

Hookup Culture in the Modern Society: A Creative Exploration of Its Affects

By

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ABSTRACT

The content of this creative thesis project centers around my personal experiences and emotions regarding hookup culture and other young adults struggling to find genuine relationships in today's society. This project is significant as I care deeply about people and their struggles. I aspire to be a confidant and source of support for those in need, even if the favor is not returned. This outlook also shapes my perspective on relationships, doing anything in my power to prove my loyalty and love. In today's world, many individuals seek only instant gratification, and once they achieve it, they tend to move on. I intend to create a handmade book utilizing multiple-colored papers and mediums, composing multiple illustrations, along with the works of others, to convey how this culture negatively impacts today's young adults.

PREFACE

My goal for this project was to assess and explore hookup culture's complex and multifaceted impact on society. As a phenomenon prevalent for several decades, its growth and influence have been further amplified with the dawn of social media. With this in mind, I set out to explore the factors that have contributed to the rise of hookup culture and its effects on individuals, relationships, and broader societal norms. Through this process, I uncovered aspects of my pent-up anger and frustration toward this issue to connect to my research and my personal story. My goal is to raise greater awareness regarding this pertinent issue and assist others in adopting a more proactive approach towards building long-lasting relationships rather than simply satisfying their immediate desires before proceeding to someone new to repeat the cycle.

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ARTIST'S STATEMENT: The New Norm

This body of work is a byproduct of years of trauma and growth as I transitioned into adulthood. In my youth, I held onto a somewhat naive belief that the romantic love portrayed in movies and books accurately reflected how it was in the real world. I was captivated by the grand gestures, the heartwarming moments, and the happy endings that seemed so effortlessly attainable. However, as I grew older, I realized that love is much more complex and nuanced than what the media often portrays. I used to believe that simply being myself would make people like me. However, I soon realized that it was not that simple. As a result, I developed a mirroring personality disorder. This tactic made it easier for others to enjoy spending time with me, as I felt my true self was insufficient. This issue initially confused me about my well-being and made me think about who I was.

My past relationships were hollow, with little to no chemistry but verbal and physical abuse. I felt that if I did everything in my power to keep them happy, such as giving them what they wanted every time, they would one day love me back—first, the anger set in, then the confusion, shame, and heartbreak. I was attracted to those who treated me with little to no respect, the ones I thought I could help or fix. Since entering adulthood, I have found my worth and have been living my life happily alone. I have realized that those past situations were not my fault and that my anger was a natural response to mistreatment. Due to this discovery, I have kept my distance from those who

treat me the way I let them before, thinking I have found a way to distinguish individuals like them. Instead, I have faced false intentions and feigned apathy.

Since my last relationship in high school, I have explored the dating world through Tinder, Hinge, and other sites that connect people with the same interests. Being naive in some ways, I was unaware that the people I would meet on these sites were only interested in casual hookups even though their profiles would say they were looking for long-term. This miscommunication diminished my trust very quickly. Every date I would go on always ended the same: the person would ask for my body in return for drinks and an appetizer. This insincere effort made me wonder if it was even worth my time and effort to go out since I felt like a piece of meat. I grew frustrated with the prevalence of this, almost normality, of the dating world. Most of my friends have spoken about this, which led me to believe it was beyond my lousy luck and more prevalent in our society.

My goal is to raise greater awareness regarding this pertinent issue and assist others in adopting a more proactive approach towards building long-lasting relationships rather than simply satisfying their immediate desires before moving on to someone new to repeat the cycle. In this creative project, I aim to elicit an emotional response from my audience, making them question their contribution to the problem and their willingness to bring about social change.

