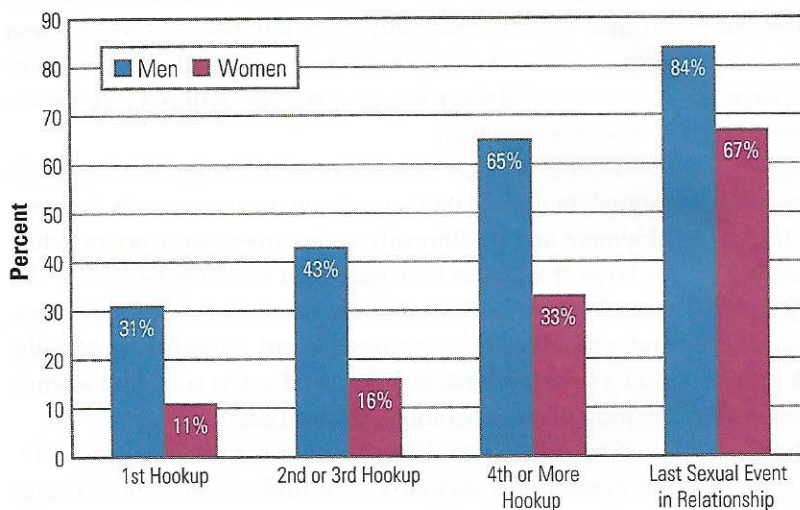


Figure 12.14 Percentage of College Men and Women Reporting Orgasm in Various Contexts



SOURCE: Based on Paula England's calculations from Online College Social Life Survey, 2010 version.

Yet while women's career aspirations are now much more equal to men's than previously, gender differences in what is expected in the romantic and sexual realm have changed surprisingly little, even at the same time that norms of whether premarital sex was acceptable were changing. In my college online survey mentioned earlier, when asked who asked whom out on their most recent date, students reported that the man did the asking in about 90 percent of cases. When asked who initiated sexual activity on a hookup, more reported that men did than women.

Interestingly, hookups lead to orgasm much less often for women than men. Figure 12.14 shows the percentage of male versus female college students who reported having an orgasm depending on whether the event they were reporting on was a first-time hookup with this partner, the second or third hookup with this partner, the fourth or more hookup with this partner, or the most recent time in a relationship of at least six months when they did something sexual beyond just kissing. The figure shows that

both men and women are much more likely to orgasm with a partner when they've hooked up several times before. This is partly because they go farther sexually. Talking to women, my research team and I learned that it is also because partners learn more about how to please each other with experience. Both men and women have an even higher chance of orgasm in relationships. This is again partly because they go farther sexually and have more practice with each other. Interviews with men and women students revealed that it is also because of the affection in relationships that makes partners care more about each other's pleasure.

The gender gap in orgasm is much larger in early hookups than in later hookups with the same partner, and the gender gap in orgasm is smallest in relationships (see Figure 12.14). Women have orgasms only one-third as frequently as men during first hookups. This gender

gap in orgasm is much bigger than the gender gap in pay! Using in-depth interviews, a team of researchers I was part of found that men report really caring about the pleasure of their girlfriends but being much more selfish in hookups. In contrast, women seemed to feel an obligation to try to give pleasure to their male partners whether they were in casual hookups or relationships. Interpreting this finding, we argued that the sexual double standard may explain this. That is, perhaps men and women are more ambivalent about whether women deserve sexual pleasure in a hookup than they are about men's entitlement to pleasure in a casual context (Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2012).

Overall, while sex before marriage has become more acceptable, the extent to which sexual and relational behavior follows gendered expectations has changed very little. While of course there are exceptions, the expectation that men ask women on dates, initiate sexual activity, propose marriage, and are less severely judged for casual sex still remains.

Conclusion: The Puzzle of Gender Inequality

As we've seen, gender and sexuality are linked. When people are committed to the idea that men and women are naturally and appropriately different, a bias against same-sex relationships often results because such relationships challenge the idea that roles need to be assigned based on one's sex. Gender and sexuality are also linked because our cultural beliefs about how we are supposed to act—at work, in social gatherings, or anywhere—affect how we act when we have sex as well. Gender norms also create the sexual double standard under which peers judge women more harshly than men for casual sex.

Neither gender nor sexual practices are static. That is how we know that they are, at least in part, socially constructed, although they are undoubtedly affected by biology as well.

Many sociologists used to believe that the shifts in the system of gender and sexuality were unidirectional and continuous. In other words, for a few decades it looked like things were getting increasingly more permissive regarding sexuality and ever more equal between men and women. A person's sex came to dictate less about how the person was treated or expected to act. Many gender