

Engaging in the Hookup Culture: A Self-Discrepancy Perspective

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This study examined the hypothesis that self-concept discrepancies predict engagement in casual sexual behavior, or hookups. One hundred seventy two undergraduate men and women completed questionnaires assessing their level of self-discrepancy and their hookup participation. Contrary to the study hypothesis, findings indicate that participants high in actual-ideal self-discrepancy are less likely to engage in hookups. Gender, age, and actual-ought self-discrepancy did not predict hookup culture participation. Differences between ethnic groups in hookup participation are also discussed.

A new phenomenon has changed young adult and adolescent sexual relationship development, as clear boundaries and stages appear to no longer define dating relationships (Stanley, 2002). In fact, Glenn and Marquardt (2001) claimed that “the ambiguity of the phrase ‘hooking up’ is part of the reason for its popularity” (p. 5). Without a proper operational definition for the term hooking up, young people are left with an inability to forecast what physical behaviors are expected from their partners or whether there is a possibility for a future committed relationship. Casual sexual encounters, or hookups, according to contemporary college students, can refer to a wide variety of sexual behaviors ranging from kissing to vaginal sex, and usually occur between two people who are either strangers or brief acquaintances, typically last only one night, and occur between partners who are not in a committed relationship (Flack et al., 2007; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). In addition, Bogle (2008), as well as England, Shafer, and Fogarty (2007), reported that hookups typically involve moderate to heavy alcohol consumption and that most college students report not believing their hookup will lead to a future committed relationship.

Fifty to 75% of college students report engaging in at least one hookup in the past year (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). The increase of casual sexual encounters continues to stir controversy for both sexes as females and males struggle to find their role in the hookup culture. Such encounters have serious health risks leading both psychologists and education policy makers to try to better understand the factors leading to participation in the hookup culture. Past research has examined this type of casual sexual behavior during adolescence through a cautionary or disease-related lens (e.g., Levinson, Jaccard, & Beamer, 1995), suggesting that

engagement in this type of “hookup culture” may put individuals at increased risk for unwanted pregnancy and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, as individuals are less likely to know about their partner’s sexual history (Dailey, 1997).

Self-Discrepancy Theory and the Hookup Culture

Little research has been conducted on why some young adults choose to engage in casual sexual activity, while others strive for committed romantic relationships with one person. The level of development of each young adult’s self-concept may offer some explanation for these differences.

Self-Discrepancy Theory (SDT; Higgins, 1989) provides a useful frame in which to examine the relationship between casual sexual-decision making and self-concept among young adults. SDT is concerned with how discrepancies in self-perceptions relate to heightened emotional states (i.e., anxiety, stress, and anger). Higgins (1987) defined self-concept in terms of three domains: (1) the actual self, or one’s representation of the attributes that are believed to be true of one’s current self; (2) the ideal self, or one’s representation of the attributes that one would like to possess; and (3) the ought self, or the attributes that one believes one should possess. In other words, SDT seeks to understand how a person describes themselves in three ways: how they think they actually are (to themselves and to others in their social network), how they would like to be, and how they think they ought to be. According to Higgins (1999), when discrepancies involve the domains of the self, emotional vulnerabilities can be heightened (i.e., anxiety, stress, and anger). For example, if a person describes their “actual self” as *arrogant*, but then lists *humble* as an “ideal self” attribute, he or she may feel elevated levels of depression-related feelings. Furthermore, a person that uses *selfish* as an “actual self” attribute, but then lists *compassionate* as an “ought self” attribute, may experience anxiety-related feelings. Discrepancies between how one actually is (the actual self) and how one would ideally like one to be (the ideal self) represent *the absence of positive outcomes*. In contrast, discrepancies between the

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actual self and how one believes he or she should or ought to be (the ought self) represent *the presence of negative outcomes* (Boldero & Francis, 2005). For instance, actual-ideal discrepancy is hypothesized to lead to feelings of depression or low self-worth, while actual-ought discrepancy is hypothesized to lead to feelings of anxiety or preoccupation with moral behavior. In addition, Higgins reports that actual-ideal discrepancies predict participant's global self-esteem (Higgins, 1999).

