), compared to friends (60%), gay bars (41%) and the Internet (35%) (Chow et al. 2016).

### Theme 3: Motivations for Hookups

#### Heterosexual Young Adults

A common motive that drives young people to hook up is the desire for intimacy (Claxton and van Dulmen 2013; Fielder and Carey 2010; Kenney et al. 2013; Snapp et al. 2014; Snapp et al. 2015; Stinson 2010; Vrangalova 2014). Other motives have been documented extensively in research and include self-affirmation (e.g., confidence), enhancement (e.g., pleasure), coping, and peer-approval (Cooper et al. 1998). In a contemporary investigation into motives for hooking up, Uecker et al. (2015) found four clusters of individuals based on their shared hookup motives: Utilitarians, Uninhibiteds, Uninspireds, and Unreflectives. The authors describe Utilitarians as those who hook up for not just the fun of it, but for additional reasons as well; about half of their sample identified as Utilitarians. Uninhibiteds pursued hooking up mostly for the thrill and sexual pleasure of hooking up—about a quarter of students were Uninhibiteds. Uninspireds, about one-fifth of students, are not driven by sexual gratification, but hook up for fun. Last, Unreflectives make up less than 5% of students and are neutral on most hooking up motivations. Interestingly, membership in each cluster was related differently to hookup regret and differed by gender. For example, the Uninhibited cluster was composed disproportionately of men who hooked up for fun and sex. The authors noted that this did not mean women disliked hooking up (because many women seemed to accept hooking up as fun), but that women simply did not seem as enthused as men (Uecker et al. 2015).

A review of casual sex behaviors found that exhibiting high levels of intimacy goals, certain personality characteristics (e.g., neuroticism and extroversion), liberal personal values, and higher alcohol use were related to higher incidences of hookups among young people (Claxton and van Dulmen 2013). Traditionally, hookups have been conceptualized as important in forming successful pathways for a romantic relationship, yet some scholars have found that this is rarely the outcome (Heldman and Wade 2010).

Attachment styles and hookup outcomes have been linked to motives for hooking up. For example, Snapp et al. (2015) found that satisfaction in hookups was linked to particular motives, such as obtaining pleasure, affirmation, and closeness with others. Specifically, among 250 undergraduate college students, when participants reported self-affirmation motives for hooking up (e.g., hooking up to feel more self-confident), they also reported more positive emotional reactions to their hookup. Enhancement motives (e.g., hooking up because it feels good) was significantly linked with higher levels of sexual

satisfaction (e.g., felt closer to the other person). Attachment style may also interact with motives to hookup. In one study of 266 college students, avoidant attachment style was negatively related with intimacy motives and anxious attachment was positively correlated with intimacy among both men and women (Snapp et al. 2014). In essence, when individuals' attachment style are considered, motives may differ.

#### LGB Young Adults

As we previously discussed, many heterosexual youth hookup for pleasure and intimacy (Claxton and van Dulmen 2013). We are unsure whether these motives apply to LGB populations in the same way because LGB individuals may be clandestine in regard to their sexual identity and with whom they want to have sex. Perhaps the motivations for LGB young people are related to exploring potential dating partners, as compared to physical pleasure, because there have traditionally been fewer ways to meet romantic partners.

The motivations for hookups remain underexplored for LGB youth. It may be assumed that intimacy and physical pleasure persist as predominant motives for all young people, regardless of sexual/gender identity, and yet the extant literature shows disparate motivations for some LGB youth. In one of the few studies that asked 274 gay men why they hooked up (measured by the question: "Use whatever definition you and your friends use";  $M_{age} = 20.3$ ), 90% of gay men, compared to 74% of heterosexual men, strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they hooked up with the hope there were more relationship opportunities (Barrios and Lundquist 2012). In another study of casual sex, Pingel et al. (2013) found that many YMSM aged 18 to 24 years-old wished their casual sex experiences would lead to something more intimate, such as a romantic relationship or friendship. Participants reported that this desire was the impetus for visiting online dating sites. Based on the little research on hookup motives, it appears that pleasure, intimacy, and interest in long-term relationships may compel young gay men to hookup, but we are not so sure about young people of other sexual orientations.

### Theme 4: Health Outcomes of Hookups

#### Heterosexual Young Adults

Much of the existing hookup literature has explored risks associated with hooking up, such as STI protection (or lack thereof), sexual assault, and compromised mental health (e.g., depression; Garcia et al. 2012; Paul and Hayes 2002). Some research has also indicated that among 1468 undergraduate students, 25% of the sample reported emotional difficulties, 27% felt embarrassed, and 21% experienced a loss of respect related to a hookup experience (Lewis et al. 2012).

