2016

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Sex and God #blessed: The Relationship Between Faith and Reported Frequency of Hooking-up Among College Students

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Hooking-up is defined as a physically intimate encounter between two individuals whom are not romantically involved with one another (Strokoff, et al., 2014). Past research has shown that students who reported that religion had a higher influence on their daily life also reported hooking-up less frequently (Simons, et al., 2009). Limited research has been conducted to measure whether priming persons with their religious beliefs has an impact on the reported frequency of sexual health practices. This research extended the paradigm of Saroglou and Muñoz-García (2008) who employed a technique in which they asked participants questions about their values and personality traits in differing orders. This study sought to investigate if the placement of religious-based questions had an influence on reported frequency of sexual health practices. Findings from this study revealed that there was a negative correlation within all three question-placement conditions at a .05 significance level.

Researchers typically define hooking-up as a physically intimate encounter between two individuals whom are not committed to one another (Strokoff, Owen, & Fincham, 2014). The importance of studying hook-up behaviors lies within the statistics, as a recent study on adolescence found that 28% percent of seventh to twelfth graders had already experienced at least one hook-up behavior (Fortunato, Young, Boyd, & Fons, 2010). These authors also reported that hookup encounters almost doubled from middle school to high school suggesting that social contexts and norms may increase popularity of such behaviors.

The majority of previous research has found that there is a negative correlation between level of faith and reported frequency of hooking-up (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012). Hooking-up and reported faith, should be investigated concurrently because findings may provide evidence to the degree of which the faith of young adults relates to reported hook-up frequency. This study seeks to determine if the past literature would have similar results across different geographical settings, by surveying students who live within an area of the Midwest.

Hooking-up

There is a small, but growing body of literature, investing hook-up behaviors among adolescents and young adults. This previous research has shown that the definitions of hook-ups may slightly vary across persons due to societal norms and past experiences (Lewis, Atkins, Blayney, Dent, & Kaysen, 2013), however one commonality is that these encounters include the absence of a relationship commitment. Bradshaw, Kahn, and Saville (2010) claim that "hooking-up" is perceived as more popular than traditional dating on college campuses. The researchers defined traditional dating as when one person asks another to go on a date together which may or may not lead to a committed relationship while defining hooking-up as a sexual encounter between two brief acquaintances or stranger usually lasting only one night but may or may not include sexual intercourse. The results of this study revealed that men initiated more dates than women, but there were twice as many hook-ups reported.

Comparatively, Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) believe that college campuses

encourage and accept uncommitted sexual encounters that may or may not include intercourse. The participants completed a survey that included dimensions of creativity, personality, sexual attitudes, and sexual behavior. For the sexual behavior questions, the participants were asked when they first had penile-vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, and how many oral sex partners they have had in the last year. The participants were then to measure their level of religiosity on a 3-point scale, 1 being not at all intense and 3 being very intense.

Additionally, Lewis et al. (2013) report that the hook-up rate for college students is between 77% and 85% with half of the men and one-third of the women reporting having had sexual intercourse during those encounters. The researchers note that students are very diverse in their definitions of hooking-up. Some students claimed that hooking-up was only intercourse while many other students claimed that making out or fooling around was hooking-up. They believed students used their past history and/or normative perceptions of peer hook-ups to determine their own definition of hooking-up. The study found that the participants believed hooking-up to be sexual activity with no romantic commitment, which is important because the participants never specified that it was with a stranger giving the current research support that an individual could have uncommitted sex with a friend and still consider it hooking-up.

Impact of Religiosity

In regards to predictors of hooking-up behavior, students whose religion had a higher influence on daily life also reported hooking-up less frequently (Simons, Bert, & Peterson, 2009). This study defined religion as the values and standards given to the individual that they become dedicated to and live by.

They also predicted that sexual activity would be delayed because of religious importance. The results found that 78% of the participants reported their religion as having either a moderate, high, or very strong influence on their daily lives, while being significantly greater in females than in males. For both males and females, religiosity was associated with more negative sexual attitudes, and the age of having sex was higher for females when compared to males.

