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**Unwanted Sexual Behavior and Women's Sexual Agency: Gendered Experiences of
Pleasure in Casual Sex***

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ABSTRACT

Dichotomous discourse surrounding sexual behavior frames sexual experiences as either consensual or non-consensual. This rhetoric suggests that all *consensual* sexual activity is *desired* sexual activity, and does not account for the effect of heteronormative sexual scripts and gendered power dynamics. What are the consequences of engaging in unwanted, yet consensual, sexual activity for heterosexual cis-women? In casual hookups, motivations to engage in sexual activities such as emotional commitment and reproduction are removed from the sexual equation, leaving sexual pleasure as the primary goal. However, in heterosexual sexual activity, women's pleasure is often not prioritized. This reality creates a grey area of desire as it frames women as objects of men's sexual pleasure, running the risk of creating unwanted, non-pleasurable experiences for women. How does engaging in unwanted sexual activity affect a woman's expression of her sexual agency and self-prioritization of pleasure? I propose that engaging in unwanted sexual activity will result in the dissociation of sex and pleasure in any sexual context for women, including safe, non-partnered contexts. More specifically, using masturbation as an indicator of sexual agency and prioritizing personal pleasure, I hypothesize that women who engage in unwanted encounters will have masturbated less recently. This paper analyzes data from the Online College Social Life Survey (2005-2011). The results refute the hypothesis that women will have masturbated less recently if they engage in unwanted sex, suggesting that women who engage in unwanted sexual activity will actually have masturbated *more* recently.

**Unwanted Sexual Behavior and Women's Sexual Agency: Gendered Experiences of
Pleasure in Casual Sex**

The hookup culture has quickly become a common way in which young people are engaging in sexual activity within affluent Western societies (Paul et al. 2000; England et al. 2012). According to Armstrong et al., around 70 percent of students report having hooked up at least once by their final year of college (2013). Emotional commitment is often removed from the equation because of the casual nature of these interactions, allowing pleasure to become the central objective for sex. To an extent, to center personal pleasure as the primary objective of sexual activity is to engage with other individuals as vessels to provide that pleasure, especially within heterosexual contexts where gendered power dynamics and sexual scripts exist. The question of “healthy” sexuality then arises regarding these interactions. When factors like commitment, reproduction, and emotional attachment are removed from sexual behavior, more space can be left for objectification and the inclination to fall into socially designated sexual scripts and behaviors. Sex and emotions are two intertwined concepts for conscious beings like ourselves, and casual sexual activity encourages us to separate the two. Knowingly dissociating emotions from such intimate behavior can affect the way individuals interpret their own emotional responses to sexual behavior and relationships with partners or with themselves.

So how does one define healthy sexuality, and how might this expectation differ for women specifically? Generally, scholars and women's rights advocates alike agree that desire, pleasure, and subjectivity are three aspects that encompass healthy sexuality (Lamb 2010). Unfortunately, these aspects are not often emphasized for women engaging in heterosexual relations. Because of this, Lamb makes the point that advocating for a sexuality which is based in pleasure, desire, and subjectivity seems to be a "response to three historically problematic areas for women and girls:

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

objectification; abuse and victimization; and stereotypes of female passivity" (2010:294). Our socialized understanding of heterosexual sexual behavior involves a pleasure prioritization for men, which perpetuates these problematic areas for women (Armstrong et al. 2012). Because of this, when asked about sexual experiences in general, some women may express that sometimes there is nothing pleasurable involved. So why engage? If casual sex is for pleasure, why is a woman's pleasure so often overlooked by her partner within a heterosexual and heteronormative context? Moreover, why would a woman overlook her own pleasure as she willingly inserts herself into a casual sexual culture not built for her pleasure and emotional wellbeing?

As young women, we are either hyper-sexualized or judged for being hypersexual. What happens when we try to reclaim agency over our bodies and pleasure by embracing promiscuity? At the same time, why do we knowingly enter into a male-centric sexual realm where effective teaching about consent does not exist, nor do conversations about what to expect for our own pleasure, humanity, and self-respect? Sexual activity is vulnerable behavior, and not everyone's boundaries are the same. Lack of communication regarding and during sexual activity creates the possibility for these boundaries to be pushed and misinterpreted, resulting in unwanted sexual behavior especially when taking into account gendered power structures. This paper investigates the issue of unwanted sexual interactions between heterosexual partners and their effect on sexual agency and prioritization of pleasure. It focuses specifically on cis-women's experiences within a context where affirmative consent is given.

Various scholars have defined unwanted sexual behavior differently. According to Flack et al., "unwanted sexual behavior" was defined as "any behavior involving sexual contact experienced as harmful or regretful during or following the incident" (2007:141). This definition includes sexual assault, rape and/or coercive tactics. However, O'Sullivan and Allgeier (1998)

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

point out that while the terms “undesired” and “unwanted” are often used as synonyms for “nonconsensual” in various literatures, it is possible to engage in sexual activity that is consented to yet is still undesired or unwanted. More recently, many scholars are in agreement with the definition of unwanted encounters that excludes sexual assault (non-consensual encounters), giving much attention to the phenomenon of consensual yet unwanted sex and the social implications and consequences of these behaviors. Bay-Cheng et al. define unwanted sex as a "partnered sexual activity to which one consents but may not desire sexually or otherwise" (2008:387). For the purposes of this paper, unwanted sexual behavior is defined through the latter definition, as consensual yet undesired sexual behavior.

Recently there is more exploration into the grey area of consensual yet unwanted sex resulting from a variety of pressures be it coercion, social expectations, or simply feeling as though another individual is entitled to a woman's body. In the wake of the Me Too movement and an increase in discussions around consent and unwanted sexual encounters, the implications and consequences of said encounters are important questions to explore. At the bare minimum, it can help further a much needed conversation about women's sexual agency and right to sexual pleasure. This topic matters because we are in a time of sexual blurred lines while also in a time of more nuanced conversations about sex and sexual interactions. These interactions remain uncomfortable, undesired, and traumatic, yet still fall under the umbrella of consent (Aziz Ansari Story, Way 2018). In general, regardless of gender or sexuality, we as a society have a real communication issue surrounding sexual expectations in a country where sex is everywhere. These budding conversations and ironies must be furthered to expose the work that must be done by all individuals across the gender spectrum to combat how we have been socialized into our heteronormative, patriarchal, and sexist society. If non-reproductive sex is mainly intended for

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

personal pleasure, why do so many women lack just that in their encounters? As women, what are we socialized to expect from sex? More specifically, can we see such themes of a lack of pleasure prioritization and sexual agency for women in general manifested through women's masturbation habits?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are several theoretical frameworks that help explain the existence and prevalence of gendered sexual behavior, along with helping to explain how these phenomena may influence a woman's view of herself and her sexual pleasure. The first framework explored is gender structure theory.

Gender Structure Theory

According to Risman (2004), gender structure theory can be used to classify the different mechanisms which produce outcomes within social structures that are inherently gendered. Structuralists agree that social structures somewhat explain human action, and these structures exist separate from individual motives or desires. This definition exemplifies a dualism between action and structure, where action serves as one's choice and structure serves as a constraint. Regarding action within a social structure, individuals compare their options and themselves with those who are in a similar position structurally, and therefore are intentionally seeking to "maximize their self-perceived well-being under social structural constraints" (Risman 2004:431). Therefore, people act within these constraints because they are imposed by the society into which we are socialized. We often believe these social constructions to be truths, and these structures to be absolute and unbreakable.

The social structure of gender results in gendered behavior, and social interactions under this structure along with accounting for others' expectations of us reproduce gender inequality

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

(Risman 2004). Our perceptions of own choices and interests are shaped by these structures. While women see themselves as a different type of person than men, or vice versa, both groups will remain unable to compare their life options to the life options of the other. In the case of subordinate and dominant groups, this means that the subordinate group is unable to see life options for men as tangible life options for themselves. Gender is a socially constructed system of stratification in the patriarchal world. This social construction is institutionalized, making it imbedded within social processes, organizations, and social life, and these constructed differences justify the system of sexual stratification.

Sexual Script Theory

Sexual script theory describes the social process of practicing and perpetuating sexual behavior learned from society. Gendered structures exist, and their existence results in the production of certain social “scripts” to follow when applied to human behavior. This can take form in the initiation of sexual behavior (i.e., whose role is it to follow the sexual script of initiation?) and sexual behavior in general (i.e., what is expected from me in this sexual encounter, what behavior should I engage in?) These “scripts” engender and guide normative sexual behavior. This internalization is due to our socialization into a society with those scripts and norms. The script itself suggests how a sexual encounter is “supposed” to progress and the socially appropriate situations in which we engage in (Monto and Carey 2014).

If there are ambiguous stimuli in an interaction (or ambiguous reactions to stimuli), it can be perceived differently based on one’s interpretation of the sexual script and their own behavior. In practice, this can affect one’s recall for elements of the situations or events in question (Littleton 2001). If a woman, for example, is receiving ambiguous stimuli in a sexual encounter that leaves her uncomfortable, her perception of said stimuli and of her own discomfort depends on the social

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

schema within the given situation. A woman could then push aside her discomfort, citing the social expectations she believes she should have towards her partner, because she uses the scripts that she has been socialized to believe and accept as mental and emotional guidelines for sexual interactions (Littleton 2001).

Coital and Orgasm Imperative

The coital imperative constructs the reality of heteronormative sex as a penis/vagina penetration being “real” sex, and the end of sex being male ejaculation inside of the vagina. This imperative perpetuates the idea that women are vessels for male sexual pleasure (Opperman et al. 2014; Thomas et al. 2017; Potts 2000). The orgasm imperative idealizes the orgasm as the end goal, along with being regarded as the “gold standard” of sexual enjoyment that all individuals should try to achieve in their sexual encounters (Thomas et al. 2017). Orgasms are also viewed as gifts of reciprocity in sexual activity. Within these imperatives lies the reality of our gendered society, which includes the socially constructed idea that a woman's orgasm is more difficult and takes more work to achieve than a man's orgasm (Opperman et al. 2014).

Women have often reported that they feel it is important to gift their male partners with orgasms, even if it means that the orgasm is at the expense of their own personal pleasure. Since orgasming has this connotation, women who see themselves as having issues with orgasm (which may not be a personal dysfunction, but rather a result of neglect from their partner) report negative self-image and emotional wellbeing. Women have reported anger, frustration, anxiety, a sense of missing out, sadness, decreased sexual satisfaction and desire (the desire part of which could result in more unwanted sexual activity) and a feeling of a hindered ability to express their sexuality (Opperman et al. 2014; Lavie-Ajayi 2009). The effects of the orgasm and coital imperative are clear not only in the emotional well-being of women who understand these imperatives to be true or at

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

least normative, but also defines sex as completely heteronormative as it centers men's orgasms as the end of sex. The imperatives are a form of social script which dictates sexual behavior. Any behavior that strays outside of these norms can run the risk of negative self-image and emotional well-being, as described in Goffman's stigma theory to follow (1963).

Research on the orgasm has shown that individuals view climaxing as the prime way to have sexual fulfilment and a key indicator of one's experience with sexual pleasure. In a nationally representative probability dataset among women, researchers asked specific questions about what does and does not enhance the probability, quality, and technique required for a woman's orgasm. This data found that over half of women in the sample experience orgasm from penile-vaginal intercourse infrequently, and that adding clitoral stimulation resulted in more women reporting experiencing orgasm frequently, with over 40 percent of women stating that they experience an orgasm more than 75 percent of the time (Herbenick et al. 2018). Men, on the other hand, have been shown to experience orgasm more than women in heterosexual sexual encounters, a man's orgasm has been shown to be prioritized during sex, and a man's orgasm is viewed as a signifier of the end of sexual intercourse (Opperman et al. 2014).