The level of discrepancy between these self-concepts varies between individuals. Some people do not have a large discrepancy between their actual self-concept and their ideal self. These people are presumed to be more motivated and to have greater self-esteem in comparison to those with high actual-ideal discrepancies (Strauman & Higgins, 1987). For example, in researching self-discrepancies as predictors of chronic emotional distress, people characterized by an actual-ideal discrepancy reported considerable depressive (i.e., dejection oriented) symptoms, but fewer anxiety/paranoid (i.e., agitation-related) symptoms (Strauman & Higgins, 1987). In addition, these findings have been tested outside of normative populations. In a study of undergraduates suffering from major depressive disorder, dysthymia, or an anxiety disorder, those with depressive disorders were found to have significantly higher actual-ideal discrepancies, while anxious participants had significantly higher actual-ought discrepancies (Scott & O'Hara, 1993). However, there has been increasing debate about whether or not Higgins' original theory is uniquely predictive of depression and anxiety. Previous studies have reported that Higgins' theory of discrepancy was actually more predictive of self-esteem levels in comparison to studies examining personality types or behavior patterns (McDaniel & Grice, 2008).

Factors Associated with Hookup Culture Participation

A variety of factors may influence one's decision to take part in the hookup culture during college. Once a person leaves their home and parents to venture off to college, he or she may encounter significant social pressure that will influence his or her future actions in an effort to feel accepted by his or her peers. Given the risk of casual sexual decision-making, it is important to explore what variables might predict engagement in casual sexual encounters. This study will address gender, ethnicity, and self-discrepancy as factors that might be associated with engaging in hookups.

Many previous studies have found that males report hooking up more often than women (Grello et al., 2003; Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2005); however, others have noted a convergence in males and females sexual attitudes and activities (Herold & Mewhinney, 1993; Feldman & Cauffman, 1999; Paul et al., 2000). Most recently, Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, and Fincham (2010) found similar numbers of men and women engaging in hookups. Furthermore, Simpson and Gangestad (1991)

found variance both within and between the sexes. For example, they found that women who indicated more positive attitudes toward casual sex were more likely to report engaging in such behavior than women with negative attitudes, and with more partners than their male counterparts.

Few documented studies examine age or racial differences in hookup engagement (Paul et al., 2000), as most studies draw conclusions from largely white undergraduate samples (Desiderator & Crawford, 1995; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). Previous literature has primarily found differences only in Asian American samples who tend to report less involvement in hookups (Feldman, Turner, & Araujo, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Whereas Davis and colleagues (2007) reported that there were no racial differences found in intentions for future casual sex or attitudes toward safer sex, Owen et al (2010) found that students of color were less likely to engage in casual sexual behaviors. Weinberg and Williams (1988) found that African Americans reported more permissive attitudes toward casual sexual behaviors. Due to the insufficient amount of previous research concerning this factor of hookup participation, this study will explore potential racial differences in hookup participation.

Aims of Current Research

This study will investigate casual sexual encounters through the lens of SDT. The study will evaluate whether college students' self-discrepancy levels as defined by self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1989) are predictive of hookup culture participation. Both actual-ought and actual-ideal discrepancies will be assessed to better understand the reasons for college students' hookup participation.

To the author's knowledge, this will mark the first study using the concept of self-discrepancy to further understand hookup culture. Specifically, it is expected that a high level of self-discrepancy (either in actual-ideal or actual-ought discrepancies) will predict hookup culture participation. Particularly, since a low actual-ideal discrepancy (AI) is typically associated with increased self-esteem, it is reasonable to assume that high AI will be predictive of high involvement in the hookup culture. Consistent with most previous studies, it is expected that males will engage in more hookups and have a greater number of partners compared to their female peers. Furthermore, Whites are expected to engage in more hookups compared to their peers of other ethnicities.

This study will be the first to investigate how a theory of self concept can be used to better understand hookup participation. The investigator is particularly interested in understanding casual sexual relationships taking place during late adolescence, a period generally associated with identity development. The results of the study might better inform college counselors and others in how to provide support for college students, including helping students combat peer pressure (specifically with regard to casual sexual relationships), and mitigating possible tension

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between developing value systems in contrast to established family-of-origin values and ideals.

