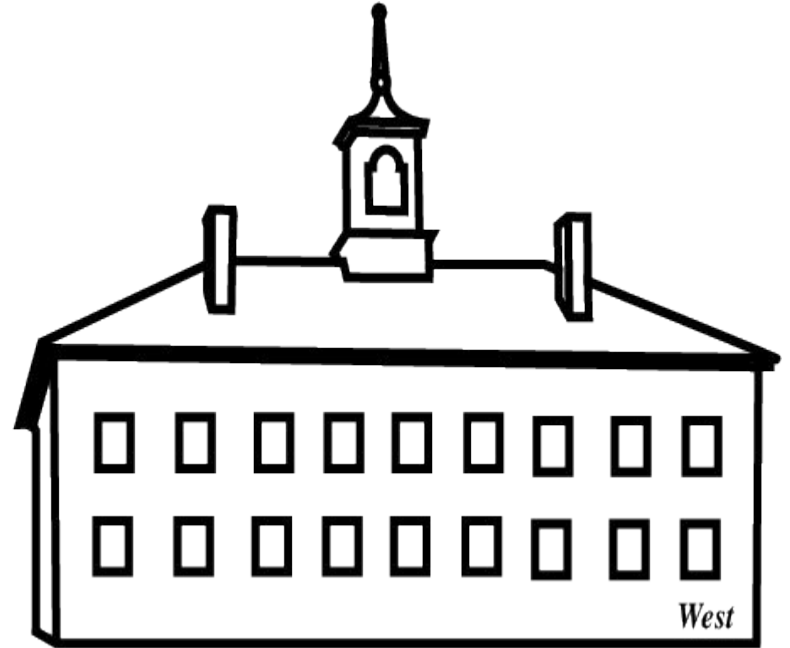


# **Communicating Intimacy at Williams College**

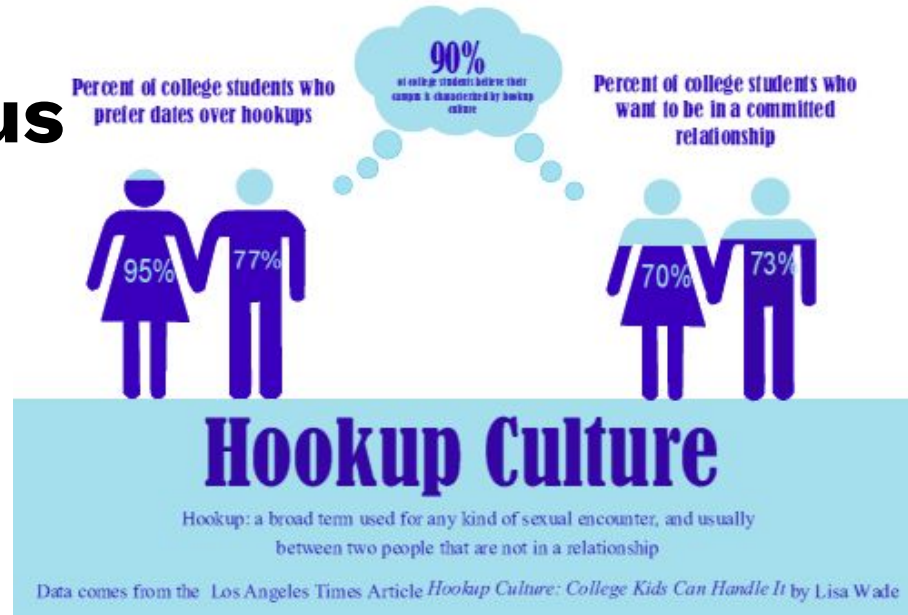
Elizabeth Welch  
December 8, 2020  
ANTH 371

# Research Questions

- How do female students **communicate intimacy**?
- What **social pressures** shape our intimate landscape?
- Is **sexual and romantic satisfaction** possible on campus?



# Background: Intimacy on Campus



Which Best Describes Sex in College?