Past research has found that orgasms are not necessarily always a simple physiological reaction or response to intercourse. There are emotional and comfort-level factors and intimacy factors which can help to enhance or impede one's experience with an orgasm. For example, Opperman et al. (2014) found that most of their participants stated they were less likely to orgasm during casual sex as compared to relationship sex, and attributed this phenomenon to being less understood emotionally, sexually and physically comfortable. However, Bay-Cheng et al. (2008) found that unwanted sexual encounters were most common among serious relationships, not casual ones. Kaestle (2009:33) also found that in relationships, women are more likely than men to have

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

reported participation in unwanted sexual behavior, and that the characteristics of these relationships were found to be relatively unimportant in the outcome of these analyses. Another study found the opposite results: Flack et al. (2007) found that 78 percent of reported unwanted sexual encounters by college students occurred during hookups. Still, these contradictory studies show that unwanted sex does happen, and that it has more to do with gendered sexual norms than possible pressures from being in a relationship or a casual scenario.

Social Stigma Theory

Society categorizes human beings and human behavior. This allows human beings to anticipate and interpret certain behaviors within the confines of these definitions. These behaviors or individuals that then fall outside of the social norm are stigmatized for being different and acting different. In terms of sexual behavior, there are stigmas against female masturbation and women straying from the stigmas or expectations of their own roles in sexual intercourse. Because of this, women are disqualified from full social acceptance regarding their sexual agency when they stray from these norms. Women prioritizing their own pleasure is also societally unacceptable, as men's pleasure prioritization has always been primary, normative, and expected (Goffman 1963). Masturbation is then regarded as taboo for women, or at the very least is silenced. For example, straying from the guidelines of social scripts, gender structures, and coital and orgasm imperatives can result in stigmatization and social ostracization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Though hypersexualized, society encourages us to shy away from being open about our sex lives. We are also simultaneously socialized into a society of male privilege, double standards, and rape culture. While a woman may feel poorly about a recent sexual encounter, she is encouraged to ignore her own discomfort because of what we think is normalized sexual behavior,

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

and normalized sexual scripts to follow (Bay-Cheng 2008). It is important to explore how gender dynamics, power dynamics, and privilege pan out in such intimate and personal encounters, encounters which (if negative) can severely alter one's mental state, self-confidence, and trust in men during sexual interactions (Bay-Cheng et al. 2008). Human beings generally conform to these societal expectations, which can lead to uncomfortable or unwanted sexual encounters. With that in mind, how much of a heterosexual woman's sexual experiences and actions are guided by how she is "expected" to act and react, and what does that mean for how she interacts with and views herself?

Discourse surrounding sexual activity has often been broken down into two categories, consensual and non-consensual (i.e., sexual assault, rape). What this does, however, is presume that all consensual sex is desired sex (Bay-Cheng et al. 2008). What this discourse does not take into account are the power dynamics, gendered assumptions of sexuality, and one's personal sexual expectations that may influence an individual, women in particular, to consent to undesired sexual activity. These discourses are heteronormative, and they paint women as sexual objects that serve as pleasure centers for men. Men are assumed to be subjects, agents, in their sexuality and are thus able to pursue their own pleasure while feeling entitled to sexual objects (women) in pursuit of said pleasure (Kettrey 2018). Not only are men pitted against women as subjects versus objects, but a hierarchy exists among women due to systemic structures of racism, classism, and homophobia that makes women of color, women of lower socio-economic status, and LGBTQ+ women more at risk for sexual mistreatment and/or hyper-sexualization and objectification (Kettrey 2018; Mann 2016). These social hierarchies affect one's ability to engage in the hookup culture in general, as well as create expectations for poor or good treatment based on various social identities. Elizabeth Armstrong makes this point in *Paying for the Party*, where one's level of

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

attractiveness was defined by societal standards of beauty “judging on ‘cuteness’ also had racial, ethnic, and religious implications. The privilege of ‘blondeness’-- meaning blue eyes, white but tanned skin, and straight hair-- disadvantaged women of color and Jewish students” (2013:82). Because of this, not all cis-women will have similar experiences with the hookup culture.

Unwanted sexual behavior is a phenomenon that many women have experienced during sexual activity, and it is not limited to casual hookups. While wantedness and unwantedness are constructed by a multitude of complexities and subjectivities, whether it be social influence, fear of family disapproval, fear of STD/STIs, or simply sexual arousal, unwanted sex can exist without a gendered context. However, previous research has shown that there are many instances of unwanted sex that fall under gendered norms and expectations of women in particular. For example, one may engage out of a fear of a negative response from one’s partner, self-protection against violence (rape, but not calling it rape because “consent” was given), a feeling that a male-partner has reached a point of “no return” in his level of arousal, desires to maintain a relationship, and more (Bay-Cheng et al. 2008).

Gender norms and sexual scripts set up the foundation for unwanted sex, not just among women, but for all gender identities. After all, any social expectation on the self, be it one of power and agency or of subordination and objectification, puts human beings into oppressive boxes, following normative social scripts that can lead to unwanted behavior. O’Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) found that 26 percent of male participants reported having unwanted sex in the past two weeks, compared to 50 percent of women reporting having had unwanted sex in the same time period. These findings not only show that a significant number of individuals engage in these unhealthy sexual practices, but also that these practices are inherently gendered and are more common among women than men. While dated, this study shows that unwanted sexual encounters

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

have been a reality of sexual activity even before the shift to the hookup culture. A more recent study into unwanted sexual behavior done by Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras (2008) found that in a sample of 40 women who stated they had experienced consensual but unwanted sex within heterosexual interactions, 22 of them reporting unwanted sexual activity with 30 different partners. Another study by Flack et al. found that “more women ($n = 53$, 43.8 percent) than men ($n = 6$, 7.1 percent) reported that they had experienced at least one unwanted sexual encounter while at the university, including unwanted touching, and attempted and completed anal, oral, and vaginal sex” (2008:1184). Because of this, it is important to examine the prevalence and possible consequences of this phenomenon within the hookup culture where sexual agency and pleasure are supposedly emphasized.

These unclear sexual realities and limiting sexual guidelines are not to say that women are viewing all of their sexual encounters as negative and non-pleasurable. Many women experience “enjoyable” sexual encounters where their own pleasure is not explored or prioritized by their partner because of gendered sexual norms (Armstrong et al. 2012). However, a woman’s definition of “enjoyment” may be heavily influenced by society’s guidelines for what to expect in terms of sexual pleasure and fun as a woman. Because of this, one could argue that if a woman does not feel sexually satisfied in terms of physical pleasure within partnered encounters, she could seek out pleasure on her own time in the form of self-pleasure, eliminating the gendered power dynamics and pressure to follow said scripts associated with heterosexual encounters. However, women are also not necessarily exploring the full potential of their sexual agency and personal pleasure prioritization by engaging in self pleasure—masturbation-- because its existence and importance has not yet been normalized and is in fact extremely stigmatized (Arafat 1974). Presently, women's sexuality is no longer an unspeakable topic and one that society thinks should

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

be suppressed and censored. However, it remains a topic that is simply inappropriate and should be discouraged, all while the discourse surrounding male sexuality has remained the same in terms of their agency and subjectivity (Kettrey 2018). In denying one's own sexual subjectivity, one does not necessarily explore their own desires and pleasures, especially when the justification for sexual activity in our heteronormative society is geared toward men's sexual fulfillment and not a woman's pleasure (Kettrey 2018).

A critique of women's sexual agency is that women's sexuality is often exploited, and therefore encouraging said sexuality may be dangerous in a society riddled with sexual objectification, coercion, rape culture, and gendered expectations (Kettrey 2018). Additionally, mainstream representation of women in media consistently portrays women characters as overtly sexual. This portrayal, however, is often written off as sexual empowerment, especially when compared to the societal expectations that women are "bad girls" if they engage with their sexual beings (Bay-Cheng 2008). Some women even reject feminism and active engagement in self-empowerment because to engage in this discourse suggests that women are socially and sexually disadvantaged: that women are victims in the realm of sexual activity.

This disdain and disassociation from victimhood has been compared to the perpetuation of neoliberal discourse that our society is riddled with, in which an individual has full agency, free choice, self-determination and values, and personal responsibility in the course of their lives (Bay-Cheng 2008). Neo-liberalism, while often discussed in a political and economic context, can absolutely be applied to human behavior. Neo-liberalism grants the individual autonomy, giving them a capacity and ability for self-care, being able to provide for themselves, be rational, and take responsibility for their lives. Research into the connections between neoliberalism and sexual attitudes shows that neoliberalism, for young women, risks eroding personal and social resources

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

that these women need for sexual well-being in this society, and replaces it with a rhetoric of personal responsibility that leads to further self-victimization and space for sexual vulnerability and manipulation, especially when the male power dynamic is introduced (Bay-Cheng 2008). One example of this can be shown through the research done by Allison and Risman (2013), as the results from their quantitative analysis on attitudes towards the hookup culture show that most of both men and women have “egalitarian standards” for each other in the context of the hookup culture. While this does show progress towards a “single evaluative standard” for hooking up, it could also be exposing how women are subduing their views of their own oppression in a sexual culture that encourages more casual activity and more practice of one’s sexual agency with the benefits of this practice being unequally felt (Allison and Risman 2013; Bay-Cheng 2015). Because of this, some women may actively deny efforts at women's empowerment, as it assumes that women are disadvantaged in our society. A neoliberal mindset thus justifies experiences with unwanted sex after the fact as something one can control, and also minimizes the negative affect this experience may have on someone (Bay-Cheng 2008). This thought process is not necessarily used to justify the act in the moment, but instead to make sense of it later on (Bay-Cheng 2008). While agency and victimization are polarized and women are generally given an either/or option as to how they want to view themselves and interact with society, neither confront the realities of gendered normative sexual behavior (Bay-Cheng 2008). Previous studies have shown that more sexual agency does help influence whether or not a woman engages in unwanted sexual encounters. In other words, more sexual agency makes a woman less likely to engage in unwanted sexual activity (Kettrey 2018).

Role of Alcohol

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

An added factor in unwanted sexual encounters and sexual assault that cannot be disregarded is alcohol. In the hookup culture, sexual interactions often involve the consumption of alcohol or other substances before or during said hookup (Ford 2017). Research into the sexual assault of college women has found that 50-75 percent of incidents involve alcohol, whether it was consumed by the perpetrator, the survivor, or both (Ford 2017). In terms of unwanted sexual encounters, previous research also found that heavy consumption of alcohol can decrease a woman's resistance to sexual advances that are unwanted, while also increasing her level of uncertainty regarding whether or not they need to resist an advance that is unwanted (Ullman 2007; Ford 2017). This is an important factor to acknowledge when discussing unwanted sexual encounters within the hookup culture, because it could provide other rationale for some experiences of unwanted sex. However, even among alcohol-induced instances of sexual assault, heterosexual sexual advances still often perpetuate gendered stereotypes of women in a sexual context. Men, who are already socialized to view women as objects, may take more advantage of said objectification when a woman is inebriated and less able to say no, and therefore heteronormative power dynamics within sexual encounters remains relevant and important in these encounters (Ford 2017:3).

Consequences of Unwanted Sexual Behavior

The realities of unwanted sexual encounters among women lead us to several questions: if heterosexual intercourse's main goal is to achieve a man's pleasure and orgasm, and individuals generally feel less able to achieve orgasm during casual sex, what are the consequences of these gendered sexual standards for those who fall below the top of the social gender hierarchy? What is the point of casual sex, especially for women, if not for pleasure? Do we engage because we are inherent sexual agents who have been blinded by the gendered nature of sexual expectations, and

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

therefore continue to not prioritize our own pleasure during these experiences even if pleasure was the primary motivation in the first place?