Burdette, Ellison, Hill, and Glenn (2009) predicted that religious affiliation affects the frequency of hooking-up giving emphasis to the level commitment that an individual has for their religion. This study claims that measuring subjective religiosity, or how religious an individual perceives themselves to be, would negatively correlate with their reported frequency of hooking-up and make the individual feel guilt. The results found that higher religious attendance was associated with lower frequencies of hooking-up. Interestingly, Catholic women were found to be more likely to hook-up than non-religious females.

Consistent with past definitions, Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, and Fincham (2010) defined hooking-up as a range of physically intimate behaviors within an uncommitted relationship (Strokoff, Owen, & Fincham, 2014). They hypothesized that higher levels of religiosity would be associated with less reported hook-up frequency. The results reported that 48% of the participants have not had a hook-up in the past year, 24.4% had a hook-up 1-2 times, and 27.6% of participants had a hook-up 3 or more times in the past year. The results revealed that religiosity only correlated with hook-ups among female participants.

Brimeyer and Smith (2012) suggest that hooking-up has replaced dating on college campuses. They wanted to study how students defined hooking-up, the

relationship between dating and hooking-up, and association between gender, race, dating, class, hooking-up, and religion. This research predicted that the most powerful predictor of religiosity and hooking-up behavior would be the frequency of attendance at religious services versus their affiliation and how religious they consider themselves. Participants were asked what religion they were raised as, how literal they took the scripture of the Bible, the frequency of attended religious services, and how religious they considered themselves on a likert scale. It was found that students who attended religious services reported fewer hook-ups. Also, Protestants who took a literal interpretation to the Bible hook-up less than Catholics.

Question Placement

To our current knowledge, no research has been conducted to measure whether priming people with their religious beliefs has an impact on the reported frequency of hooking-up. The current study will employ a paradigm modeled after Saroglou and Muñoz-García (2008). These authors used a technique in which they asked participants questions about their values and personality traits in different orders. Their results reported that when personality questions were asked before values questions, it was twice as significant as when the personality questions were asked after the value.

The current study would like to utilize this technique for the study between faith and reported frequency of hooking-up. The novel concept in this study is the manipulation of the order of the appearance of faith and hooking-up questions. The faith questions will be measured using the Religiousness Measure (RM), and hook-up behaviors will be assessed using the Socio-sexual Orientation Inventory-Revised (SOI-R)

(Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Sethi & Seligman, 1993). Participants will be randomly assigned to one of three conditions: the FAITH-focused condition will have questions regarding RM appearing before SOI-R questions; the SEX-focused condition will have the SOI-R questions before RM; the MIXED-condition with alternating RM and SOI-R questions.

Hypotheses

Saroglou and Muñoz-García (2008) found that the order of their questions had an effect on the participants' answers. Using that same principle, the first hypothesis (*H1*) states, when religious questions are placed first, participants will be more conservative in their answers about hooking-up than when religious questions are placed last or alternating. Previous research is split on whether or not religiosity has a significant impact on frequency and perceptions of hooking-up (Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009; Olmstead, Pasley, and Fincham, 2013). The second hypothesis (*H2*) states that an increase in religion will correlate negatively with openness. The third hypothesis (*H3*) states that a negative correlation in religion will lower the chance of hooking-up. The fourth hypothesis (*H4*) states that an increase in openness will positively correlate with attitudes toward casual sex. The fifth and final hypothesis (*H5*) states that when comparing year in school, more years in school will positively correlate with attitudes toward casual sex.

Method

Design

The design for this study is a one-way with three levels of the independent variable. The independent variable is the order in which

the faith and hook-up questions were presented on the surveys. The dependent variables were the responses on the faith, hook-up, and personality questionnaires respectively. In condition A, the surveys were FAITH-focused, meaning that the faith questions came before the hook-up questions. Condition B, or SEX-focused surveys, had the hook-up questions before the faith questions. In Condition C, or MIXED-survey, the faith and hook-up questions alternated throughout the survey.