45%

CAREFREE AND FUN

44%

MESSY AND COMPLICATED

11%

HURTFUL AND DAMAGING

Based on LA Times article  
(May 30, 2013)

Cosmopolitan survey with  
1,000 students (Aug 13, 2014)

# Background: Communicative Behaviors

## “FWBR

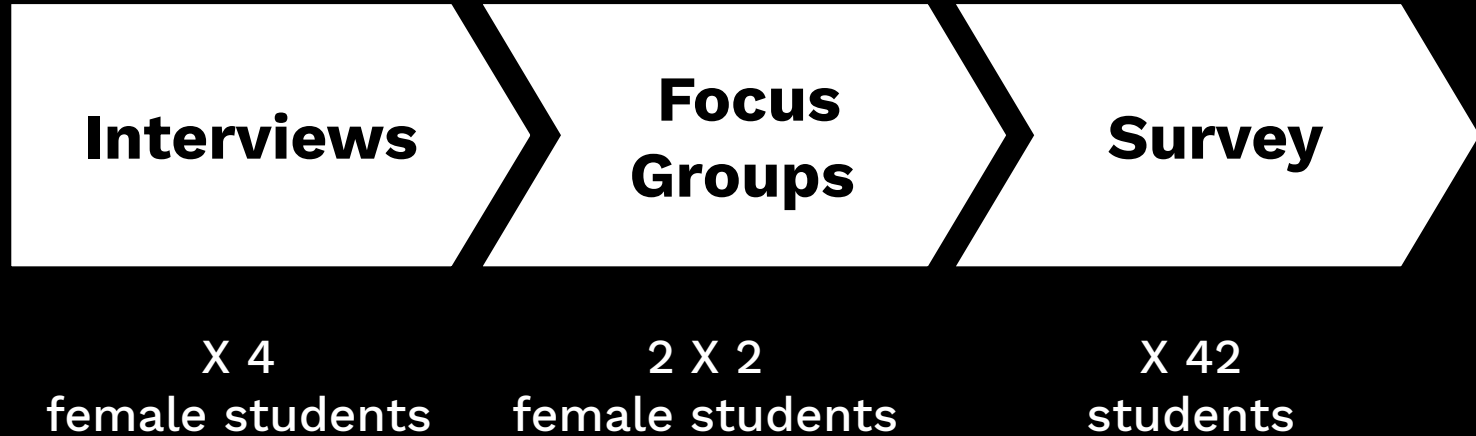
(friends with benefits relationship)