Having these dominant, heteronormative, sexual standards in play socializes young women to subscribe to said norms about their own sexuality. In effect, this removes a young woman's sexual agency and can lead to feelings of conflict regarding their desires. This conflict is especially true when society does not encourage a woman's sexual expression as it does for men and polarizes women as either sexually innocent or sexually knowing and promiscuous. Women are still having sex, of course, as this conflict does not prevent women from their pursuit of sexual activity. What it can risk, though, is the toxic shift in motivation for one's sexual activity as a woman. These expectations and norms may force women to expect only pleasure prioritization for their male partners over their own personal pleasure (Kettrey 2018). Even if sexual behavior does not result in the prioritization of male pleasure, these realities may lead women to suppress their sexual desires completely due to guilt around feeling these desires as they are expected to be passive sexual objects (Kettrey 2018). This suppression discourage women from exploring their own pleasure completely, whether it be during sexual activities or in the privacy and safety of their own home in the form of masturbation, for example. Said dynamics can also make it difficult for a woman to understand and act on her own discomfort that would otherwise help her to avoid engaging in consensual yet unwanted sex. Because of this, an individual who does not view their desires as adequate enough of a reason to engage in sexual activity may be less likely to understand their lack of sexual wants in a given situation as reason enough to refuse sexual activity (Kettrey 2018).

Masturbation as Pleasure Prioritization

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

Masturbation is a good way to study how cultural sexual norms permeate the actions and thoughts of women who are victims of gendered power dynamics because it can be seen as a way to reclaim sexual agency over one's experience with pleasure. Though a private and personal act, women masturbating not only continues to be a controversial and arguably taboo topic in general, but also a controversial act to engage in at all. When something is socially stigmatized, individuals feel conflict when they engage in behaviors associated with that stigma (Goffman 1963). With female masturbation, these stigmas can be enough to deter women from ever masturbating, and some may even internalize the stigma so much so that they too perpetuate the disdain for the behavior. Many times women will state that they don't masturbate, and/or will be embarrassed or shy away from the topic (Fahs 2014).

Historically, female masturbation has been viewed as threatening to men's dominance over women. This is because it challenges the normative idea that women need men for sexual satisfaction, or that women need penetrative intercourse to have "real sex" and to experience pleasure (Fahs 2014) It has also been found that, as compared to men, women experience higher intensity orgasms during masturbation than during intercourse: 33 percent of women experience this, while only 9 percent of men experience this (Arafat 1974). This idea that female pleasure and stimulation can be found without men, and that often times it leaves women feeling more sexually satisfied than with their various partners, is one that threatens the framework for heteronormative sexual expectations and norms.

Does the self-proclaimed free sexual agent engage with their own pleasure outside of the realm of partnered sexual activity, or do these gendered norms permeate into a woman's personal and private interactions with her own body? Do non-pleasurable experiences due to this internalization then translate over to not engaging in self pleasure? Can we look to unwanted sexual

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

experiences and neglect of personal pleasure to see trends in a woman's practice of self-pleasure? These double standards affect engagement in unwanted sexual encounters and behavior, but does this double standard also affect how a woman views pleasure in general? More specifically, can we see the effects of heteronormative male pleasure prioritization in how women interact with the concept of their own sexual pleasure and agency through an analysis of a woman's masturbation habits?

Through available data on sexual behavior obtained from the Online College Social Life Survey (England and Bearak 2011), one can examine whether or not the respondents have ever masturbated and how often they engage in it, along with tracking and evaluating unwanted sexual encounters of respondents. In order to explore the relationship between these two variables, I hypothesize the following: 1) Women who have ever hooked up with someone and later regretted how far things went sexually will have masturbated less recently, if at all, 2) women who performed oral sex or hand stimulation on their partner because they did not want to have intercourse, but felt they should give their partner an orgasm will have masturbated less recently, if at all, and 3) women who enjoyed their last sexual encounter more will have masturbated more recently.

METHODS

The dataset analyzed in this paper is the Online College Social Life Survey, conducted by Paula England between 2005 and 2011 (England and Bearak 2011). The survey itself was a 15-20 minute questionnaire distributed in-class, mostly within sociology courses, making it a non-probability sample of the classes. No distinctions were made as to who could participate in the surveys, the only criteria being that individuals were enrolled in the classes in which the survey was distributed. The unit of analysis is the individual, and the sample surveyed are college and

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

university students from 21 four-year colleges and universities in the United States ($N = 24,298$). The survey was made voluntary, as students had the option to complete the questionnaire for credit or turn in an academic assignment for the same course credit. The response rate was 99 - 100 percent, because almost everyone opted to take the survey. This pool is limited to university and college students and while it contained several elite colleges and universities, the sample is made up of mostly public school students. Major was not a source for non-representativeness, because although most of the recruitment was done in sociology classes only 11 percent of the respondents were sociology majors. For more information on this survey including a list of the included schools, please see Armstrong et al. (2012). This is the best dataset to explore this topic as it asks extremely nuanced questions to a large pool of respondents about their sexual behavior and the hookup culture, including regret, enjoyment, and masturbation.

The variables used are unwanted sexual encounters/behavior or enjoyable sexual encounters/behavior (IV) and recency of last time masturbating (DV). All missing data was deleted along with "N/A" responses to questions using select cases in SPSS. I have created a subset of respondents which includes only self-identified straight, non-virgin, cis-women, in order to emphasize the experiences of women engaging in behavior where gendered sexual expectations and power dynamics exist. Individuals with zero sexual partners were excluded in this analysis because the study is intended to focus on women who have experienced unwanted sexual encounters in their lives. Only cis-women are analyzed because although there were response options within the survey to identify as transgender, man to woman, there are no questions indicating when said individual's transition took place, and therefore experiences with unwanted sexual encounters could have occurred during a period of time in which the individual still identified as a man. This subset has a valid $N = 4,492$ (compared to the old $N = 24,298$). The new

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

N is much smaller because it narrowed the sample down from all college and university students regardless of virginity, gender, or sexuality to only straight, cis-women who have had sexual intercourse.

Independent Variables

To operationalize unwanted sexual encounters, several variables are used. The first is one is a dummy variable which measures whether or not the respondent has ever engaged in sexual activity that they later regret. The question is: "Have you ever hooked up with someone and afterwards regretted how far things went sexually?" The answers are yes or no, where 0 = No and 1 = Yes. The second IV used is how much the respondent enjoyed what happened physically, which was recoded to be in order of 1 = "I did not enjoy at all" to 4 = "I enjoyed very much." The third variable is the response to the question: "Did you perform oral sex or hand stimulation on your partner because you did not want to have intercourse, but you felt you should give them an orgasm?" I recoded these responses so that 0 = No, 2 = Once, and 3 = More than one. The variables associated with the second and third questions are ordinal, while the first variable is nominal. These IV's are meant to shed light on how women interact with their own sexual agency within the realm of heterosexual casual hookups and how women truly feel looking back on their last hookup to show whether or not engaging in certain "unhealthy" sexual behavior has an effect on how and when a woman engages with her own sexual pleasure.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was recoded from two variables into one based on the responses to two questions asked about masturbation. The questions are: "At what age did you first masturbate?" and "when was the last time you masturbated?" The variable associated with the first question is ordinal, as it asks about age but includes an "I have never masturbated" option, and has

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

a grouping for individuals 10 and younger, another grouping for individuals 23 and older, and then the actual age in years for all individuals between 11 and 22. Only the responses of “I have never masturbated” were used from this variable, as they were then added to the data from the variable “when was the last time you masturbated?” to create a new variable regarding recency of last time masturbating. The “last time” question, does not have an option for “I have never masturbated,” and therefore is not inclusive for women who have never masturbated. Because of this, I create the new recoded variable from the two original variables, which in reality is just making the “last time” masturbation question more inclusive to represent those who have never masturbated. The variable associated with the second question (“last time”) is ordinal as well. The new variable I use is recoded so that 0 = "I have never," 1 = "More than a month ago," 2 = "In the last month, but not in the last week," 3 = "In the last week, but not in the last 24 hours," and 4 = "In the last 24 hours." The variable is operationalized as such to measure recency of masturbation. I use masturbation to highlight whether or not women are exploring their own sexual pleasure in the privacy and safety of their own space, using their most recent time engaging in self-pleasure to measure both sexual agency and pleasure prioritization at once.

Control Variables

I include several control variables. The first is the ordinal variable “religion shapes my sexual behavior” which states: “My religious beliefs have shaped and guided my sexual behavior” and is recoded as follows: 4 = "Strongly agree" to 1 = "Strongly disagree." It is important to control for religion because oftentimes one’s religion can influence their sexual behavior, and this study is interested in the effects of gendered sexual expectations are on women regardless of the influence of religion. This question in particular, which is more specific than a general question

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

on one's religiosity, is perfect because it asks respondents directly whether or not their religious faith affects how they behave sexually.

The second variable I control for is race/ethnicity, as the hookup culturally is generally one in which white, affluent young people partake in (Armstrong 2013). For race/ ethnicity there are various options respondents can choose from (but can only choose one), and the vast majority of respondents are white (63.14 percent of all the women surveyed). Because of this, I collapsed all of the respondents who answered any race that is non-white into one group, and then dummied the variable to be 0 = White and 1 = People of Color, in order to have at least 20 percent representation for individuals of color. This new dummied variable is called People of Color.

I also control for political views, as individuals who are more "conservative" may be less apt to be hyper promiscuous or engage in the hookup culture, let alone engage in self-pleasure as it is still a "social taboo" among even more liberal spheres. The question asks: "How would you characterize your political views?" I recoded the values so that 1 = "More conservative," and 5 = "More liberal," so that the variable itself measures "liberalism."

I control for the number of sexual partners (within the subset of non-virgins) because one's lack of experience with the hookup culture and sexual activity in general can influence the results. I operationalize number of partners into an interval ratio variable, where the values reflect number of sexual partners *R* has had. The options range from 1-10, and the final options are categorized as such: "11-15", "16-20", and 21+. I change the value of the two categories into the mean of the two options (11 and 15, or 16 and 20), so the interval-ratio value for the 11-15 group is 13, and 18 for those who answered 16-20 (suggesting that they have a mean number of partners being 13 or 18). Those who answered 21+ remain with the value 21.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

Finally, I controlled for substance use during hookups. Drugs and alcohol have been shown to play a large role in the hookup culture and one's "willingness" to engage in certain sexual activities. For the drugs variable, respondents were asked if they used drugs in their last hookup. The options are 0 = No, and 1 = Yes. For Alcohol use, respondents were asked to record the number of drinks before engaging in their last hookup, on an interval-ratio scale of 1-37. I collapsed responses for 15-37 drinks as there were few respondents who had more than 15 drinks.

FINDINGS

According to Arafat (1974), while only 10 percent of men do not masturbate, nearly 40 percent of women do not. Prior research has argued that the silence surrounding female masturbation can be used to the advantage of women. For example, since there appears to be no single norm surrounding the act of masturbation (i.e. method and frequency) this may allow space for women to freely engage without restrictions of "normative behavior" (Fahs 2014). In other words, women are free to create and define the norms surrounding masturbation habits among themselves. However, the silence in itself creates a norm that female masturbation is inappropriate or abnormal and therefore something to *be* silenced. The additional cultural baggage that comes from engaging in something socially unacceptable seeps into the consciousness of women and perpetuates gender imbalances and meanings one attributes to self-pleasure and agency (Fahs 2014). Findings from Fahs (2014) suggest that among women who masturbate, their motivations to do so and experiences with the act tend to match up with traditional socializations and understandings regarding power, gender, and pleasure. Researchers also found that heterosexual women more often see masturbating as a threat to "male dominance" than bisexual or homosexual women. While further research is needed, these findings reveal some of the perpetuated power dynamics and double standards that arise in how heterosexual women view female masturbation,

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

as male dominance seems to penetrate into how said women interact with their own bodies and pleasure (Fahs 2014). In the subset of cis, heterosexual, college women I examine, 19 percent of respondents said they do not masturbate. Very few women (13 percent) have masturbated the most recently, in the last 24 hours. 23 percent masturbated more than a month ago, and 27 percent masturbated in the last week, but not in the last 24 hours.