Method

Participants

Male and female undergraduate students attending a mid-sized private university in North Carolina were recruited through an advertisement on the school's psychology department subject pool website and through on-campus fliers. Since the study was administered in early August 2008, most freshmen would have only been college students for a few weeks and thus were not included in the study. Junior undergraduates were not recruited for the study because a disproportionate number of juniors at the university study abroad during their fall semester and therefore the juniors on campus may not be representative of the typical class. The study sample included 172

Measures

Higgins' modified selves questionnaire (MSQ, 1986). This measure was designed for the purpose of assessing an individual's self-discrepancy score(s) between their actual-ideal and actual-ought self attributes. Although Higgins outlined two standpoints of the self: one's individual standpoint and the standpoint of a significant other (mother, father, close friend, etc), this study only examined the individual's standpoint as it was of primary interest with regard to late adolescent sexual decision-making. A well-utilized technique for learning about a participant's most highly accessible self-state attributes (or how a participant feels, thinks, and describes oneself) is to use the free-response listing technique found in this questionnaire (Strauman & Higgins, 1987). Participants were asked to indicate 10 attributes (adjectives) that describe each of the following: 1) the type of person they actually are; 2) the type of person they believe they ideally

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Factor	<i>n</i>	%	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	possible range
Gender (<i>N</i> = 172)					
Female	119	69%			
Male	53	31%			
Ethnicity (<i>N</i> = 172)					
Caucasian	112	65%			
African American	14	8%			
Asian American	32	19%			
Other	14	8%			
Class Year (<i>N</i> = 172)					
Sophomore	113	66%			
Senior	59	34%			
Hookup Participation (<i>N</i> = 172)					
YES	98	57%			
Typical level of involvement	171		.99	3.95	1-5
Furthest level of involvement	170		1.24	4.59	1-5
Number of sexual partners	109		8.67	6.69	0-50
Alcohol consumption frequency	128				1-5
YES	81	63%	.99	3.47	2-5
NO	47	37%			
Blackout frequency	81		.76	1.42	2-5
Drug use frequency	130		.76	1.29	1-5
NO	74	43%			

Notes. Possible range is based on a likert scale from 1 to 5. For "typical and furthest level of involvement," 1 = kissing and 5= vaginal/anal intercourse. For "alcohol consumption frequency," "blackout frequency," and "drug use frequency," 1 = never and 5 = all the time/constantly. For the category "blackout frequency," only participants who indicated that they have used alcohol at least once before or during a hookup were included.

students, ages 18-24 ($M = 19.65$, $SD = 1.82$) who volunteered to participate in the study. Participants were primarily female ($n = 119$, 69%) and sophomores ($n = 113$, 66%). One hundred twelve (65%) of the participants were Caucasian, 32 (19%) were Asian American, 14 (8%) were African American, and 14 indicated (8%) "Other."

would like to be; and 3) the type of person they believe they should or ought to be.

As per Higgins (1987), discrepancy scores were obtained by comparing each individual participant's listed attributes between their three selves (i.e., actual self, ideal self, and ought self). A thesaurus was used to determine if certain words were synonyms (matches) or antonyms

(mismatches) between their actual self attributes and their ideal and ought self attributes. Synonyms received a -1, while antonyms received a +2. First, the actual-self total score was determined by identifying any synonyms or antonyms in the list of 10 words. If a synonym or antonym was found, the first word was kept, but the antonym or synonym of the word was crossed out. Therefore, a participant could have an actual-self total score of -10 to +20, depending on how many synonyms or antonyms were listed. This same process was used for the ideal and ought self-lists to get a total score for each list. Next, all the remaining words listed in the actual self were compared to all the remaining words listed in the ideal and then, ought self. For instance, if a participant wrote *lazy* as an actual self-attribute and then wrote *diligent* as an ideal self-attribute, the participant would be given a score of +2. However, if a participant wrote *hard working* in the actual self list and listed *diligent* in the oughtself list, he would receive a -1 score. Each pair of words was given a score and then all the points were tallied at the end to produce an actual-ideal and actual-ought discrepancy score. If a word was found in the actual-self to be neither a synonym, nor an antonym, the word receives no point and the coder continues to the next word.

