



American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus

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Offering invaluable insights for students, parents, and educators, Lisa Wade analyzes the mixed messages of hookup culture on today's college campuses within the history of sexuality, the evolution of higher education, and the unfinished feminist revolution. She draws on broad, original, insightful research to explore a challenging emotional landscape, full of opportunities for self-definition but also the risks of isolation, unequal pleasure, competition for status, and sexual violence.

Accessible and open-minded, compassionate and honest, American Hookup explains where we are and how we got here, asking, "Where do we go from here?"

American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus Details

Date : Published March 13th 2018 by W. W. Norton Company (first published January 10th 2017)

ISBN : 9780393355536

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Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Feminism, Sociology, Sexuality, Education, Psychology

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From Reader Review American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus for online ebook

Sezín Koehler says

Fascinating book. Full review to come over at HuffPost.

Liza Wiemer says

Stunning. Eye-opening. Heartbreaking. Complex. Painful. Well-researched.

As someone who mentors, teaches, and writes for young adults, many things in this exceptionally researched book came as no surprise, like how drinking alcohol and hooking up were often linked. But some things did surprise me, like how the research showed that this hookup culture is mostly embraced by white students.

My heart broke many times for these young men and women who force themselves to shut out all emotion to have "fun" or "meaningless hookups" or hookups in the hope that they'll actually find a meaningful relationship only to be crushed when they're completely ignored. It broke my heart to read how some girls felt obligated to do things they didn't want to do. Pressured to say yes when they wanted to say no. And the sexual assaults—we know this is an epidemic on college campuses. 1 in 4.

Yes, that type of hookup experience wasn't the case for everyone and there was enjoyment to be had, but it didn't seem to be so for the majority. Especially because of the culture, which lacks kindness and compassion. There is no doubt that the hookup culture is a huge detriment to our society.

What needs to be understood is the cause of students' unhappiness isn't because they're having more sexual relationships than other generations—they're not—but it's because of the culture! And that's what this book is about.

Quote from page 15: "On campuses across America, students are sounding an alarm. They are telling us that they are depressed, anxious, and overwhelmed. Half of first-year students express concern that they are not emotionally healthy, and one in ten say that they frequently feel depressed. Students are less happy and healthy than in previous generations, less so even than just ten or twenty years ago."

A very important book.

Andrew says

3.5 stars

A serious academic looks at hookup culture in the round, terrifying anyone who wishes they could relive their undergrad days. Believe me, you won't. There's an anthropological strain here, which dispassionately looks at the culture, its norms, and its understood rules, including an almost deep-play Geertzian explanation of grinding.

The obvious callouts are here, but the main message is that hookup perpetuates white, hetero, gender stereotypes for both men and women. And, as a culture, it's fairly entrapping.

Petty Lisbon says

This was a great book. Lisa Wade covered a lot of different topics, including who's not a part of the hook up culture, what their social lives are like, and what life is like for students after they leave college. She speaks about how hook up culture is still aimed at men and how it can be improved for women. Although I was a commuter, I enjoyed learning about the secret world of campus after dark and learning about what I missed.

Jolynn says

For parents of girls and guys heading to college or in college, I would strongly recommend this book. Forewarned is forearmed as they say. I went with four stars for interest, timeliness and relevance of material covered. Up there with *Girls & Sex* by Peggy Orenstein as a book with information good to know for young people trying to navigate college campuses successfully, happily and safely. Really, I would give this book more like a 3.5 but only because I am not a huge fan of the anecdotal approach. The snippets of individuals' real lives are interspersed though with some fascinating history about dating, sexual relationships, gender dynamics and collegiate life. While there are certainly ways around it, understanding the apparently predominant hookup culture on campus and its behavioral norms seems like a good preparation for college life.

Ann Rufo says

Sometimes I bemoan getting old- when I see the rather large number of gray hairs taking over my head, or the depressing deterioration of my eyes, or even having to scroll down so very very far to get to my birthdate for online forms. Then I think about what it is like for young people today, especially as it comes to social media and school and I think, thank fucking god I was too old for that shit.

I'm not saying there wasn't hookups and casual sex in my college years - they have always been there, they will always be there. But the dynamics of today's society - the pressures put on and the stereotypes made of millennials; the constant display of our every move and thought on social media; the constant response to your every move and thought on social media; the terrifying reality that at the same time women are making amazing strides in equalling men for college attendance, and career opportunities, rape culture on campuses has grown to extreme proportions. All of this presents a whole new set of complications for young adults - most of which scare the hell out of me.