Univariate Findings

Table 1 contains the means, medians, and standard deviations of all the variables.

****TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE****

According to Table 1, the mean for the dependent variable is 2, meaning on average, the last time respondents masturbated was "in the last month, but not in the last week." The median is also 2, and the standard deviation is 1. Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution for the variable, revealing that the highest percentage, 27 percent, of respondents answered that the last time they masturbated was in the last week, but not in the last 24 hours. These distributions suggest that the sample generally has not masturbated recently.

****FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE****

For the first independent variable, whether or not respondents have ever hooked up with someone and later regretted how far things went sexually, the mean is .71, meaning 71 percent of respondents answered yes, they have hooked up with someone and later regretted how far things went sexually. The frequency distribution reflecting this can be found in Figure 2. The median for this variable is 1, and the standard deviation is .453. The frequency distribution suggests that the vast majority of respondents have experienced a hookup where they later regretted how far things went sexually.

****FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE****

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

The mean for the level of enjoyment of sexual activity variable is 3 as shown in Figure 3, suggesting that on average respondents answered "I enjoyed somewhat." The median for this variable is 4.00, meaning "I enjoyed very much" and the 51.40 percent, the majority, answered "I enjoyed very much." The standard deviation is .824. Figure 3 shows the frequency distribution of this variable below. This variable is ordinal, which suggests using the median as a more appropriate measure of the sample.

****FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE****

The final independent variable, whether or not respondents have ever performed oral sex or hand stimulation on their partner because they did not want to have intercourse but felt they should give said partner an orgasm, has a mean of 1, meaning the average respondent answered "once" to this question. The median is 0, meaning "No." The standard deviation is .836. Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution for this variable, which reveals that the vast majority, 59.60 percent of respondents, answered "No."

****FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE****

According to Table 1, 31 percent of respondents were People of Color, and Figure 5 shows the frequency distribution with the various racial categories that were originally given to respondents before the variable was dummied into white and People of Color. The median is 0, where 0= white, and the standard deviation is .463. This means the majority of the sample are white individuals.

****FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE****

The mean age of the subset is 20 years old, with a median of 20 and a standard deviation of 1.889. See Figure 6 below for the frequency distribution for age. The distribution is appropriate because the ages are 18-25 and college/ university students tend to be on the younger side of this

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

age cohort, as people generally start college at around age 18 and have a four-year track at these universities.

****FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE****

The mean for the variable "Liberalism" was 4, meaning the average respondent identifies as somewhat liberal. The median is also 4, and the standard deviation is .967. As shown in the frequency distribution below in Figure 7, the distribution has many individuals identifying as liberal, most likely because the population surveyed are younger, college and university students and therefore more liberal than the general population.

****FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE****

The mean for the variable regarding religious beliefs shaping sexual behavior is 2, meaning respondents disagree with the statement that religious beliefs shape their sexual behavior. The median is also 2, and the standard deviation is .838. The frequency distribution shows that most individuals disagree with the statement itself, as shown in Figure 8 below.

****FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE****

The mean number of sexual partners is 5, whereas the median is 4. The standard deviation is 4.815, and the frequency distribution (see Figure 9 below) is skewed left, meaning most respondents had fewer sexual partners than a lot of sexual partners. Because of the skew, the more appropriate measure of the sample is the median of 4 even though the variable is interval-ratio.

****FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE****

16 percent of respondents used drugs before their last hookup, as the mean for this dummy variable is .16. The median is 0, meaning they did not use drugs. The standard deviation is .363. According to the frequency distribution, the majority of respondents did not use drugs before their last hookup (see Figure 10).

****FIGURE 10 ABOUT HERE****

The mean number of drinks consumed before respondents' last hookup is 5, with a median of 3 drinks. The standard deviation is 3.702. Figure 11 shows the frequency distribution for number of drinks, and the mean may be skewed because although barely any respondents had more than 15 drinks, the available responses for number of drinks were 1-37, so anyone who answered with more than 15 could have skewed the data a bit in the mean. Because of this, although the variable is interval ratio, the median is a better representation of the sample.

****FIGURE 11 ABOUT HERE****

Bivariate Findings

After running correlations between all pairs of variables, the following relationships yield no statistical significance at the .001 level: 1) recency of masturbation with enjoyment of sexual activity, people of color, and number of drinks, 2) regretting how far hookup went with people of color, age, religion shapes sex, liberalism, and used drugs, 3) enjoyment of sexual activity with how often one finishes off their partner, age, religion shapes sex, liberalism, and used drugs, 4) how often one finishes off their partner with people of color, religion shapes sex, liberalism, number of drinks, and used drugs, 5) people of color with used drugs, 6) age with liberalism and used drugs, 7) number of partners with liberalism, 8) religion shapes sex with used drugs, and finally 8) liberalism with number of drinks.

****TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE****

There are a few relationships that are not statistically significant contrary to data on the general population, such as in the GSS. For example, the relationship between age and liberalism was not statistically significant, although liberalism is usually associated with age and more specifically, younger individuals. This is precisely the reason why this relationship was not

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

statistically significant, because the age range for the sample is only 18-25, making it a sample of only young people.

There is a statistically significant relationship between recency of masturbation and regret of how far a hookup went sexually, where the correlation coefficient is .048, making it a positive, weak correlation. This suggests that for individuals who answered that they regret how far a hookup went sexually will have masturbated more recently. There is a statistically significant, weak, positive relationship between recency of masturbation and whether or not one has finished off their partner because they felt that their partner deserved an orgasm, where the correlation coefficient is .107. This means that the more often one finishes off their partner, the more recently they will have masturbated. There is a positive, weak, statistically significant relationship between age and recency of masturbation, along with number of partners and recency of masturbation, where both correlation coefficients are .160, meaning older women will have masturbated more recently, and women with more sexual partners will have masturbated more recently. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between agreeing that religion shapes one's sexual behavior and recency of masturbation with a correlation coefficient of -.087. The more one agrees that their religion shapes their sexual behavior, the less recently they will have masturbated. Additionally, there is a positive, weak, statistically significant relationship between liberalism and recency in masturbation with a correlation coefficient of .100, meaning more liberal individuals will have masturbated more recently. Finally, there is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between recency of masturbation and whether or not *r* used drugs prior to or during their last hookup with a correlation coefficient of .048, meaning those who used drugs before or during their last hookup will have masturbated more recently.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between regret how far one's last hookup went sexually and enjoyment of sexual activity in one's last hookup with a correlation coefficient of $-.050$, meaning those who regret how far things went sexually, the less likely they are to have enjoyed their last hookup. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between regret and how often one finishes off their partner ($r = .179$), meaning those who regret how far things went sexually in their last hookup are more likely to finish off their partner more often. This particular relationship suggests that the hookup that a respondent regrets may include the one in which they are finishing off their partner. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between regret and age ($r = .222$) meaning the older one is, the more likely they are to regret how far things went sexually in their hookup. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between regret and number of drinks before one's last hookup ($r = .092$) meaning those who regret how far things went sexually in their last hookup are more likely to have had more alcoholic drinks.

There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between enjoyment of sexual activity in last hookup and people of color ($r = -.056$), meaning people of color enjoy the sexual activity of their last hookup less. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between enjoyment and number of partners ($r = .093$), meaning the more partners one has, the more likely they are to enjoy the sexual activity of their last hookup. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between enjoyment and number of drinks ($r = -.156$), meaning the more drinks one has, the less they enjoy the sexual activity of their last hookup.

There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between how often one finishes off their partner and age ($r = .097$), meaning the older one is the more often they have finished off their partner. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

finishing off one's partner and number of partners ($r = .090$), meaning the more partners one has, the more often they finish off their partner.

There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between race and age ($r = .082$), meaning People of Color are older in this sample. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between race and number of partners ($r = -.048$) meaning People of Color have less sexual partners. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between race and religion shapes sex ($r = .138$) meaning People of Color are more likely to agree that religion shapes their sexual behavior. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between race and liberalism ($r = .063$), meaning People of Color are more likely to be liberal. Finally, there is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between race and number of drinks ($r = -.119$) meaning people of color have less drinks before their last hookup.

There is a positive, moderate, statistically significant relationship between age and number of partners ($r = .324$) meaning the older one is, the more sexual partners they have had. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between age and belief that religion shapes sexual behavior ($r = .084$) meaning the older one is, the more likely they are to agree that religion shapes their sexual behavior. There is a weak, negative, statically significant relationship between age and number of drinks ($r = -.048$) meaning the older one is, the less drinks they consumed before their last hookup.

There is a negative, weak, statistically significant relationship between number of partners and religion shapes sexual behavior ($r = -.161$), meaning the more partners one has, the less likely they are to agree that religion shapes their sexual behavior. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between number of partners and number of drinks ($r = .081$), meaning the more sexual partners one has, the more drinks they consumed before their last hookup. There is a

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between number of partners and use of drugs before last hookup ($r = .110$) meaning those who consumed drugs before their last hookup have a higher number of sexual partners.

There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between agreeing that religion shapes sexual behavior and liberalism ($r = -.269$), meaning the more liberal one is, the less likely they are to agree that religion shapes their sexual behavior. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between religion shapes sexual behavior and number of drinks ($r = -.062$), meaning the more one agrees that religion shapes their sexual behavior, the less drinks they consume before their last hookup.

There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between liberalism and use of drugs before last hookup ($r = .092$) meaning those who used drugs before their last hookup are more likely to be liberal. Finally, there is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between number of drinks and use of drugs ($r = .124$), meaning those who used drugs before their last hookup also consumed a higher number of drinks.

Multivariate Regression Results

With a statistically significant F value of 29.271, the regression equation of last time masturbated on all variables is statistically significant at the .001 level. The R^2 equals .061, meaning 6.1 percent of the variation in the dependent variable, recency of masturbation, can be explained by all other variables. The F value is also large, meaning it is even less likely that the results are due to chance. When comparing the standardized regression coefficients, the strongest indicator of recency of masturbation is age (.133), followed by number of sexual partners (.088), with unwanted sexual behavior (.078) and liberalism (.079) coming in as the third strongest indicators. As this age cohort is one of emerging adults with opportunities to explore their sexuality

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

and sexual activity, it makes sense that older individuals will have masturbated more recently. Older folks are likely to have more experience in life and in terms of sexual behavior. Number of sexual partners makes sense as another strong indicator of sexual agency in the form of masturbation habits, as having more partners is likely to result in more sexual experience with another individual as well as with oneself. More sexual partners also suggests more opportunity for unwanted sexual behavior that can then affect one's masturbation habits. One's level of liberalism makes sense as an indicator of masturbation habits as well, as liberal individuals are more likely to engage in "liberal" or "radical" behaviors that are non-traditional, as well as being more likely to see themselves as free sexual beings.

****TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE****

The introduction of control variables on the dependent variable has led to the replication of the following significant relationships: recency of masturbation with how often one finishes off their partner, age, number of partners, religion shapes sexual behavior, and liberalism. Looking at the unstandardized coefficient, for every one unit change in how often one finishes off their partner, there is a .123 change in recency of masturbation. With age, for each year older an individual is, there is a .094 increase in recency of masturbation. Additionally, using the unstandardized coefficient for each additional sexual partner, there is a .024 increase in recency of masturbation. For every one unit change in agreement that religion shapes one's sexual behavior, there is a -.085 change in recency of masturbation. Finally, for every one unit change in liberalism, there is a .109 change in recency of masturbation. These regression results refute the original hypotheses. Only one of the independent variables showed a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, and this relationship refutes the original hypothesis regarding this variable. The results show that women who performed oral sex or hand stimulation on their partner

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

because they did not want to have intercourse, but felt they should give their partner an orgasm will have masturbated more recently.