Participants

The study had 161 undergraduate students as participants with 73 male (45.3%), 87 were female (54%) and 1 listed as other (0.6%) when the study was completed. The demographics included: an age range of 18-26 (M = 20). Eighty-seven participants reported being single (54%); 72 reported being in a relationship (44.7%); 1 reported being engaged (0.6%); 1 married (0.6%). For ethnicity, 140 identified as White/Caucasian (87%), and 8 identified that they were Multiracial (5%). The participants' year in school were reported as 49 freshman (30.4%), 42 sophomores (26.1%), 43 juniors (26.7%), 21 seniors (13%) and 6 as super seniors or those that have been there at least five years (3.7%). Religious affiliations were reported with 29 having identified as Unaffiliated from any religion (18%), 1 identified as being Jewish (0.6%), 121 identified as Christian (75.2%), and 8 identified as other (5%). Sexual orientations of participants were reported as 149 heterosexuals (92.5%), 1 bisexual (0.6%), 4 homosexual (2.5%), 4 preferred not to respond (2.5%), and 3 participants did not answer at all (1.9%). Table 1 displays the participant demographic information.

For the conditions of the survey there was about an equal number of participants with

55 in the FAITH-focused condition, 54 in the SEX-focused condition, and 52 in the MIXED condition. Participants were provided extra credit at the discretion of the instructor. All participants were treated ethically with the rules and regulations of the Institutional Review Board at Drury University.

Materials

This study did not require any special accommodations regarding rooms or technology. The researchers, to assess the basic background of the participant, created the demographic section of this study. This assessed each participants' age, gender, relationship status, ethnicity, year in school, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and history of sexual transmitted diseases. These were assessed through a series of forced-choice questions.

Penke and Asendorf (2008) created the Socio-Sexual Inventory Revised (SOI-R). The SOI-R measures the frequency of uncommitted sexual behaviors and the participant's attitude towards uncommitted sex with eight items. This inventory will be utilized as the authors operational definition of hook-up behaviors. The researchers in this study used all eight items. It was included in the study to report hooking-up behaviors with nine items on the scale. Items number 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 were multiple choice questions, items numbered 4, 5, and 6 were 9-point Likert scale with 1 meaning strongly disagree, 5 being neutral, and 9 being strongly agree. The sixth item on the inventory is reverse coded. The total score is calculated by adding all of the answers from three different sections together to get the total sum. Items 1-3 give the rating for behaviors, while items 4-6 calculate attitude toward uncommitted sex, and items 7-9 calculate level of desire for uncommitted sex. All three sections summed

together provides the total score. The score range for the SOI-R was: 5 being the lowest score, all the way up to 81, which would be the highest score. The higher the score, the more the participant has participated in uncommitted sex or fantasies. The authors report the reliability coefficient for the SOI-R as 0.83.

The religiousness measure (RM) was created by Sethi and Seligman (1993). This measure is designed to assess how dedicated a person is to their religious beliefs. This inventory will be utilized as the authors operational definition of faith/religious beliefs. Items numbered 1 and 5 were dichotomous with only "Yes" or "No" responses. Item 3 was a multiple choice question and items 2, 4, 6, and 7 were 9-point Likert scales with anchor points of 1 meaning "not important", 5 meaning "somewhat influential", and 9 representing "extremely important." The scores of the items were added together to get the total sum. The range of scores was 1-15 was defined as low, 16-30 moderate, and 31-45 was defined as a high score. The higher the sum, the greater the level of faith dedication. No formal attempts have been made to test the reliability of this measure (Sethi & Seligman, 1993).

A portion of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) was adopted from John and Srivastava (1999). The purpose of the BFI is to assess a participant's personality based off of five dimensions. The original dimensions being extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. There are forty-four items on the scale but this study only used ten of these that involved openness. The rest of the items were used as filler items and were not coded. All items on the BFI were 5-point Likert scales, 1 being "disagree strongly", 3 meaning, "neither agree nor disagree", and 5 representing "agree strongly." To determine the score, the openness personality items were summed. The range of scores started with 10 being the lowest possible score all the way to 50, which would be the highest score possible. The higher the sum, the greater the level of openness. Reported reliability by the authors was 0.85.

Procedure

When the experiment was facilitated, it began with an explanation of the informed consent. Participants were told that they could stop at any time and that the surveys were confidential, so to answer the questions as truthfully as possible. At the beginning of the survey were two copies of the informed consent form. The participants were asked to read over them then sign and date both copies but to continue through the survey after signed. When the participant was done with the survey, the experimenter gave the top copy of the informed consent form to the participant and kept the second.