Is "hookup culture" a byproduct of this new college scene or is it hookup culture that has produced a group of kids obsessed with their social media presence and willing to push the boundaries of consent in order to get laid? Wade joins a growing area of social science that is examining the effects of hookup culture on students, and the rationale behind it. Relying primarily on journals she had her own students maintain, in addition to the surveys and studies of colleagues, she presents a candid, insightful look into the current experience of sex, college and relationships (or lack thereof). Hookup culture raises so many questions and catch-22s: women are finally able to experience and voice positive views of their own sexual experiences, to

feel free to have casual sex if they want, and yet Wade's research shows some male students see this as an invitation for being rude, disrespectful, and overly aggressive. Hookup culture may provide more freedom to men and women in expressing their sexuality, but stereotypes of masculinity and femininity abound and seem to increase their strictness in response.

Hookup culture is a complicated trend, and I appreciate that Wade focuses more on presenting and analysing data than passing judgment. Of the similar books I've read, Wade's is not really any better or worse- it's a thorough, fascinating look at the current college life and some of the people who participate in it. It is, if nothing else, a welcomed reminder of how great it is to grow up and get too old for that shit.

Tristan Bridges says

This book will shape debates surrounding "hookup culture" for many years to come. Wade has garnered national and international attention as a public scholar for many years now. She has a knack for clearly explaining insights from sociological research to public audiences in ways that do not detract from the level of sophistication of the science. And her own work is no exception. This book may be written to be read by anyone with an interest in the topic, but it's also a brilliant research project, carefully constructed to provide new information about a pressing social issue. The book is historically grounded, empirically rich, and completely engaging throughout. I'll use this book in courses I teach on sexualities, but I'll be ordering copies for friends and family, too.

Rachel says

Fascinating and eye-opening! Completely make sense as to why my generation has a skewed view on dating. Like the documentary, "The Hunting Ground," everyone needs to read this book!

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

About a year ago, some of us who participate in Title IX investigations on my campus were passing around an episode of the Hidden Brain Podcast (NPR) on hookup culture on American campuses. It featured the author Lisa Wade and felt like a true reflection of what occurs on our campus and elsewhere. She came to speak on campus in April and although I couldn't go, I decided to at least read the book. Two months later I finally did.

This book is her research, largely told through stories from interviews she conducted and journal entries Wade gleaned from students on her campus and many other campuses. She explains hookup culture, the cultural norm of "emotionless" encounters, the role alcohol plays, issues of consent and sexual assault, what happens to students who don't want to play the hookup game, how hookup culture effects relationships beyond college, etc.

She also tries briefly at the end to suggest how to fix it, and that chapter is definitely the weakest part. This trend has come out of our new freedoms and mores (birth control, less social stigma) and new ways of connecting (social media, more interaction online and anonymous than in person). Wade is strongest when she just reflects what is.

An interesting discussion in the book is how hookup culture favors the men, as in the men are gaining the most and receiving the most pleasure.

I feel it should be said that although there is some discussion of non-heteronormative hookup culture, by and large the focus is on heterosexual hookup culture, and actually, most often white, heterosexual hookup culture, because the privileged culture sets the rules.

Wade also shows how people can continue on in hookup mode beyond college thanks to Tinder and Grindr, etc., but that the majority of students seem to grow weary of it before they even graduate, and start gravitating toward relationships over hookups. but that they often find this a difficult transition to navigate.

Jessica says

I picked up this book after hearing the author interviewed on the Hidden Brain podcast. Based on that segment, I expected the book to be much more pessimistic, but instead I found it only to be starkly, sometimes brutally, realistic. Where Wade could have taken a "kids these days" approach, sounding an alarm for parents about the dangerous behavior of their children, she instead focused on making room for the voices of actual college students about the good, bad, and ugly of hookup culture. She provided historical and sociological context for the stories and synthesized them into topic areas, but overall I felt she did a great job of keeping the students' personal experiences front and center — which also made for a better and more interesting read.

While listening to this book, I debated about whether I would want to give this book to a college-bound high school senior, and ultimately I think I would. Wade is not uniformly negative toward hookup culture — she profiles the segment of students who are "enthusiasts" about it, talking about why they enjoy it and what they get out of it, and she is also clear-eyed about the fact that this is the next evolution in America's ever-changing landscape of sex, relationships, and expectations of the college experience. However, she provides valuable background information that students who find themselves immersed in this culture on campus might not otherwise understand. For example, about one-third of students opt out of hooking up altogether, but they tend to believe they're the only ones and so don't seek out each other's company. (This makes me proud of some of the work I did at my undergrad to create social space for non-drinking students, and makes me see the ways in which my current institution is excelling at this as well.) Students believe that they can have emotionless sex with no consequences, even though this is practically impossible. And there are ugly sides to hookup culture, with the denigration of women, racial minorities, and LGBTQ+ students.

It is the negative effects of hookup culture on women that Wade details most persuasively. She does not minimize the stories of women who fall into the "enthusiast" category, but she shows how hookup culture rewards the objectification of women's bodies, the use of women for male pleasure, and the sometimes brutal treatment of women during hookups, all of which pave the way for many men who do not fit the "serial rapist" profile (though those men exist as well) to feel justified in taking advantage of a woman one time given the right circumstances. Whereas men are more likely to gain physical pleasure from hookups, women are much less likely to enjoy it physically and more likely to say they enjoy knowing that they're physically attractive enough to be "chosen" for a hookup, which grants them a temporary reprieve from an otherwise constant insecurity that they're not measuring up to male standards of beauty.