**contains...**

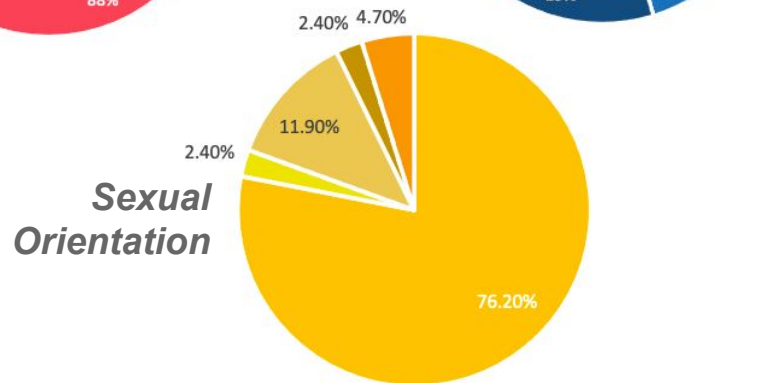
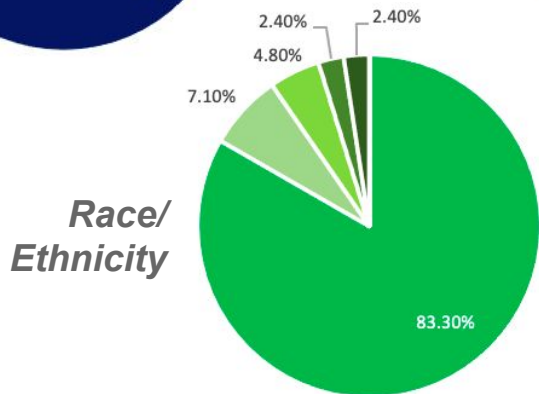
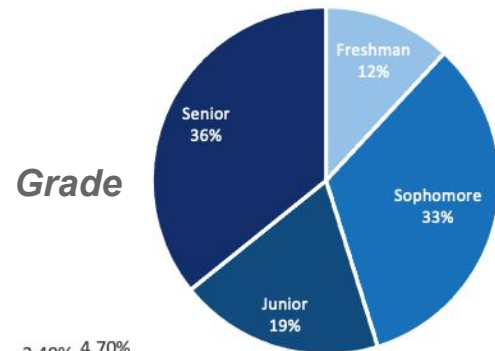
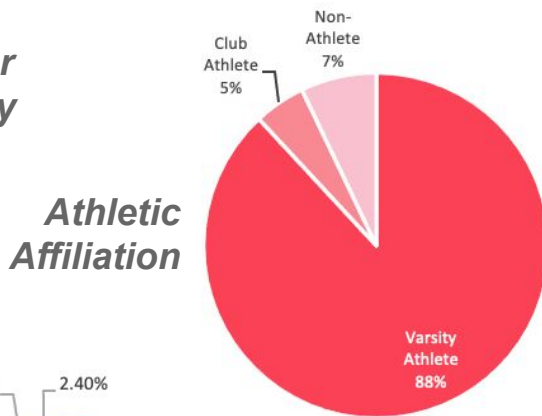
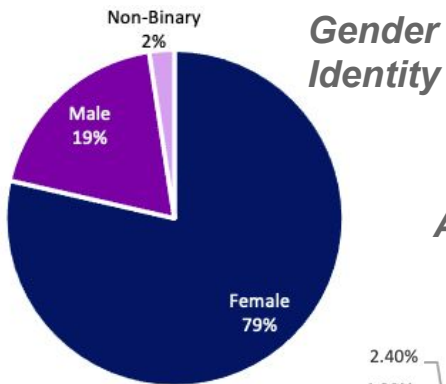
- Rules of constancy  
(‘this is all this is’)
- Rules against relational progression  
(‘don’t get attached’)
- Rules of impermanence  
(‘this works for right now’)

(Knight, 2014.)