INTRODUCTION

Hookup culture represents the latest chapter in the ongoing evolution of sexual norms and behaviors in America. Its origins trace back to the bustling city life of the 1920s, a period that witnessed young people mingling in mixed-sex groups without the watchful eye of chaperones. This era sparked significant media interest in the emergence of 'youth culture,' coinciding with the broader accessibility of college education nationwide. By the 1960s, a desire for unattached relationships began to take hold among young adults. They became even more sexually liberated with the rise of feminism, the widespread availability of birth control, and the growth of sex-integrated college party events. Simultaneously, urban gay communities were pioneering a culture centered around casual sexual encounters, or 'hookups.'

The onset of the AIDS epidemic in the later decades temporarily hindered the mainstream proliferation of casual sexual encounters, yet the momentum persisted. Today, when older generations contemplate hookup culture, there's a curiosity about its prevalence among today's youth. In Lisa Wade's article, "The Rise of Hookup Sexual Culture on American Campuses," she explains that for approximately a quarter of students, hookup culture initially offers an appealing playground. They thrive within its parameters, embracing the spontaneity and brevity of casual encounters. However, Wade explains that a significant portion, around a third, actively opt out. They find the norms and expectations of hookup culture uninviting, preferring abstinence over conforming to its mandates.

Although this culture has been prevalent for generations, the introduction of social media and dating apps has made it even more widespread. Many people today are not interested in pursuing relationships, claiming they are too complicated and emotionally taxing. While this may be true in some cases, those who genuinely desire to build a meaningful relationship and share their lives with someone may want more from what hookup culture offers. As one who genuinely enjoys being alone in many ways, experiencing a new chapter of my life, like entering adulthood with someone else, seems comforting and beneficial. As I explored the nature of why this culture impacted me so much, I learned a great deal about my anger and, in turn, my healing.

RESEARCH

I find it fascinating that in many studies I have encountered during my research, males tend to report a more positive experience than females. As a woman, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to navigate this culture. One article that caught my attention was by Justin Garcia, titled "Sexual Hookup Culture." The text discusses various studies that have explored the impact of current culture on young adults and their mental stress. One such study was an extensive web-based survey of 1,468 undergraduate students. Participants of this study reported a range of consequences, including 27.1 percent feeling embarrassed, 24.7 percent experiencing emotional difficulties, 20.8 percent facing loss of respect, and 10 percent reporting difficulties maintaining a steady relationship. Due to these results, one can only assume it will eventually take a toll on a person's mental health—many people who partake in this experience a persistent, deep, indefinable disappointment. Of course, not all young adult sexual exploration is risky, it can even be healthy, but there are reports of many being taken advantage of and coerced into doing things they do not want to in fear of losing the one they love.

To gauge the impact of this issue, I researched a 10-question survey designed for a specific demographic. The survey was completely anonymous, so I posted it on my social media platforms. Within an hour, I received around 25 responses. However, I had to stop there since I could only analyze the first 25 responses for free. As expected, the results were predictable. Most individuals were male, with a 50 to 45 percent enjoyment ratio out of females. Out of the respondents, only 10 percent were in a current relationship, while 55 percent claimed they had not been in a relationship for longer than a year. Furthermore, 5 percent of the participants were married. 59 percent of the

individuals reported that their dating experience negatively impacted them. Interestingly, every respondent believed that using phones and social media negatively affects how we speak to one another, yet this is still a problem in our society. One response stated, "In today's world, social media plays a big part in dating. We are all too consumed with our phones, which makes cheating so much easier. Cheating has become so normalized...[people] don't take you on dates anymore; it is not how it used to be." Some people feel powerless, while others find consolation in a false sense of happiness and resort to dating apps to fill the gaps between partners. However, those who feel empowered also run the risk of mentally damaging others and themselves.