The surveys were given to participants in a FAITH, SEX, and MIXED respectively alternating procedure to ensure equal distribution. When the participants sat down in the room, an experimenter would address them to review the informed consent, sign both copies, and then continue through the survey. Due to the sensitive nature of the surveys, the experimenters were trained to remind the participants that since the surveys were confidential that the experimenters would not know the participant's answers asking them to answer as truthfully as possible. When the participant completed the survey, they were given the top copy of the informed consent then a debriefing form, and thanked for their time. On average, it took the participants about 8-10 minutes to complete the survey.

Results

Religion and Hook-Up Hypothesis

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any differences on the religiosity and hook-up behaviors across the three conditions: FAITH, SEX, & MIXED. Results found no statistically significant differences on the SOI-R, $F(2,158) = .754$, $p = .472$ ($M = 145.42$) and RM, $F(2,158) = .921$, $p = .400$ ($M = 93.81$). The researchers then conducted a bivariate correlation on the total sums of the RM, SOI-R, and openness section of the BFI. The scores on the SOI-R that were negatively correlated with the scores on the RM, $r(159) = -.352$, $p < .01$. No other significant correlations were determined when the data was analyzed in aggregate form. Next, the researchers then split the data file and conducted in depth correlational analyses for each level of the independent variable. Table 2 displays the correlations between RM and SOI-R scores in each of the conditions.

The FAITH-focused condition of the independent variable was when the RM question were provided before the SOI-R items. When a series of bivariate correlations were conducted, there was a statistically significant relationship between the RM and the SOI-R. They were negatively correlated with one another, $r(159) = -.294$, $p < .05$. It is also important to note that the BFI had a p value of .851 when correlated with the RM and a p value of .524 when correlated with the SOI-R.

The SEX-focused condition had the SOI-R items asked entirely before the RM questions. A bivariate correlation revealed a significance difference when the SOI-R was negatively correlated with the RM, $r(159) = -.315$, $p < .05$. Another statistically significant difference was found when the BFI was correlated with the SOI-R, making it a positive correlation, $r(159) = .353$, $p < .01$. Another important note is that during this condition, there was a p value of .109 when the BFI was correlated with the RM.

The MIXED condition of the independent variable included SOI-R and RM questions that alternated through the section. When a series of bivariate correlations were conducted, there was a statistically significant difference between the SOI-R and RM, revealing a negative correlation, $r(159) = -.438$, $p < .01$. In comparison, there was a somewhat marginally significant statistic between the MIXED condition and the other two conditions. When the BFI was correlated with the RM there was not a statistical significance, $r(159) = -.002$, $p = .989$. When the BFI was correlated with the SOI-R, there was no statistical significance, $r(159) = .055$, $p = .697$. When the p values of the MIXED and FAITH conditions BFI scores were compared to the score of the SEX condition, there was a marginally significant statistic.

Religion and Openness Hypothesis

It was predicted that religion would negatively correlate with openness. In all three conditions, there was no statistical relationship between the RM and BFI. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. When the RM and BFI were compared in the FAITH-focused condition, $r(159) = .026$, $p = .851$; the SEX condition, $r(159) = -.202$, $p = .109$; the MIXED condition, $r(159) = -.002$, $p = 989$.

Openness and Casual Sex Hypothesis

It was predicted that an increase in openness will positively correlate with attitudes toward casual sex. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. A bivariate correlation was conducted based upon sum

of the attitude dimension of the SOI-R and the openness dimension of the BFI. When the attitude dimension of the SOI-R and openness dimension of the BFI were correlated, there was no statistical significance, $r(159) = .042$, $p = .599$. This did not change with the file was split by condition.

Year in School and Casual Sex Hypothesis

For the final research hypothesis, it was predicted that when comparing year in school, more years in school will positively correlate with attitudes toward casual sex. This hypothesis was supported. To find the relationship between attitude towards casual sex and year in school, a bivariate correlation was conducted based upon the sum in the attitude dimension of the SOI-R and correlated with the participants' year in school. This study found that attitude towards casual sex was positively correlated with year in school, $r(159) = .279$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find the relationship between level of religiosity and the reported frequency of hook-up behaviors when the orders of the questions were manipulated. This research extends the paradigm of Saroglou and Muñoz-García (2008) who used a technique in which they asked participants questions about their values and personality traits in differing orders. Thus the three different conditions: RM entirely before SOI-R (FAITH-focused), SOI-R entirely before RM (SEX-focused), and RM with SOI-R alternating (MIXED) were made by the researchers to determine if the placement would have an effect on the reported answers. There were 161 participants from a small, private liberal arts school within the Midwest.