Looking at the iterative regression on all variables, shown in Table 4, the independent variable for later regret how far hookup went sexually was statistically significant when the regression was only on recency of masturbation and the regret variable, but once the variable "ever finished off partner" was introduced, the relationship between the dependent variable and regret how far hookup went sexually goes away.

****TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE****

DISCUSSION

The regression results suggest that individuals who finish off their partner more often will have masturbated more recently. These results suggest that women are exploring their own pleasure outside of unwanted sexual encounters that do not prioritize their pleasure. There are several explanations for the relationship between masturbation and unwanted sexual behavior in the form of a woman performing stimulation on a partner because they did not want to have intercourse, but felt they should give their partner an orgasm. Women may be more inclined to focus on their partner's orgasm (more specifically, the man's orgasm and pleasure) because of societal scripts that dictate women's sexual behavior as a means for male pleasure, which is consistent with previous literature regarding these societal sexual norms. Their engagement in this form of unwanted sexual behavior is also reflective of the orgasm imperative, where the male orgasm is regarded as the end of sex. In order to avoid having sex while still attempting to arrive at an end to the encounter, women may be inclined to give their partners orgasms to avoid unwanted intercourse. This behavior could also be an attempt to avoid sex by doing "as little as possible" to get out of the encounter, using normative sexual scripts and the orgasm imperative as

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

a means to do this, or simply to avoid retaliation or a negative response from a man (Bay-Cheng et al. 2008). This is a way of following normative sexual scripts without fully engaging in penetrative intercourse. In a way, it can be seen as an attempt to get around the sexual script while still being influenced by social stigmas surrounding women who do not act as they are expected to in sexual encounters. Women may also feel as though they owe a man something sexual due to these imperatives and scripts, as they can be accused of "leading someone on" if they engage in sexual activity without actually engaging in intercourse. Men feel deserving of women's bodies during intercourse, and this act could be a way to give their partners "what they deserve and expect" while still maintaining some sort of agency and control over their bodies in the encounter.

Age, number of partners, liberalism, and unwanted sexual behavior are all positive indicators of recency of masturbation. As noted earlier in the theoretical background, orgasms are deemed as the goal of sexual activity, and the gold standard of sexual pleasure. Women are engaging in casual sex in which they are not orgasming, yet still desire that gold standard of pleasure for themselves. Women who have experienced unwanted sexual encounters may masturbate more recently as a response to the sexual encounters that did not prioritize their own pleasure, suggesting that women are aware that their own pleasure is an important factor in their sexual behavior. This result is contrary to findings from Kettrey (2018), as they found that more sexual agency makes a woman less likely to engage in unwanted behavior. However, these results suggest a more complex understanding of agency in the face of power dynamics, and suggest that there are ways to practice sexual agency as a woman outside of partnered interactions.

In the changing social and cultural climate surrounding sex, pleasure, and consent, women are challenging gendered sexual norms and scripts along with stigmas surrounding masturbation. This can be seen as attempts at liberation in the form of taking individual and personal

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

responsibility for one's own pleasure, which falls in line with the ideas of neoliberal behavior proposed by Bay-Cheng et al (2008). The fact that these results refute the original hypothesis is a good thing, as it shows that women are at least viewing themselves as deserving of sexual pleasure and orgasm, though it is not yet generally obtained through heterosexual sexual encounters. While women have still been socialized to act as sexual vessels for men's pleasure, they are simultaneously viewing themselves as deserving of sexual pleasure in some form, and we can observe this through their recency of masturbation in relation to unwanted (and therefore not pleasurable) sexual encounters.

The internalization of social sexual norms, stigmas, and scripts along with the existence of dangerous gendered power dynamics does not necessarily extend through the orgasm imperative, in the sense that women who do not receive pleasure from sexual intercourse are finding it elsewhere. The results show a clear disconnect between pleasure prioritization in partnered heterosexual encounters where power dynamics and socialized gender norms are present, and sexual behavior in search of pleasure when said power dynamic is not present. This suggests that internalized gender roles in sex are still very prominent and relevant, and that sex is still generally viewed through a heteronormative lens among heterosexual partners, but that women are reclaiming control and agency over their bodies and pleasure through masturbation when these power dynamics are present.

CONCLUSION

Men are encouraged to prioritize their pleasure, masturbate as they please, and be full sexual agents. Women are discouraged from all of those practices of sexual agency. People internalize gender norms, sexual scripts and social stigma, which can alter one's level of comfort in engaging in behaviors that stray from the norms that these phenomena create. Because of the

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

unequal sexual guidelines that exist within our heterosexual interactions, these expectations can manifest negatively in the form of unwanted sexual encounters, mostly for the woman involved. In casual sexual encounters where pleasure is the primary goal, women are often denied equal pleasure compared to their male counterparts. These norms lead women to engage in certain behaviors that they may view as obligatory to said sexual script. These behaviors are dictated by society and not the individual, leaving room for agreeing to unwanted sexual activity and behavior. This behavior can have negative effects on a woman's views of herself and her own levels of pleasure during sex. However, where women do not receive pleasure during intercourse, they could find in the form of masturbation.

Limitations

This study is limited to interpreting the manifestation of gender norms and power dynamics solely within a heterosexual context, among solely cis-women because of the subset analyzed. The Online College Social Life Survey surveyed all individuals, so this study should be explored among all social and sexual identities because the literature and theoretical background suggest that these heteronormative behaviors plague all individuals. Further research can explore how these gendered structures manifest in a woman's pleasure prioritization in all sexual interactions, not just heterosexual, casual ones. Additionally, the variable for recency of masturbation does not specifically ask things such as the motivation for masturbation. Though this dataset asks extremely nuanced and unique questions about sexual behavior, in order to arrive at a more specific relationship between unwanted sexual behavior and a woman's sexual agency and prioritization of pleasure, more topic-specific questions can be asked in the future.

Additionally, the hookup culture is generally a phenomenon that affluent, privileged individuals in the United States engage in. As stated in *Paying for the Party*, “some [graduates]

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

come from such affluence that they will be wealthy irrespective of how they spend their time in college. Others may seek to capitalize on social skills, connections, and looks-- which matter more in some arenas than others. These students can take familial support after college graduation for granted, considerably reducing the stakes of academic performance” (11). Individuals from underprivileged and marginalized backgrounds may be socially and academically unable to participate in the hookup culture, as it requires attention away from studies and work. Because of this, these results may not be all encompassing, as they do not specifically take into account cultural differences. However, the control variables attempt to take these differences into account as best as possible by controlling for race, influence of religion, age, political views, promiscuity, and alcohol.

While the culture surrounding sex is still inherently gendered and dehumanizing for women, in private, personal spaces women are exploring their pleasure when they do not receive it elsewhere. The fact that women are masturbating more recently after having engaged in unwanted sexual behavior suggests that there is not a direct disassociation of sex and pleasure for heterosexual cis-women. Rather, women still view sexual behavior as a means for their own pleasure, but when men are involved their pleasure is not emphasized or prioritized. Because of this, when they do not have pleasurable sexual encounters, they may seek out sexual pleasure in the form of masturbation.

There is still much work to be done to change the sexual narrative to be more inclusive and equitable in the face of severe power and gendered dynamics, and women are taking steps to do this work in the privacy and safety of their own space by engaging in self pleasure. All people are sexual beings in one way or another regardless of gender and sexual orientation. As a society, we

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

must actively attempt to unravel heteronormative views surrounding sex in order to foster an equitable, pleasurable, and respectful sexual environment within casual sex practices.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

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GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1. Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations ($N = 4492$)

Variable	Mean	Median	SD
Last time masturbated	1.93	2.00	1.329
Regret how far HU went	0.71	1.00	0.453
Enjoy sexual activity	3.33	4.00	0.824
Ever finished off partner	0.64	0.00	0.836
People of Color	0.31	0.00	0.463
Age	20.46	20.00	1.889
Liberalism	3.80	4.00	0.967
Religion shapes sexual behavior	1.82	2.00	0.838
# of sexual partners	5.50	4.00	4.815
Used drugs	0.16	0.00	0.363
# of drinks	3.70	3.00	3.702

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

Table 2. Correlations (*r*) between Recency of Last Time Masturbated and Other 10 Variables (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, *N* = 4492)

Variable	Regret how far HU went	Enjoy sexual activity	Finished off partner	People of Color	Age	# of partners	Religion shapes sex	Liberalism	# of drinks	Used drugs
Last time masturbated	.048*	.042	.107*	-.043	.160*	.160*	-.087*	.100*	.012	.048*
Regret how far HU went		-.050*	.179*	-.026	.011	.222*	-.005	-.014	.092*	.032
Enjoy sexual activity			-.006	-.056*	.038	.093*	-.041	.023	-.156*	.003
Finished off partner				-.040	.097*	.090*	-.013	.042	.036	.022
People of Color					.082*	-.048*	.138*	.063*	-.119*	-.035
Age						.324*	.084*	-.009	-.048*	-.045
# of partners							-.161*	.041	.081*	.110*
Religion shapes sex								-.269*	-.062*	-.036
Liberalism									.032	.092*
# of drinks										.124*

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

Table 3. Regression of Last Time Masturbated on All Variables

Variable	<i>b</i>	β
Regret how far HU went	.040	.014
Enjoy sexual activity	.037	.023
Ever finished off partner	.123	.078**
People of color	-.121	-.042
Age	.094	.133**
Number of partners	.024	.088**
Religion shapes sexual behavior	-.085	-.054**
Liberalism	.109	.079**
Number of drinks	-.002	-.004
Used drugs	.118	.032
Constant	-.589	

$R^2 = .061$; $F(10, 4481) = 29.271$; $p < .001$
**** $p < .001$**

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

Table 4. Regression of Variables on Last Time Masturbated (n = 4,492)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Last Time Masturbated									
Enjoy sexual activity	0.070*	0.071	0.073	0.069	0.058	0.052	0.050	0.038	0.038	0.037
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Finished off partner		0.171*	0.161*	0.159*	0.135*	0.132*	0.126*	0.124*	0.124*	0.123*
		(0.108)	(0.102)	(0.100)	(0.085)	(0.083)	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.078)
Regret how far HU went			0.091	0.089	0.093	0.093	0.098	0.039	0.039	0.040
			(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)
POC				-.103	-.143*	-.108	-.133	-.122	-.123	-.121
				(-.036)	(-.050)	(-.038)	(-.046)	(-.043)	(-.043)	(-.042)
Age					0.109*	0.114*	0.114*	0.092*	0.092*	0.094*
					(0.155)	(0.162)	(0.162)	(0.131)	(0.131)	(0.133)
Religion shapes sexual behavior						-.147*	-.110*	-.084*	-.084*	-.085*
						(-.093)	(-.070)	(-.053)	(-.053)	(-.054)
Liberalism							0.112*	0.113*	0.113*	0.109*
							(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.079)
# of partners								0.025*	0.025*	0.024*
								(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.088)
# of drinks								.000	.000	-.002
								(-.001)	(-.001)	(-.004)
Used drugs										0.118
										(0.032)
Constant	1.695*	1.582*	1.519*	1.565*	-.598*	-.423*	-.899*	-.564*	-.561*	-.589*
	(.082)	(0.083)	(0.090)	(0.092)	(0.226)	(0.226)	(.242)	(.249)	(.252)	(.252)
<i>F</i>	8.426	30.681*	21.593*	17.684*	36.476*	37.224*	36.239*	35.970*	31.966*	29.271*
<i>R</i> ²	0.002	0.116	0.119	0.124	0.198	0.218	0.231	0.246	0.246	0.248

* $p < .001$; standardized coefficients presented in parentheses.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