My only complaint with the book is that Wade eschews the possibility of someone forming a relationship in college that does not begin with hooking up, based on the fact that no one in her classes did so. Even though

she says that religious institutions that are not evangelical or Mormon do not have a hookup culture any different from any other school, both at the Catholic university I attended and at the one where I work now, it is not uncommon for students to have a more traditional dating relationship and even be saving sex for marriage, as my husband and I (who met our freshman year of college) did. Certainly these students form a specific subset of the student population that is not representative of the whole, but they do exist, and they're not unicorns. I wish she had found some examples of students who opted out of hookup culture and still found a monogamous relationship in college, rather than simply stating that none of her students (limited to her own classes at two universities) who abstained from hookup culture had had a relationship by the time they graduated.

I found this book well researched, well written, and well organized, and I'm going to recommend it to the people I work with in residence life, even though I do think our campus is a little different. I would also recommend it for high school seniors and current college students, as well as their parents. Really, though, it's an interesting read for anyone interested in how sexual mores and behaviors on campuses have changed over time.

Nadine Jones says

I follow Lisa Wade on Facebook, and I find her posts to be interesting, so when I saw she had a book published, i was interested. I put it on hold at my library as soon as I could. Excerpts she posted were great (see link to a Guardian article, below), but I worried the full book would be dry. I needn't have worried! This is fascinating and enlightening and, ultimately, reassuring.

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/20...>

Laura says

An extremely interesting, well-researched, engaging book on what the sexual culture is like on US college campuses right now. It made me so happy to have long since passed those years of my life. If you're a college student, interact with any college students ever, or just want to feel happy that you're not a college student anymore, you should read this book.

Jen Johnston says

Nothing I didn't know before, sadly

Conor says

Never has someone observed things so well but gotten the conclusions so wrong. Wade fails to see that there is no making a healthy hookup culture. The things she thinks can be eliminated from it are the very inner logic of that culture, features not bugs. This is a tough book to listen to or read but the sociological observation is fascinating. A bit like watching a car crash.

Susan says

Probably more like 3.5 stars. The author did a good job of describing the culture on campus rather than just focusing on what is happening, which I thought was a good approach. I especially liked the early chapters that discussed the historical background leading up to the current situation. Anyone who says college students are entitled and bratty today should read these chapters! The UVA riot over students being told that they can't have their muskets on campus that required a response from a militia really stands out. The change to a partying culture as college students became richer and less focused on academia was also interesting.

I wish the author had spent more time on the abstainers and discussed more about how they integrate into campus. The fact that abstainers are more likely to be first generation, students of color, and from lower socioeconomic groups is important. These students often feel alienated on campuses, and schools have a hard time retaining them. Perhaps more focus by administration on the partying and hookup culture could alleviate some of this alienation.

I liked how the author did not focus much on the morality of the problem but on how it leaves students out, reinforces stereotypes and male dominance, and can influence normally decent people to do some heinous things to each other. I wish there was more discussion on how schools might adequately address these problems without seeming like enforcers or prudes. I do find it ironic that college students, who pride themselves on open-mindedness and progressivism, are, on the social side of things, much less so than their slightly older peers or those who don't attend residential college.

The anecdotes from students enhanced the book, but, in an effort to preserve privacy, it was difficult to tell who these students were and where they were from, thus making it difficult to discern how universal their stories were. The author did quote other authors and researchers, but the book had fewer citations than "Girls & Sex" by Peggy Orenstein. The two books are good companion volumes, though. I admit that I didn't look at the footnotes in this book as closely as Orenstein's. If I had, I might have a different opinion of how the author analyzed the information she got from various sources. Her text read smoothly, but, as a result, didn't tempt me to read deeply into her sources.

I am a parent of a new college student and have lately been talking to many parents like me. It seems that loneliness and isolation is much more common among college students than when I was in school. Many of us attribute this to kids relying too much on technology to be able to connect with new people. This book introduces other ideas about what might be going on. Many parents describe their kids' situation as that described in the book as "isolates" - Kids who don't partake in hookup culture and may have no or only one or two friends on campus. They are alone in their dorm and don't know that there are many people like them - possibly a third of the campus. This is a ripe opportunity for residential life and student affairs offices - to figure out a way for these students to connect with one another.

Another important point in this book that parents should keep in mind - this culture is at all schools, whether Ivy League, small college or big university. About the only places that don't have it are evangelical and Mormon colleges. Other religious colleges are no better than secular campuses. So even if your child is high-achieving, you should discuss this topic with them. Maybe have them read the book and talk about it together.