# Methods



# SURVEY

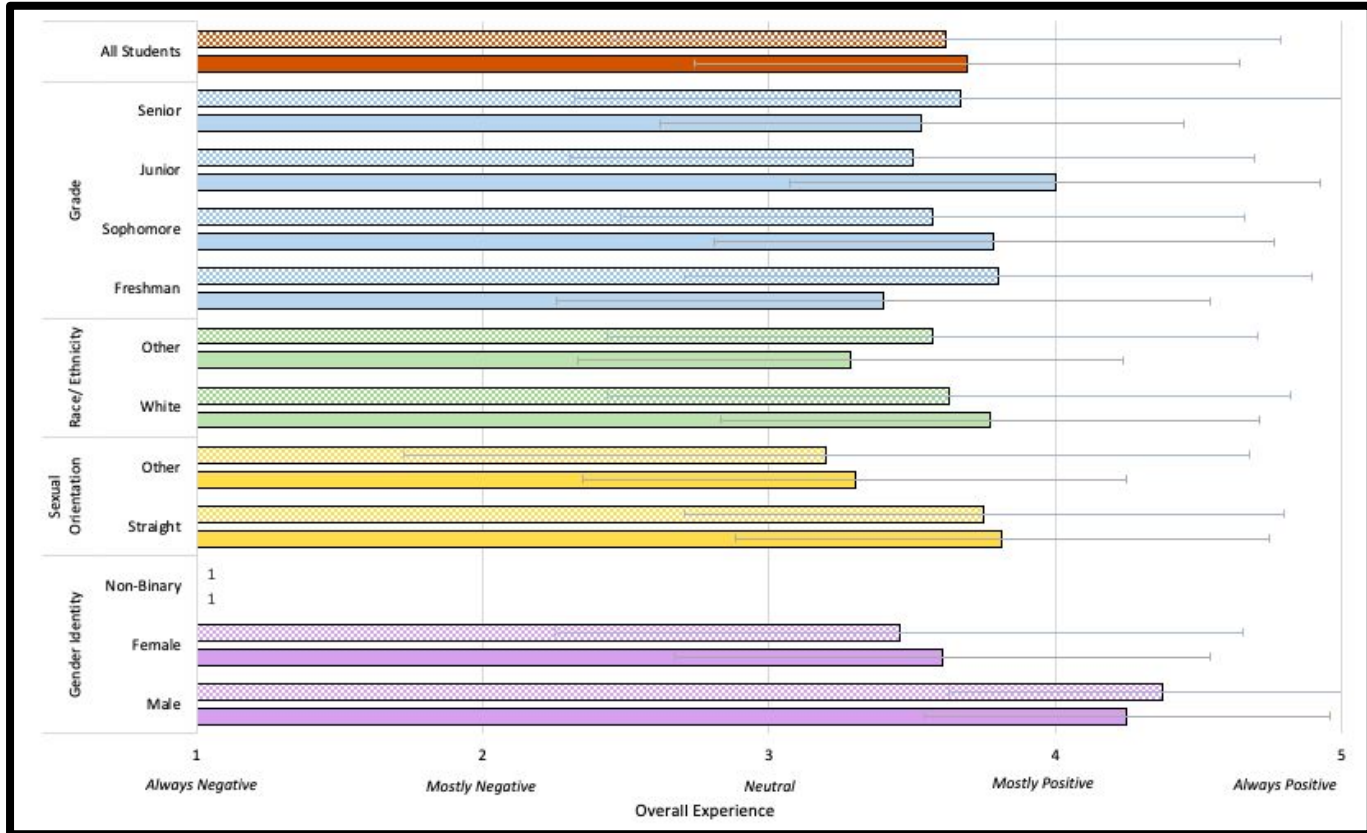


- White
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Sexual Orientation
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian/Gay
- Asian
- North African or Middle Eastern
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Pansexual & Queer
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native

# 1. Overall Experience with Intimacy

▨ Romantic Intimacy

■ Sexual Intimacy



**2.**

# **Interviews & Focus Groups**

Let's start with these female voices.



**2,025 students**

2,025

2,025

2,025

a small & shrinking pool



*I feel at parties, if it were a bigger school, you could just flirt with whoever and nobody would care. You wouldn't really have any consequence of that. But here, it's more noticed, and you will see them sober later.*



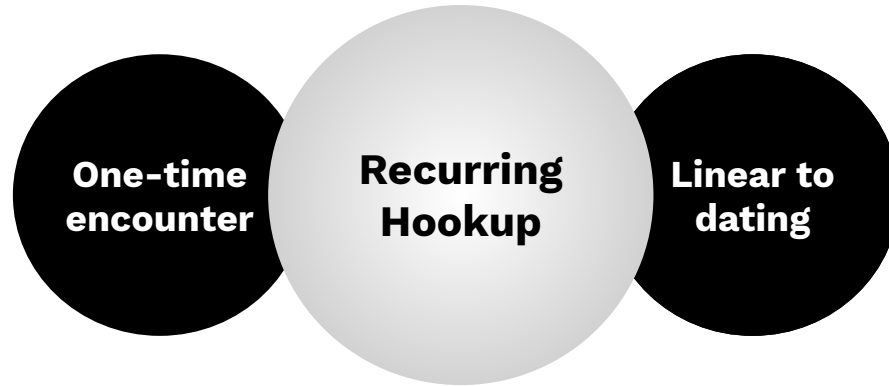


*I feel at parties, if it were a bigger school, you could just flirt with whoever and nobody would care. You wouldn't really have any consequence of that. But here, it's more noticed, and you will see them sober later.*



Most of my intimate encounters have been initiated when both people are:

# Tendency towards sustained intimacy



**Clingy**

**Over-Attached**

**Crazy**

**Obsessive**

**Psycho**

**Annoying**

# Difficulties with relational talk

*I think it's definitely the whole,  
'I don't want to be that girl,' thing.  
I didn't want to seem like the one  
pushing everything.*