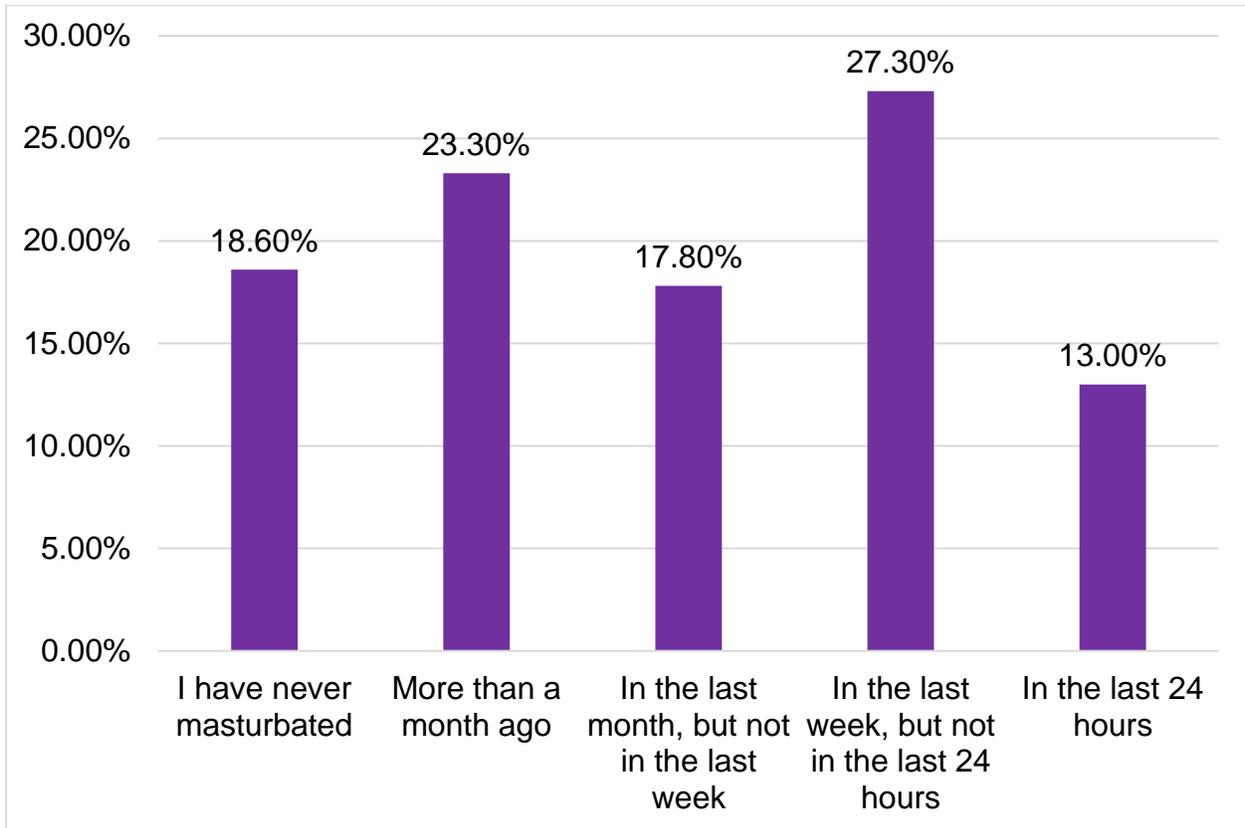


Figure 1. Bar Graph for Recency of Last Time Masturbated

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

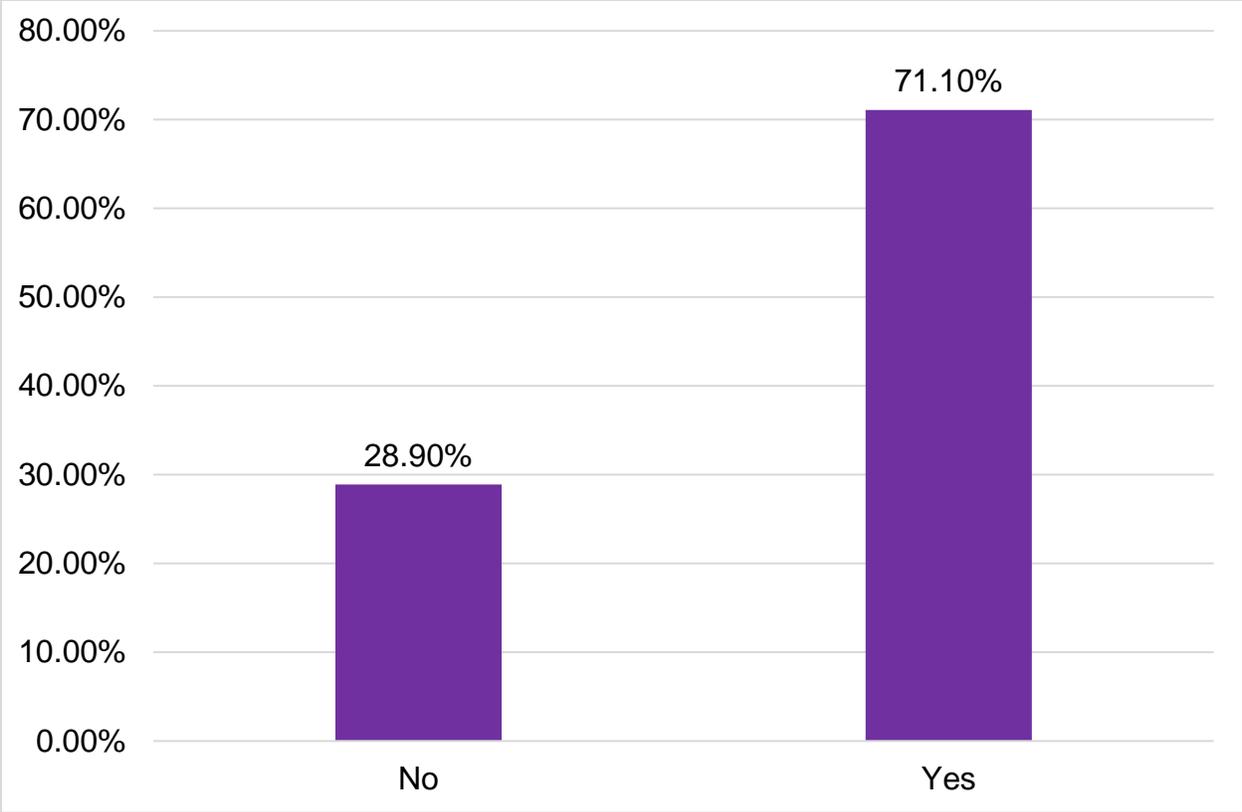


Figure 2. Bar Graph for Regret How Far Things Went Sexually

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

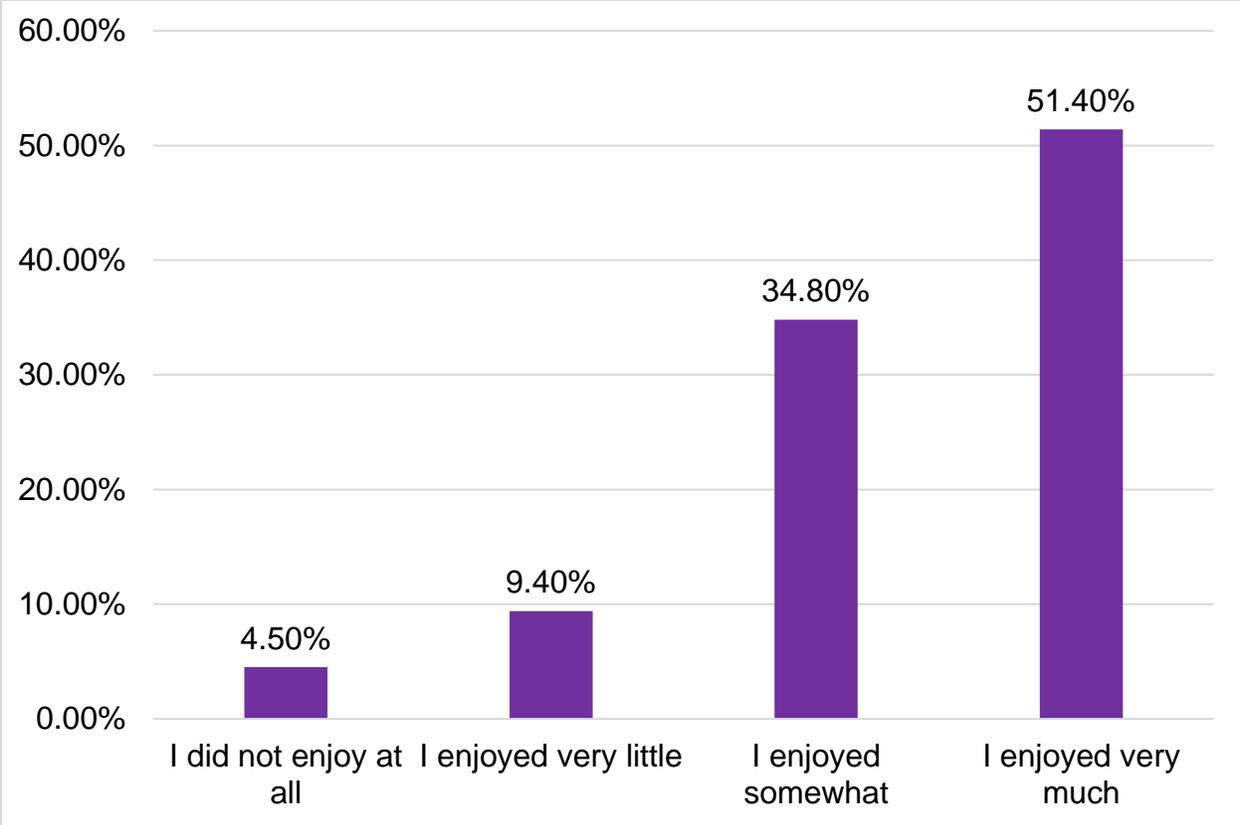


Figure 3. Bar Graph for Enjoyment of Sexual Activity in Last Hookup

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

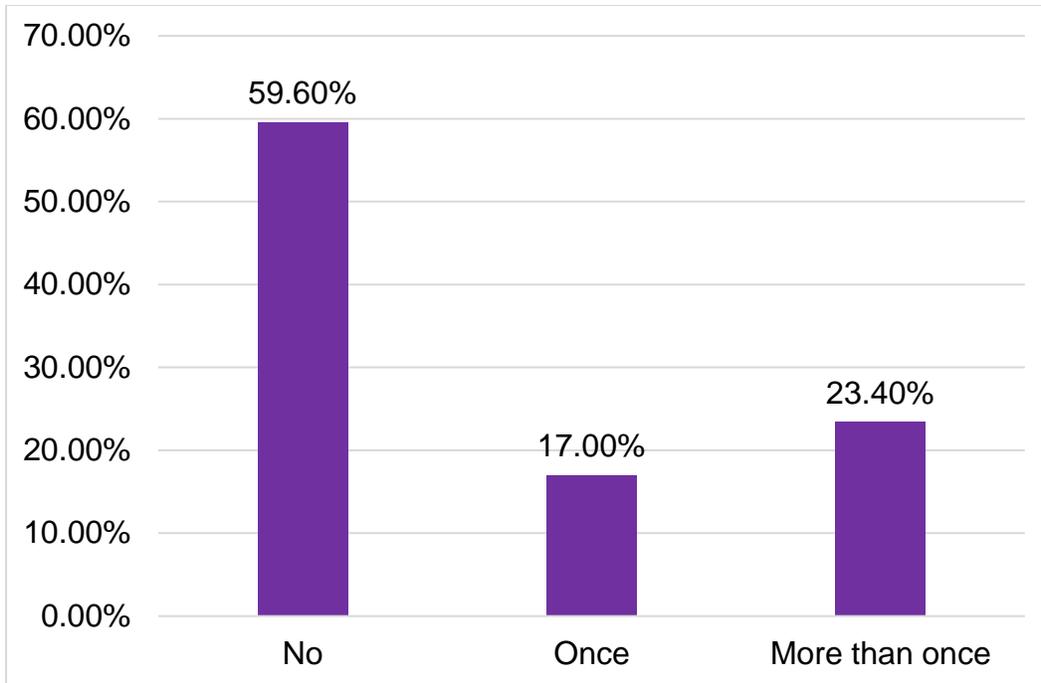


Figure 4. Bar Graph for Performed Oral/Hand Stimulation on Partner Because Respondent Did Not Want Intercourse but Felt They Should Give Partner an Orgasm