In one study of 404 heterosexual undergraduate students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19$ , range of 18–21 years of age), men who hooked up the least and women who hooked up the most were most likely to report depressive symptoms (Grello et al. 2006). In another study with 483 college women, oral and vaginal sex (compared to kissing and non-penetrative sexual behavior) was associated with more depression and sexual violence (Fielder et al. 2014).

Scholars have long argued that the burden of risk related to hookup outcomes disproportionately affects women across multiple health indicators (e.g., emotional, mental). Paul et al. (2009) argued that women are evolutionarily disadvantaged by short-term mating, and these behaviors are more socially costly. Indeed, Fielder and Carey (2010) found that about half the 32 men in their sample reported a positive reaction to their hookup experience, compared to only one-quarter of the 108 women they studied. Relatedly, among 773 women and 776 men in college (Male  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.4$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ; Female  $M_{\text{age}} = 18.84$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ , range of 18–26 years of age), both men and women sometimes attempted to pressure a hesitant partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity, yet the likelihood of this happening for a woman was lower than for a man (Wright et al. 2010). Perhaps studies have found such disparate reports of outcomes because although college student across the United States typically describe hookups similarly, the way they converse about good and bad hookups vary widely, such that women were much more likely to converse about their best hookup experiences as compared to their worst experiences (Paul and Hayes 2002).

More recent research that links which types of hookups (e.g., how they are operationalized, the length of the relationship) lead to various outcomes has found fewer significant relations between hookups and well-being than expected, and the significant associations were limited to life satisfaction and anxiety (Vrangalova 2014). More importantly, Vrangalova (2014) found that, inconsistent with earlier research, hookups were not related to lower self-esteem among a sample of 872 first-year college and junior college students. In fact, the opposite was found—those who hooked up reported higher self-esteem. Vrangalova's findings were inconsistent with one previous study in particular that found women who had penetrative sexual hookups reported lower self-esteem (Fielder and Carey 2010). Related to this important finding, scholars have suggested that hooking up is not only a normative part of sexual development in young adulthood (Stinson 2010), but also may be related to positive development and healthy sexual health outcomes (e.g., Lewis et al. 2012; Owen and Fincham 2011; Snapp et al. 2014; Snapp et al. 2015).

### LGB Young Adults

Similar to the broader hooking up literature, the most studied outcome related to hookups has undoubtedly been sexual and

mental health. Of the handful of studies that have focused on physical health outcomes, most link same-sex partner hooking up with negative health outcomes, especially higher risk of HIV among young adults (e.g., Prestage et al. 2001; van den Boom et al. 2012). The studies that focus on HIV typically assess sexual behavior (i.e., among YMSM). For example, Everett et al. (2014) pooled Youth Risk Behavior Survey data ( $M_{\text{age}} = 16$ ,  $n = 13,174$ , range = 12–18 years-old) from eight states in the United States to investigate the associations between same-sex behavior (operationalized as “sexual contact”) and sexual health outcomes. They found that bisexual-identified youths reported younger ages of first sex, higher rates of sex partners, and increased odds of concurrent sex partners compared to heterosexual and gay men. On the other hand, the authors found that gay and bisexual participants were more likely to report forced sex compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Everett et al. 2014).

Some research has focused on protective factors that reduce risky sex in YMSM and gay men. In one study among Black YMSM, Garofalo et al. (2014) found that a combination of faithfulness and attending religious services reduced incidences of unprotected anal sexual encounters among 16–20 year-old youth. In another sample of 34 young gay men ( $M_{\text{age}} = 21$ , range = 18–24 years-old), sexual position, power, and agency were found to be relevant to decision making around sexual encounters, which in turn were related to HIV and sexual risk (Johns et al. 2012). One challenge remains that many YMSM do not have appropriate sexual health information in regard to safe anal sex, and oftentimes this is related to engagement in unpleasant and high-risk sexual activities (Kubicek et al. 2010).

Sex and dating applications—although offering new opportunities for LGB youth to meet—may have created new health challenges for LGB people. Engler et al. (2007) found that YMSM who physically met a man from online were more likely to report unprotected anal intercourse. Abara et al. (2014) found that risky sexual behavior varied among YMSM according to how the participants defined their sexual experiences. For example, YMSM who reported they had sex with another man they met online had 2.6 times higher odds of reporting unprotected anal intercourse. The authors thus concluded that considerations must be paid to how scholars define sex-seeking behavior (Abara et al. 2014).