Participants also received points based on the degree of match or mismatch, which participants indicated on a 1-4 Likert scale (1= *slightly describes an attribute I possess* to 4= *extremely describes an attribute I possess*) for each word they listed. For example, if a word in the actual-self list was synonymous with an ideal-self attribute but differed in extent by more than one point (e.g., the participant gave the actual-self word a 1 score, while the ideal-self a 3 score), it was scored as a mismatch of degree, giving the participant a +1 score. If the two words were not mismatched by at least 2 points, no points were awarded. Each actual-ought and actual-ideal discrepancy score was then calculated by summing the weights for all matches and mismatches pertaining to that pair of self-states (Scott & O'Hara, 1993; Strauman & Higgins, 1988). Therefore, an individual received two final discrepancy scores: an actual-ideal discrepancy score and an actual-ought discrepancy score. The possible range of scores for each discrepancy was -10 to +20. The more negative a final score, the "healthier" the person was determined to be. The more positive a final score, the more "discrepant" a person was, indicating that he or she may be prone to increased anxiety and depression levels.

For this study, the range for the actual-ideal discrepancy was -8 to +8 and for the actual-ought discrepancy, scores ranged from -8 to +6. Based on these scores, participants were placed into three levels of self-discrepancy, both for their actual-ideal and actual-ought discrepancies: low (≤ -4), medium (≥ -3 and ≤ 0), and high (≥ 1). For logistic regression analyses, scores were recoded into a positive continuum in order to more easily interpret the findings. The psychometric properties of the Selves Questionnaire have been investigated in various studies.

Reliability data have included an interrater reliability coefficient range from .80 to .87 (Higgins et al., 1985; Strauman & Higgins, 1987). Interrater reliability for the current study was .87.

Hookup culture survey. This measure, designed for the purpose of this study, assessed hookup participation, level of involvement in the hookup culture, alcohol/drug use before and during hookups, and affective reactions to hookup participation. The first section assessed respondent's opinions concerning what constitutes a hookup, whether or not the individual engages in hookups, and the individual's frequency of participation and extent of sexual involvement in the hookup culture. The second section of the survey assessed how illicit drugs and alcohol may moderate the relationship between hookup culture involvement and subsequent negative affect. The third section of the study asked participants to indicate the extent to which they experience certain negative (i.e., distress, regret, guilt, and shame) and positive (i.e., security and confidence) emotions after choosing to participate or not to participate in hookups. Participants were also asked about types of social consequences (i.e., less romantic options and more time/resources for social networks) they may have experienced due to involvement or lack of involvement in the hookup culture. Only the first section of the questionnaire was used for data analysis in this paper, as future papers intend to examine the role of alcohol/drug abuse and the mental health outcomes of hookup behavior. At the end of the survey, participants were given space to provide any open-ended comments or details they wished to reveal that were relevant to the study.

Procedure

Individuals wishing to participate in the study completed anonymously an online survey. Participants were able to access the website at any time on a computer of their choice. The entire survey took no longer than 45 minutes to complete.

Participants began the survey by viewing a consent form and then filling out Part 1 of the Modified Selves Questionnaire (MSQ; Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986). Next, participants completed the Hookup Culture Survey. All participants responded to questions about demographics, level of sexual involvement that they define as a hookup, and their engagement in the hookup culture; however, participants answered a different set of questions based on their response to the question of whether or not they participated in the hookup culture.

Participants either received one hour of class credit by the psychology subject pool coordinator or entered into a drawing for one of six \$50 cash prizes. When the study ended, six names were randomly drawn from a collection of all non-subject pool participants and given \$50 cash prizes. Of the participants, 117 students were entered into the drawing and 55 students were given 1 hour of credit for an introductory psychology course.