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

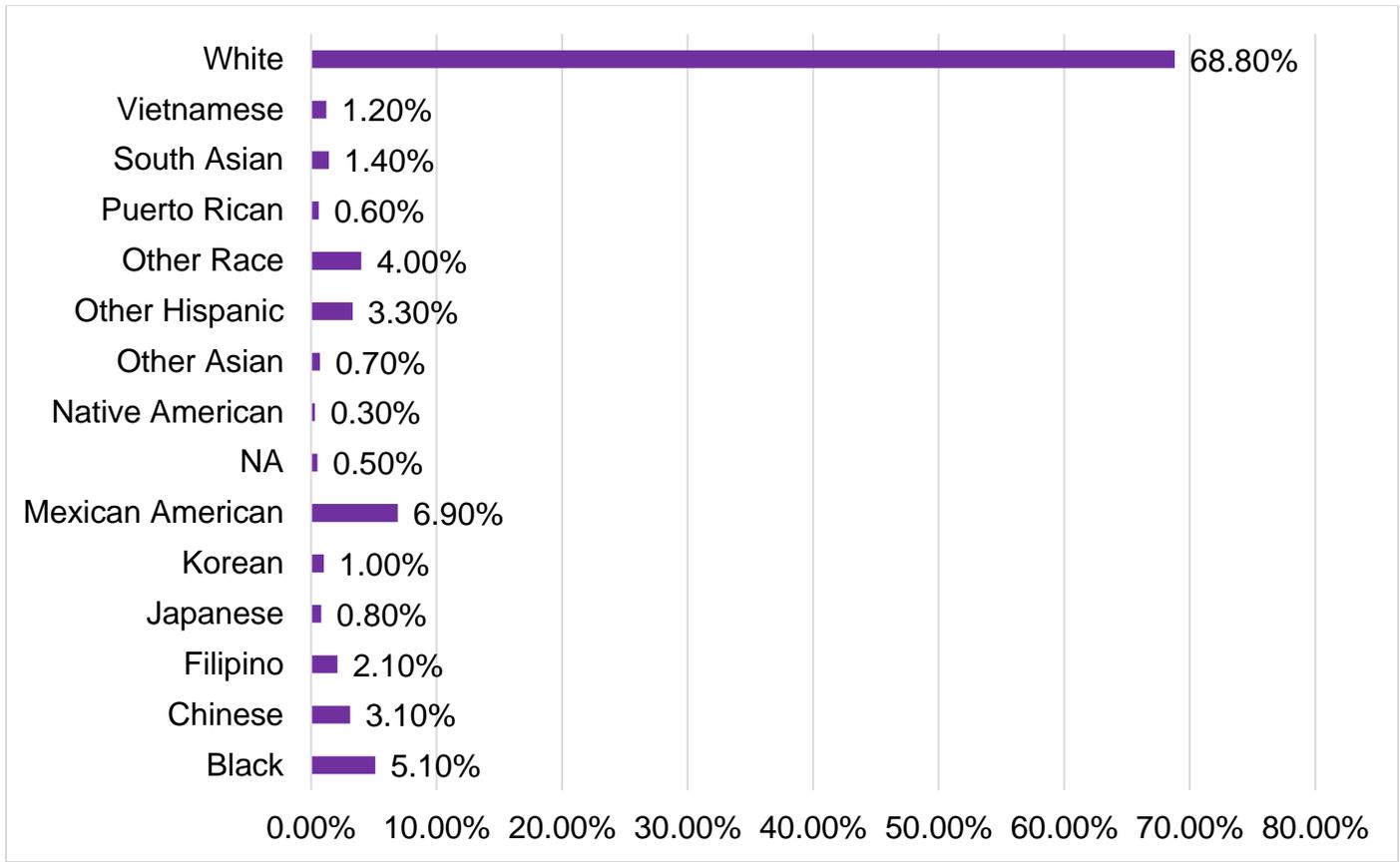


Figure 5. Bar Graph for Race

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

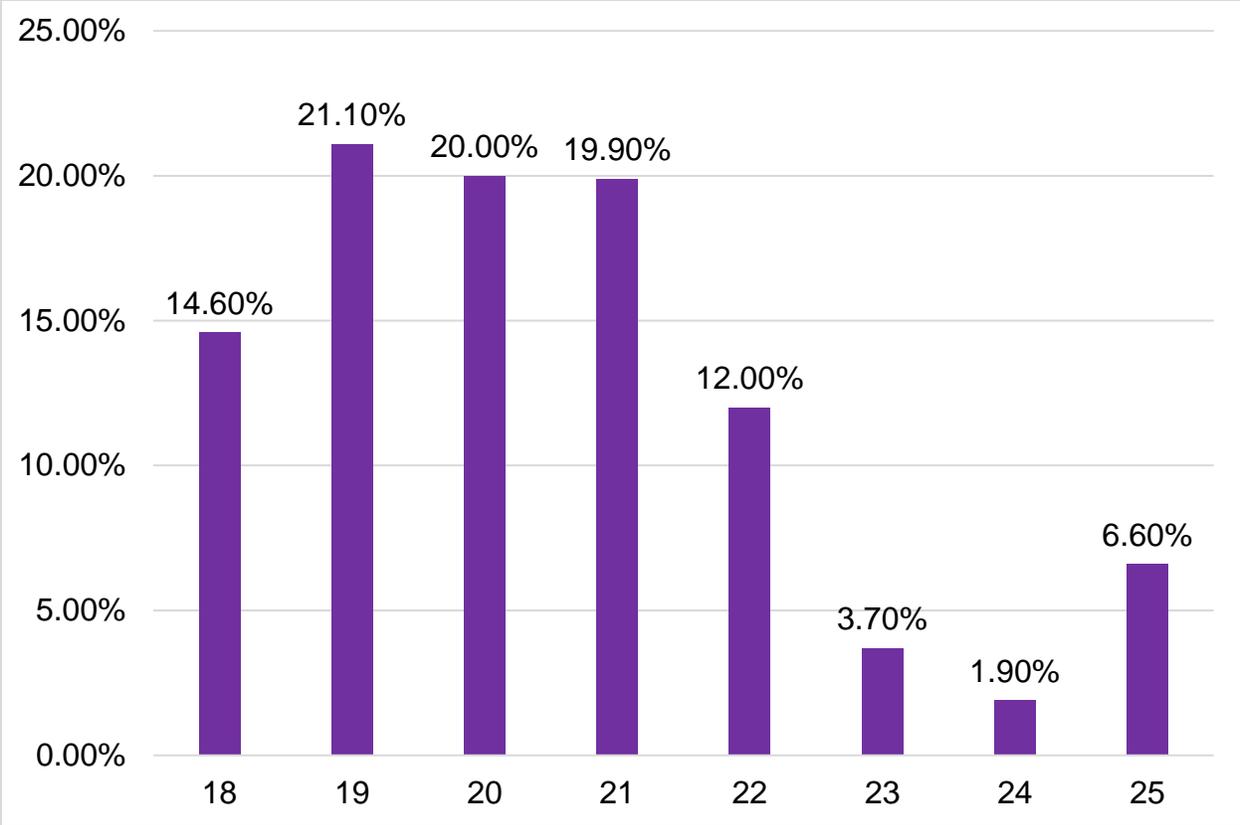


Figure 6. Bar Graph for Age

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

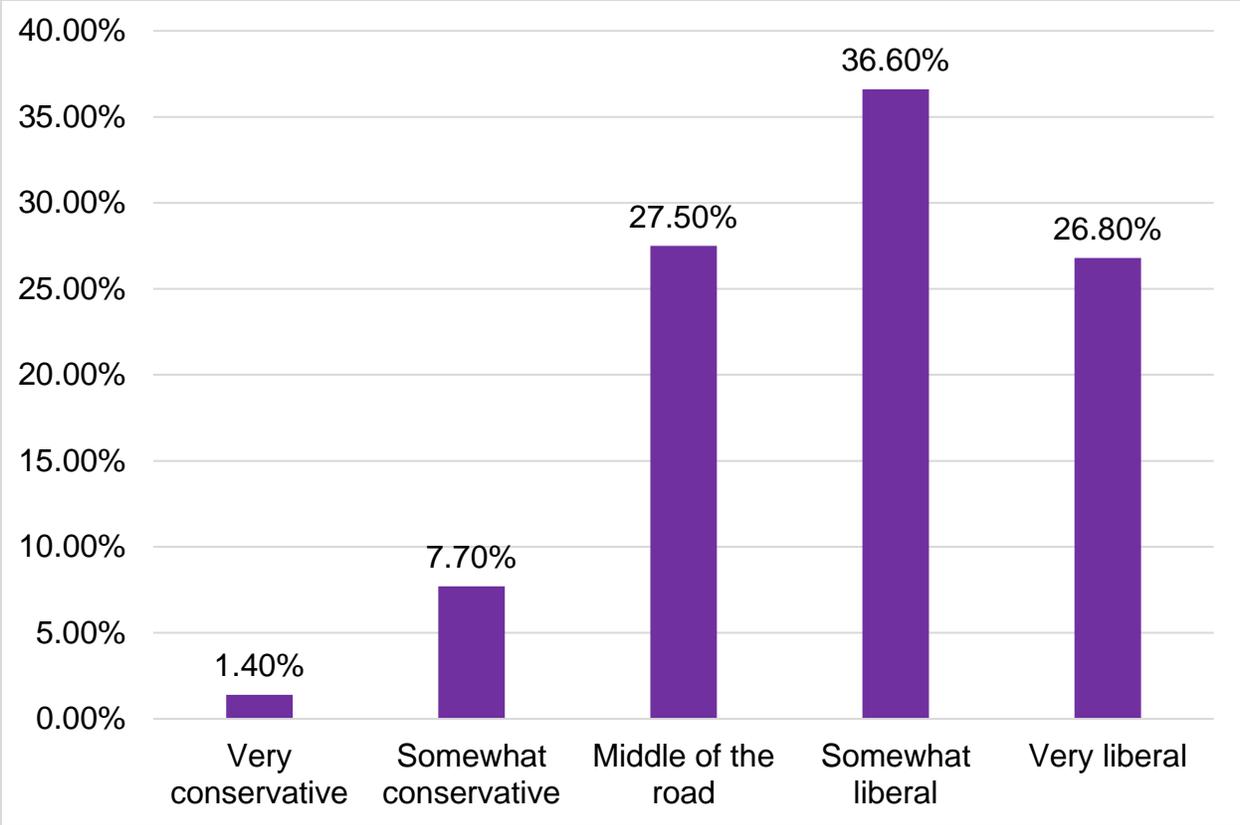


Figure 7. Bar Graph for Political Views

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

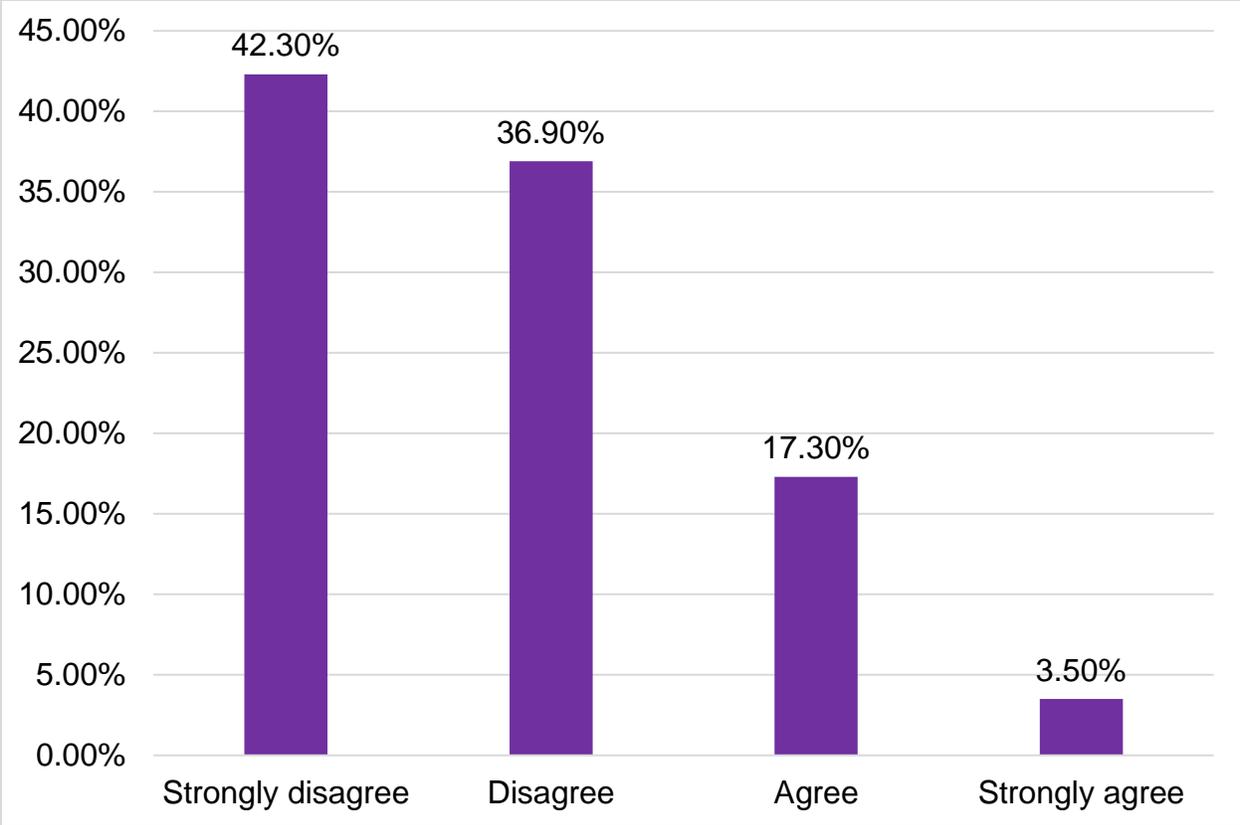


