

Kant In America Today: Hookup Culture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l13jKrjmNYY>

The facts:

- Tinder and other dating app use is on the rise¹
- Online dating stigma is now seen as an acceptable way to meet people (60%)
- Only 1/3 of users admit to using the app for actually hooking up
- Attitudes towards hookup culture among college students has largely been static in the U.S. for some time²

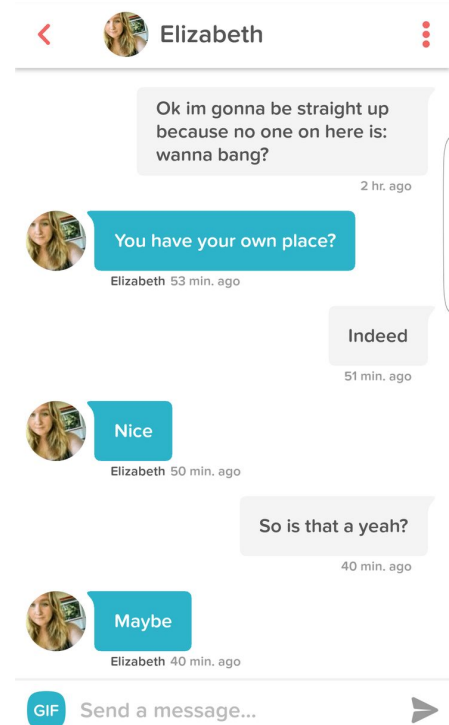
Making it philosophical:

During a hookup encounter, no matter which way one tries to spin it, it is evident that “there is a strong case to be made that CS&P [casual sex and promiscuity] necessarily objectify, and that even if they do not, they likely objectify” each individual in the act³. Is this objectification a big deal? If it is a genuine and true, hookup, both parties seem to benefit from the encounter. Also, what should first be answered is: how important and relevant is consent in these encounters?

What is valid consent? Why is it imperative in order for a hookup to even be potentially morally permissible?

Consent in sex encounters is of utmost importance because, without consent, autonomy of the person being ‘pursued’ or seduced is being violated. There *can* be tacit consent. I am not suggesting that it should be relied on though, as it is likely to wind one up in some trouble. However, while ‘no’ means ‘no’. I want to first establish ‘yes’ does not always mean ‘yes’, especially in hookup culture.

In all the readings I have completed this assignment, there seems to be general consensus around three things that are necessary for *valid* consent, consent that is morally relevant.



¹'5 facts about online dating', Aaron Smith and Monica Anderson.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5-facts-about-online-dating/>

²'Are claims associated with the "hookup culture" supported by general social survey data?', Monot MA and Carey AG. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24750070>

³ "Casual Sex, Promiscuity, and Objectification", Raja Halwani. *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings* 7th ed.

- (1) That there be no deception. Deception is defined as what one would typically think it to be, a trick, lie, or even absence of truth to get what one desires (in this case, sex)
 - (a) Can you think of an example where this might apply?
- (2) That there be no coercion. First, there are two types of coercion, occurrent and dispositional. In occurrent coercion, it bypasses consent entirely, as seen in cases of brutal rape. Obviously, consent is violated. With dispositional coercion, it can manifest in many ways, but boils down to the *threat* of harm and requires that the other party “consent” to the act. In general, under dispositional coercion, if the party refuses to participate in the “offer” (it is really a threat), they will be harmed in some way.
 - (a) “Suppose that A is mired in quicksand and is slowly but surely approaching death. When B happens along, A cries out to B for assistance. All B needs to do is throw A a rope. B is quite willing to accommodate A, ‘provided you pay me \$100,000 over the next ten years.’ Is B making A an offer? Hardly! B, we must presume, stands under a moral obligation to come to the aid of a person in serious distress, at least whenever such assistance entails no significant risk, sacrifice of time, and so forth. A is entitled to B’s assistance.”⁴
- (3) That the party consenting is rational and able to understand what they are consenting to.

Then, even if you get consent of the other party, you are still objectifying them. In hookup culture, you are using the other person as an object to gain sexual pleasure. Can one even get consent to use someone as an object (and still be morally permissible)? Most of the literature on this topic resorts to that, yes, it is okay to use people as objects as long as they consent *and* that the ends justify the means, that it is beneficial to the parties involved. What these people ignore and what Professor Marino from University of Waterloo argues is that there is “weak” instrumental use and “strong” instrumental use. In “weak” instrumental use, “we treat someone in such a way that they further ends of our own, consensually, while we do not concern ourselves with their ends... Weak use involves respecting a person's stated permissions, while ignoring the full range of their wishes and desires.”⁵ “Strong” instrumental use ignores both, it ignores the autonomy of the other human *and* their wishes and desires. The reason “weak” use is okay, as seen in hookup culture is because it is, by definition, still respecting the other’s autonomy and not violating their rights. There are many more questions and problems to be broken down, however. Marino touches on how a theory such as Hänel’s in *Why didn’t Grace Leave?* can still work in her framework of weak and strong use. Also, the framework Marino shows does not account for the widespread dissatisfaction and effects hookup culture has had on college students. Just because something can be proven morally permissible, it does not solve any societal problems, something I feel that philosophy can scratch at.

⁴ “Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person”, Thomas A. Maps. *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings 7th ed.*

⁵ “The Ethics of Sexual Objectification: Autonomy and Consent” Marino, Patricia. *Inquiry*