After analyses were conducted, only two hypotheses were supported. The hypotheses supported were the negative correlation between religiosity and hook-up frequency and the positive correlation between years in school and attitudes towards hooking-up. Alternatively, the order of the religious and hook-up questions did not matter with there being no significant difference for hook-up behaviors between the three conditions. Additionally, openness did not correlate with religiosity or attitudes about hooking-up.

Surprisingly, however, when participants were reminded of their religious beliefs in the FAITH-focused condition, they still answered sex-based questions in the same manner as those in other conditions. This result was very unexpected, as it contradicts past research by Saroglou and Munoz-Garcia (2008), which suggests that priming may occur. The fact that the current study examined sexual behavior and religion, rather than personality and religion, may be part of the reason for this. This study is the first to place sexual and religious questions differently in different conditions. Although the placement did not make a significant difference, it does indicate that placement bias may not be quite as problematic in certain situations, as participants seemed to answer honestly no matter what. Even though it was not the desired result, it may be one of the most groundbreaking. Additionally, priming for religion may not have brought out a moral instinct to appear more conservative. Alternatively, it may have brought out the moral instinct to be more truthful, as honesty is a part of many religions.

The most interesting finding to explain is the finding that openness (BFI) only correlated to attitudes toward sex when the SOI-R was placed first. This may be because starting the survey off with personal questions about sexual behavior may prime someone to score more highly on openness in the BFI. Asking

someone personal questions first, giving them the impression that the survey is mostly about their openness toward sexual behavior, may make them believe themselves to be more open in general, reflecting their BFI scores. This suggests that personality, which is believed to be very stable throughout a person's life, may not be quite as stable as previously thought.

This study has several limitations. The first is the geographical location. Drury University is a private, liberal arts school located within the Midwest. These results may differ if students were from a different locale. Participants were also recruited through convenience sampling. Also, the sexual-nature of the survey could have made some participants uncomfortable or fearful that the person next to them would be able to see the answers. This could lead to false answers. There is no way to know if the participants were entirely honest because they may have scored a certain way to make themselves look better or avoid judgment from their peers. Finally, participants who identified their religion as unaffiliated may have skewed answers because all of the religious questions were for people who affiliate with religion, so someone who identified as unaffiliated may have answered all the lowest numbers because there was no "not applicable" option.

In closing, for researchers wanting to continue this line of research, it may be interesting to determine if the same results would hold up in a different geographical region. It may be interesting to try and find more ways to incorporate open-mindedness. One could also examine how openness, religiosity, and frequency of hook-ups compare when you split the genders. It could pose more questions on if males or females are more open-minded, religious, or report high levels of hook-ups. Overall, this study contributed to the small, but growing body of literature on religiosity and hook-up behaviors.

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Appendix

Table 1
Participant Characteristics (N = 161)

	N	%
Sex		
Male	73	45.3
Female	87	54
Other	1	0.6
Race/ Ethnicity		
African American	1	0.6
Asian American	5	3.1
Caucasian	140	87
Hispanic/Latino	5	3.1
Multiracial	8	5
Other	1	0.6
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.6
Year in School		
Freshman	24	27.6
Sophomore	23	26.4
Junior	30	34.5
Senior	6	6.9
Super Senior	3	3.4
Marital Status		
Single	87	54
In a Relationship	72	44.7
Engaged	1	0.6
Married	1	0.6
Religious Affiliation		
Unaffiliated	29	18
Jewish	1	0.6
Christian	121	75.2
Other	8	5

*Indicates missing data

Table 2

Correlations between RM and SOI-R scores in each condition

Total RM scores	SOI-R
FAITH Condition	
Pearsons Correlation	-.294
Sig. (2-tailed)	.029*
N	161
SEX Condition	
Pearsons Correlation	-.315
Sig. (2-tailed)	.020*
N	161
MIXED Condition	
Pearsons Correlation	-.438
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001**
N	161

Note. The FAITH condition was when the religious questions were asked before the sexual items. The SEX condition was when the sexual items were asked before the religious questions. The MIXED condition was when the religious and sexual questions were alternated into one combined section.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.