

New book aims to clear up 'hookup culture' confusion

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Stephanie Amada, assistant professor of writing, rhetoric and American culture.
Credit: G.L. Kohuth

As students return to campus post-holiday break, a Michigan State University professor has released an e-book she hopes will demystify the "hookup culture" that often accompanies the college social scene.

During the first 48 hours of MSU's spring semester classes Monday-

Tuesday, Stephanie Amada, assistant professor of writing, rhetoric and American cultures, will give away free copies of her book, "Hooking Up: A Sexy Encounter with Choice," which is available on Kindle. Students may download the free version from her website.

"As we explored the topic in my 'Women in America' class, [students](#) began to share with me their feelings, their fears and their hopes for a happy and full life," Amada said. "For example, two students whispered to me, 'I'm still a virgin,' and I thought, 'Why are you whispering? Why is this something that you have to feel so ashamed of?' This book is inspired by those conversations."

College students are confused about what it means to hook up, she said. That's understandable since, even as an expert in rhetorical language, Amada is fascinated by how a singular phrase can have so many meanings: anything from kissing to sex, with no intention of seeing that person again.

But one thing is for sure: Hookup culture doesn't lead to rape, she said. Hooking up is about choice; rape isn't.

And that's why her book includes a chapter on [sexual assault](#). Throughout the book, Amada cites examples of her own struggle during college to navigate sex and relationships. And that includes her personal experience of being raped during her first year of college.

"There is so much shame for people who have been sexually assaulted that people don't speak up about it," she said. "The ensuing silence creates a vicious cycle of shame, silence and more shame. I hope that by sharing that this happened to me, I can show other women who have experienced a similar trauma that there is hope to go on, that it is possible to heal from the emotional pain and that it is possible to be happy again."

In researching hookup culture with her students, Amada was surprised to learn that some of them didn't know what constitutes sexual assault. And many women brought up the topic of "regretted sex," and the difference between that and rape.

As the title of Amada's book implies, women have a choice, and they should feel good about their decisions, Amada said. That's important since hookup culture isn't going away. Social media has made it easier to meet people on Facebook than in class, and texting has replaced personal conversations.

"The answer lies in taking a good, hard look at how we educate our young people about issues surrounding sex and consent," Amada said. "Teaching our students how to make choices from a place of personal strength is what will lead to the inner conviction necessary for a young person to make a good choice and not give in to peer pressure or bullying."

Provided by Michigan State University

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