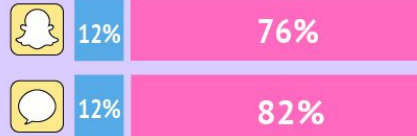
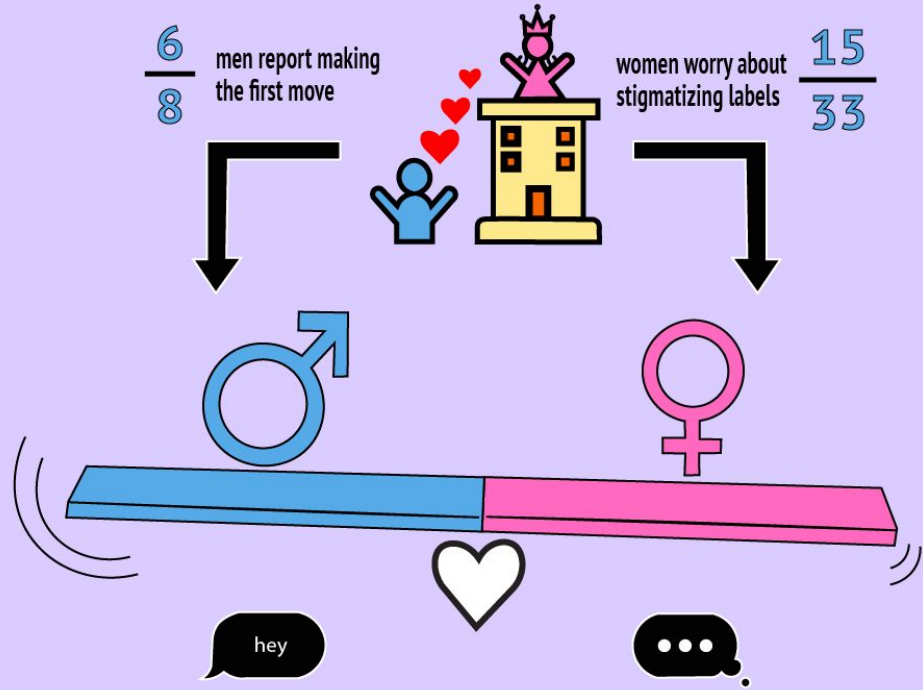
# 3.

## **Survey Respondents**

Let's add male voices to this landscape of intimacy.

# BALANCING INTEREST

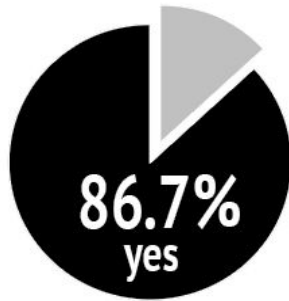
Based on a survey with 33 female and 8 male students at Williams College about their communicative behaviors and experiences with intimacy on campus.



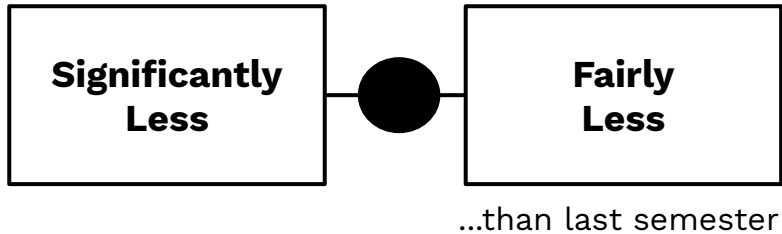
Percent of male and female respondents who answered “yes” when asked if they have ever not snapchatted or texted, **even though they wanted to**, in order to enact casualness when exploring their interest in someone.

# This COVID Semester

Have you had to be more intentional about socializing?



How would you assess the opportunities for sexual/romantic intimacy?





# Conclusions

- Female and male participants operate on unequal intimate landscapes
- Direct communication may be vital to sexual and romantic satisfaction
- Initiating cycles of direct initiation may help undo social norms that decrease opportunities for intimacy

# Future Directions

- More male voices
- Non-athlete social scene
- Minority experiences with intimacy

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