Figure 8. Bar Graph for Agreement That Religious Beliefs Guide *R*'s Sexual Behavior

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF PLEASURE

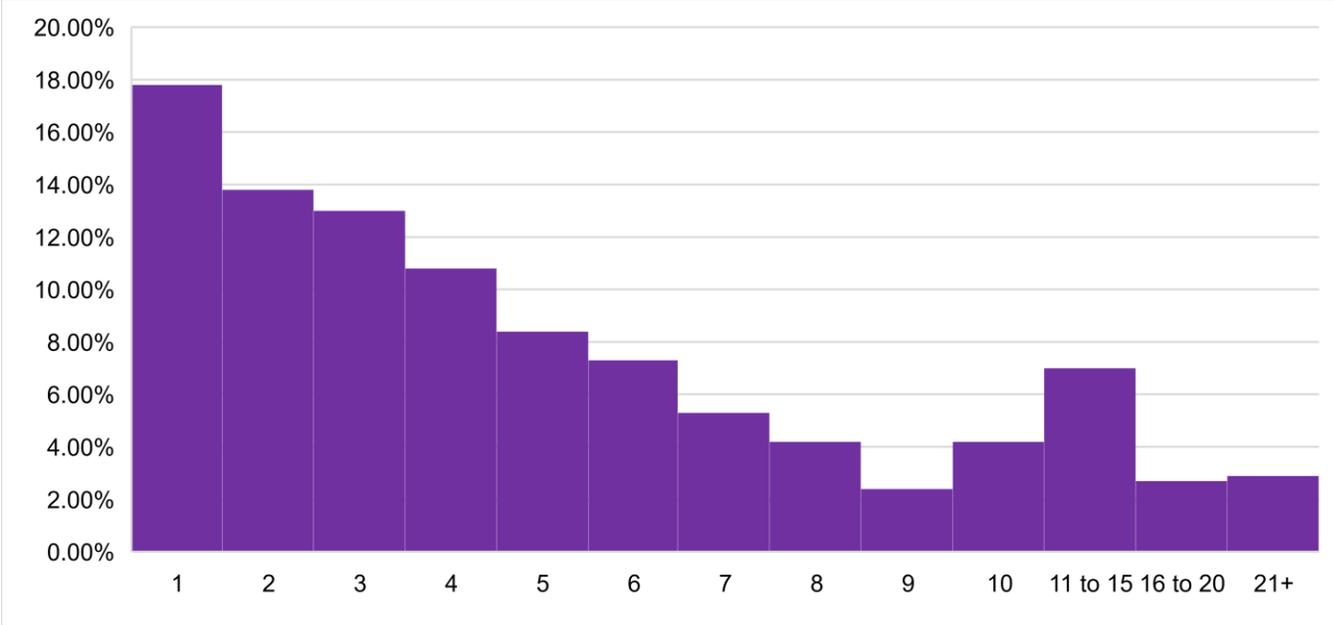


Figure 9. Histogram for Number of Sexual Partners

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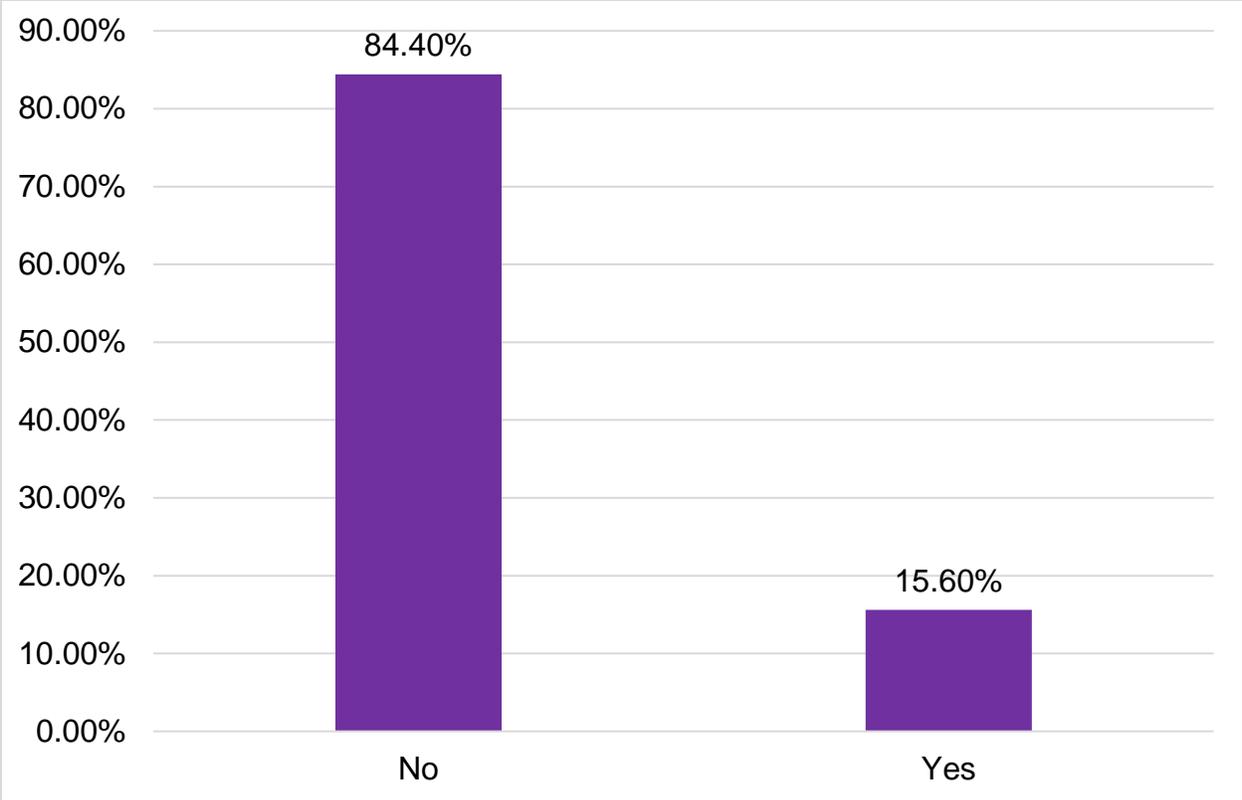


Figure 10. Bar Graph for Used Drugs before Hookup

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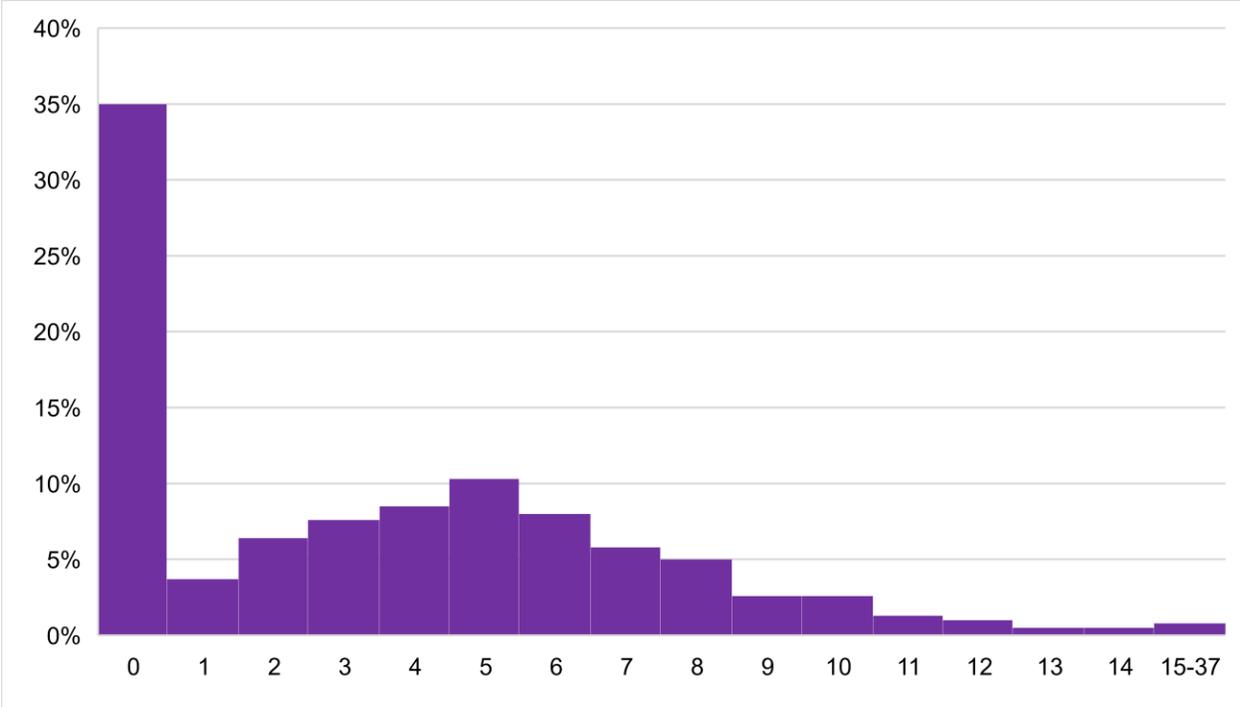


Figure 11. Bar Graph for Number of Drinks before Hookup