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Results

Descriptive Statistics

Hookup participation. This study surveyed 172 sophomore and senior undergraduates. Sixty-five percent ($n = 112$) were Caucasian (see Table 1 for descriptives). Fifty-seven percent ($n = 98$) indicated that they have participated in the hookup culture. The average number of hookup partners was 6.69 ($SD = 8.67$) and the mode was 1 partner. Since participants were asked to indicate their own definition of a hookup, it should be noted that each person indicated their participation in hookups based on their personal definition. When defining a hookup, 12% ($n = 21$) of students said “kissing” was the minimal level of required involvement, while 65% ($n = 112$) reported “making out” as the minimal level. Only 13% ($n = 23$) of the students reported “petting,” 9% ($n = 15$) “oral sex,” and .6% ($n = 1$) reported “vaginal/anal sex” as the minimal level of casual sexual engagement to constitute a hookup. “Making out” is a colloquial American expression that is synonymous with French kissing, defined as open-mouth kissing that involves both partner’s tongues (Weber, 2002). Using these definitions, typical level of intimacy was categorized into three groups based on level of sexual involvement and potential risk-taking opportunity (e.g., low condom use, risk of STD infection): *high intimacy*, or engagement in oral and/or vaginal sex; *medium intimacy*, or petting; and *low intimacy*, or kissing and/or “making out”. Of those participating in the hookup culture, 48% reported that they typically make out during a hookup and 38% reported having anal or vaginal sex at least once during a hookup. Sixty-three percent ($n = 81$) of participants reported using alcohol at least once during or before a casual sexual encounter.

Self-discrepancy. Of the 172 participants, 13% reported low actual-ought (AO) discrepancy, 68% reported medium levels of AO discrepancy, and 19% reported high levels of AO discrepancy. Participants generally reported higher levels of actual-ideal AI discrepancy than AO discrepancy. Thirteen percent reported low AI discrepancy, 56% reported medium AI discrepancy, and 31% reported high AI discrepancy.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Hookup Participation

To test the hypothesis that gender differences exist in hookup participation, (specifically that men will be more likely to engage in hookup culture), a chi-square test of independence was conducted. Gender differences were not significant, $\chi^2(1) = 0.947$, *ns*. Gender differences for AO and AI self-discrepancy levels were also not significant, $\chi^2(1) = .067$, *ns*, and $\chi^2(1) = .880$, *ns*, respectively.

To test the hypothesis that Whites would engage in more hookups than their ethnic minority counterparts, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. Hookup participation differed significantly by ethnicity ($\chi^2 = 0.002$, $p < .01$), suggesting that White undergraduate students in their sample are more likely to engage in hookups than undergraduates of other ethnicities. Because minority subsamples were collapsed due to small sample size, we could not explore group differences. However, the significant difference in ethnicity may be due to the responses of Asian Americans individuals. These individuals responded almost exactly opposite of their Caucasian and African American counterparts. For instance, 72% ($n = 23$) of the Asians reported not participating in the hookup culture. These individuals constitute almost one-third of the subsample choosing to forgo participation in the hookup culture.

Logistic Regressions

Logistic regression analyses were conducted using SPSS 18.0. Separate logistic regression analyses were conducted using gender, ethnicity, actual-ideal self-discrepancy, and actual-ought self-discrepancy as predictors of participation in hookups (a binary dependent of yes or no) (see Table 2). Inconsistent with the study’s hypothesis, low actual-ideal self-discrepancy significantly predicted greater hookup participation (See Table 2). No other results were significant. To control for combined effects, an additional logistic regression was conducted combining all the predictor variables (age, gender, and ethnicity) into the model with actual-ideal self-discrepancy (see Table 3). Results indicate that actual-ideal self-discrepancy predicts whether one will participate in hookups or not, above and beyond the other variables ($B = -0.13$; 95% CI 0.78 – 0.98). In addition, ethnicity also predicted hookup participation above and beyond the other variables ($B = -0.33$; 95% CI 0.52 – 0.99), such that Whites were more likely to engage in hookup culture than their ethnic minority counterparts.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate the variables that contribute to one’s decision about whether or not to participate in college hookup culture. Specifically, this study was investigating whether or not Higgins’ (1989) self-discrepancy theory can be used as a tool for better understanding engagement in the hookup culture. It was observed that AI discrepancy scores were predictive of hookup participation. The results were particularly interesting in that, contrary to the study’s hypothesis, high

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Table 2

Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Hookup Participation from Actual-Ideal (AI) Self Discrepancy, Actual-Ought (AO) Self Discrepancy, Gender, and Ethnicity.