### Conclusions and Future Directions

The contexts, motivations, outcomes, and understandings of hookups may vary for LGB youth, but at present there is minimal research to draw definitive conclusions. The bulk of research on hooking up has primarily been conducted with White heterosexual college students (Heldman and Wade 2010; Sewell and Strassberg 2015; Vrangalova 2014).

Hookup research on LGB young people has mostly only included YMSM; other subgroups of LGB individuals have not been systematically investigated in the hookup literature. Though some scholars refer to behaviors as hookups for LGB young people (including the majority of the research focused on YMSM), most measurements do not include language consistent with studies on heterosexual hookups. For example, extant studies have focused on gender differences in hooking up (e.g., Paul et al. 2009), such as for whom short-term hookups are riskier, which may play out differently or be irrelevant for LGB populations. Thus, there is a lack of information regarding how LGB youth define hookups, how often they occur, their motivations to pursue hookups, and outcomes related to these sexual behaviors. These basic arguments have been corroborated by the sentiments of hookup researchers themselves: Scholars highlight their exclusive focus on heterosexual college students' hookups as a major limitation (Heldman and Wade 2010). Yet, few researchers have been able to address this major limitation. The ease of access to heterosexual college populations (Bauermeister et al. 2011) may explain the overly heteronormative focus in existing hookup research.

### Hookup Research Needs to be Queered

We cannot learn more about how the emerging hookup culture applies to LGB youth until we queer our understanding of what it means to hook up in diverse social contexts. Many of the most basic generalizations made about hookup experiences—such that most hookups occur at college parties—largely do not apply to LGB populations (Heldman and Wade 2010). In addition, although research finds clear gender differences in outcomes of hookups, such as orgasms reported from penetrative intercourse (England et al. 2008), this may not apply to sexual minorities of different genders. Furthermore, the handful of studies that have explored hookups and casual sex experiences for LGB populations focus nearly exclusively on men—especially on risk and exposure to HIV (for examples, see Garofalo et al. 2014; Johns et al. 2012; Kubicek et al. 2010). Many of these studies have focused on gay and bisexual men's use of Grindr (Blackwell et al. 2014; Winetrobe et al. 2014).

We must queer our measures, interview questions, and survey instruments to improve the compatibility of research questions and methodologies with the lived experience of LGBTQ people. We suggest that research not only continues to ask about sexual experiences with other-sex participants, but also asks participants about their sexual identities and attractions, along with their hookup behaviors. These suggestions are in line with other calls to action by scholars who focus on measurement of (unstable) gender and sexual orientation categories. For example, Westbrook and Saperstein (2015) argue that the use of outdated measures of sex/gender in

survey research will undoubtedly restrict advancements in social equality, whereas Baumle and Compton have explored social demographics of sexual orientation and have suggested a need to trouble how we portray diverse identities on surveys (Baumle and Poston 2009; Baumle and Compton 2011; Baumle and Compton 2014).

Recent research that highlights the disjuncture between sexual identity and practice for some individuals further elucidates the need to re-conceptualize our understandings of hooking up, especially for young people who embrace more fluid sexual identities. For example, Jane Ward's work on "dude sex" exemplifies the reasons why only asking about sexual identity is not enough to form sound conclusions about sexual minorities. Ward (2008, 2015) explored the sexual experiences of White men who identified as straight but also engaged in same-sex sexual acts with other men. These types of hookup experiences are seldom explored in mainstream research on hookups despite the demonstrated ubiquity of these behaviors; studies that do not ask about sexual identities or attractions are not able to capture unique populations like these. Scholarship on "heteroflexibilities" and "bud-sex" indicate the need to complicate definitions of heterosexuality and support flexible-heterosexual individuals (including those in rural areas, where bud sex, or men having sex with men, is prevalent among men who identify as straight) through access to health care and other prevention/intervention strategies (Carrillo and Hoffman 2016; Silva 2017).

### Considering Positive Sexuality for LGB Young People

Similar to most research on adolescent and young adult sexuality (Fine and McClelland 2006), most studies on hookups are concerned with disparities and deficiencies (Fielder et al. 2014; see Snapp et al. 2015 for an overview), which position hooking up as predominantly risky, and thus these studies primarily focus on risk reduction (Kalish and Kimmel 2011). Scholars have troubled this perspective and instead suggested that hookups may be beneficial and normative. That is, perhaps there is a legitimate upside to hooking up (Snapp et al. 2015).

Similarly, for LGB populations, sexual experiences have been structured around risk paradigms, and scholarship has largely focused on risk prevention (Barrios and Lundquist 2012). What if, beyond the risks associated with unprotected sex that are often discussed in the research, hookups may provide platforms for LGB young adults to meet others and explore their sexuality, intimacy, and pleasure? Pingel et al. (2013) suggest this might be the case. We call for the dialogue around Internet encounters to expand from the "risk" framework by taking the development of identity exploration and social connection into account. Although it is reasonable and important to document risk in order to reduce it, scholars are now challenged to consider the potentially positive aspects of hooking up for all desirous young people (Snapp et al. 2015).

## Considering Intersectionality

As we noted, much of the research about hookup experiences disproportionately focuses on gay, cisgender, upper-middle class men, and thus insufficient academic attention is directed toward documenting the prevalence, motivations, outcomes, or experiences for lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender women of lower socioeconomic classes. Focusing on sexual orientation, future research might particularly address specific research questions pertaining to bisexuals. We know that bisexuals come out at later ages and are more likely to be younger, poorer, and more depressed than are their lesbian and gay counterparts (Bostwick et al. 2010; Bostwick et al. 2014; Persson and Pfaus 2015). Besides a handful of studies (Diamond 2005; Kuperberg and Padgett 2016a; Rupp et al. 2014; Savin-Williams and Diamond 2000; Wade 2017), an underdeveloped aspect of the hookup literature pertains to young women who hookup with other women. Future scholarship can extend these findings to explore whether or not these populations seek hookups with others through mainstream (e.g., bars, straight social media applications) methods. Perhaps bisexual young people resort to the nontraditional ways that LGB individuals have utilized for meeting same-sex partners, and perhaps this has implications for their feelings of safety when seeking hookups in primarily lesbian- and gay-dominated spaces.

Turning to gender identity, there is an absence of knowledge regarding causal sex among gender-nonconforming and transgender young people, and a separate paper could document unique challenges transgender individuals may face when they choose to hookup. Some of these issues, sometimes related to the incongruence related to sex assigned at birth and gender identity, may place these youth in especially vulnerable circumstances regarding hooking up. Emerging research has found that transgender youth desire and experience pregnancy at rates similar to those of cisgender youth (Veale et al. 2016); yet despite similar involvement and desire for sexual activity as their cisgender counterparts (Veale et al. 2016), the lived experiences and navigation of hookups are oftentimes different for this population. Therefore, it is essential to separately consider the hookup experiences of transgender youth.

As for basic demographics like age, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic class, more research is needed to understand whether hookup behaviors are similar in populations that are not in or have never attended college, as well as populations that do not identify as White. Related to race/ethnicity, racial minority- LGB individuals are disproportionately represented in the HIV epidemic (Grov et al. 2014), yet research rarely considers the experiences of these individuals (for exceptions see Newcomb and Mustanski 2013). Consistent with Spell (2017) who encouraged scholars to move beyond a White/non-white dichotomy to uncover a more complete understanding of hookup experiences, Eaton et al. (2016) found similarities in “hanging out” and dating scripts among

Hispanic and White participants in particular. Related to socioeconomic class, scholars have long argued that the gay community has struggled to include working- and middle-class lived experiences, and thus less affluent individuals are sometimes excluded and report different experiences than their affluent counterparts do (Barrett and Pollack 2005). Furthermore, LGB youth are disproportionately homeless and are likely oftentimes excluded from representation in studies focused on hooking up (Gates 2017). To explore these non-college, racially, and socially diverse populations, researchers might continue to access data from hookup apps (see Jaspal 2015; Lehmler and Ioerger 2014).

In conclusion, research on hookups has come a long way in the past decade, but researchers have largely ignored the experiences of LGB youth. The oftentimes heteronormative development of research studies with presumed heterosexual participants does not consider how LGB young adults might experience sexuality differently in contexts that still stigmatize their romantic and sexual relationships. Though some scholars have called for diverse definitions of heterosexuality and troubled the way we count LGB people, we continue to urge scholars who research hookups to queer their research methodologies and intentionally recruit underrepresented populations. By doing so, we can better serve sexual minority youth, who we know are hooking up, but may be invisible to us given our existing priorities and methodologies.

### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest and that they have complied with the APA ethical standards.

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