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>B</i>)	95% CI for Exp(<i>B</i>)
AI Self Discrepancy	-.15*	.06	.87	.76–.96
AO Self Discrepancy	-.11	.07	.90	.78–1.04
Gender ^a	-.12	.33	.85	.44–1.64
Ethnicity	-.37*	.15	2.25	.51–.93

Note. Hookup Participation (dependent variable) coded as yes = 1, no = 0. ^aDummy coded as men = 1, women = 0. * $p < .05$.

Table 3

Multivariate Model Predicting Hookup Participation from Actual-Ideal (AI) Self Discrepancy, Controlling for Age, Gender, and Ethnicity.

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Exp(<i>B</i>)	95% CI for Exp(<i>B</i>)
AI Self Discrepancy	-.13*	.06	.88	.78–.98
Age	.00	.35	1.00	.75–1.34
Gender ^a	.01	.17	1.01	.50–2.02
Ethnicity	-.33*	2.93	.72	.52–.99

Note. Hookup Participation (dependent variable) coded as yes = 1, no = 0. ^aDummy coded as men = 1, women = 0. * $p < .05$.

discrepancy scores actually served as a protective factor for engaging in hookups. There are many assumptions as to why this outcome occurred. It is possible that young adults entering college want to be a part of what they believe the majority of students are taking part in. In this case, engaging in the hookup culture may be seen as a way to gain social acceptance (Levinson, Jaccard, & Beamer, 1995). For example, some researchers believe that normative sexual standards on campus may cause some students to feel that they must conform to personal and social expectations and behavior to engage in casual sex (DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979). These perceived normative standards may dictate what individuals believe to be the accepted rate and level of physical intimacy expected during hookups within a particular campus culture, despite the individual's personal beliefs (Mewhinney, Herold, & Maticka-Tyndale, 1995). Therefore, students may feel that their "ideal" self should be popular and socially accepted, which may entail engaging in casual sexual relationships. Therefore, individuals who engage in hookups are aligning their actual self and ideal self, which leave them feeling more secure and less anxious or depressed. Given that low AI discrepancy is associated with high self-esteem (McDaniel & Grice, 2008), it is likely that those who participate in hookups would report high self-esteem before ever engaging in such casual sexual behaviors. Although this study did not find an association between actual-ought self-discrepancy and hookup culture participation, many interesting descriptive statistics were observed. More than half of participants reported engaging in at least one hookup and 38% reported engaging in vaginal or anal sex at least one time during a hookup. These findings point to the magnitude of hookup culture engagement and the potential

for unsafe sex leading to sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the study is the concerns about the validity and reliability of the self-report methods. Although students were given complete anonymity, selective self-monitoring of positive aspects (Strecher et al., 1986) and temporal distance from the described events may impact recall (Downey et al., 1995).

Furthermore, the sample is from a highly selective private university in the southeast, which may not be representative of colleges across the country, both in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. It is important to also de-bunk previous findings that the majority of casual hookups occur between strangers or brief acquaintances. Since the university students involved in this particular study attend a small, private college, hooking up may not be as anonymous or casual as it typically is on other college or university campuses. Further research is needed to understand what differences exist between the hookup cultures of small liberal arts colleges versus larger, public colleges or universities. Finally, since the majority of the sample was Caucasian (65%), few conclusions can be drawn about other racial and ethnic groups' hookup participation.

Future Research Directions

Despite the limitations of the current study, it marks the first integration of self-discrepancy theory with sexual relationship development in late adolescence. Further research is needed to establish whether self-discrepancy theory can be used to predict why some young adults

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choose to engage in casual sexual behavior, while others abstain. If Higgins' theory proves useful, psychologists, parents, and education policy makers could then begin to develop prevention strategies to reduce risky sexual decision making. Steps could be made to target certain students at risk for engaging in hookups. Furthermore, if SDT is helpful in understanding hookup participation, clinical researchers could then investigate how SDT might mediate the relationship between engagement in certain sexual behaviors and psychological outcome effects (i.e., regret, self-esteem, shame, and confidence). By understanding the role of self-concepts in young adult decision-making, we can better understand why people engage in certain sexual behaviors and the effects of engaging in these behaviors on mental and physical health.

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