Additionally, through my research and personal time in the trenches, I suggest that hookup culture is a problem not just because it encourages casual sex but because it creates a detrimental form of casual sexual engagement that feels obligatory. Students who do not engage in hookups can end up being socially isolated, while students who do commit in this way are forced to behave by a dysfunctional set of rules. This situation creates an environment where showing compassion or basic manners seems inappropriate while being careless or cruel is tolerated. I know that in my own experience when I compliment males (not women necessarily), I tend to get a sexual remark back or unwanted DMs on Instagram. I have noticed that because of these standards, many see compliments and genuine kindness as flirting or trying to acquire them for the night. These interactions only make for inappropriate situations. Hookup apps like Tinder and Hinge may owe some of their attraction to the confidence of being behind a screen. Because of these apps, many do not get the awkwardness of being rejected, so it almost creates a safe space for people to act out or say things they usually would not say face-to-face. It encourages cheating and other unfortunate situations unknown to the other

partner. At its worst, it encourages young men and women to engage in sexual competitiveness and status-seeking while meeting impossible standards of attractiveness. It entitles immediate pleasure-seeking and heightens the risks that young adults will become either perpetrators or victims of sexual crimes. Research shows that today's young people are more open, permissive, earnest, hopeful for the future, and welcoming of diversity than any other generation in memory. They are well-positioned to usher in the next new sexual culture (Wade). While I have my doubts, I feel that if we collectively strive for change, we could redefine what it means to create natural connections and relationships constructed on mutual trust and adoration. Because this culture is a shared consciousness among young adults, we must work together to make changes happen. Overall, this is a weighty problem that requires immediate attention and reevaluation. This project is significant to me and those who aspire for more than just a depleted sense of self-confidence and temporary happiness.

METHODOLOGY

To create this multi-media body of work, I explored many different outlets for expressing what I was trying to accomplish. I decided on a handmade book as my creative thesis, containing artwork, writing, and text messages about my experience exposed to this culture, all collaged together. My thesis project will focus on personal experiences and emotions concerning the prevalent phenomenon of hookup culture. I have chosen this topic because this medium is an effective way to convey the message I wish to share. As an artist, I specialize in creating collages, which involve using a combination of different materials such as paper, stickers, magazine cutouts, stamps, and other mediums to create a unique piece of art. My skills in this area will enable me to create a thought-provoking and visually appealing thesis project.

I used various weights of paper to create a tactile experience, especially for illustrations and text that dealt with heavy emotions. This paper choice would connect with people who felt ignored or depressed due to societal pressures. I also like adding texture to my work so the audience can feel more engaged with the art. I glued in different paper cutouts with various textures to do this. I wanted to add some text bubbles from previous conversations regarding the issues I expanded upon earlier to incorporate them into something that was not digital but something one would have to pick up and flip through rather than scroll through. I sewed the multiple pages together with string to make more of a book shape people were more familiar with.

Regarding the color scheme of my book, I preferred to maintain a subdued and muted palette with low saturation levels. However, I incorporated brighter and more vibrant hues for specific pages that required emphasis or attention. I kept my audience engaged by introducing unexpected and diverse media throughout the book, adding to their reading experience.

For the presentation of my piece, I created a short video that showcased the details of my work. The video was shot from a top view, with a slow flip through the pages to ensure the viewers got a clear and detailed look at every element of my work. To make the video more engaging, I added background music to keep the viewers entertained and engaged throughout the presentation while I voiced over the written part of my project. This approach helped me effectively present my work and capture the audience's attention. This project was inexpensive since I recorded it from my phone. I was also in Kathleen O'Connell's Book Arts class, so I had full access to any required materials during this process.

BOOK MAKING PROCESS

First, I select heavyweight paper for the accordion-fold pages. I prefer paper with some texture, which adds character to the finished book. Using a ruler and pencil, I measure and mark the dimensions for each page.

I decided to make this book 4 1/2 inches wide and 5 1/2 inches tall for no specific reason other than that I prefer smaller books because I find it easier to handle in your hands.

Once marked, I carefully score the paper along the lines using a bone folder to ensure clean folds. With the paper scored, I begin folding it into accordion creases. Each fold should be crisp and even, and I press down firmly with my bone folder to ensure a precise fold. As I fold, I double-check that the creases are consistent to maintain a uniform look.

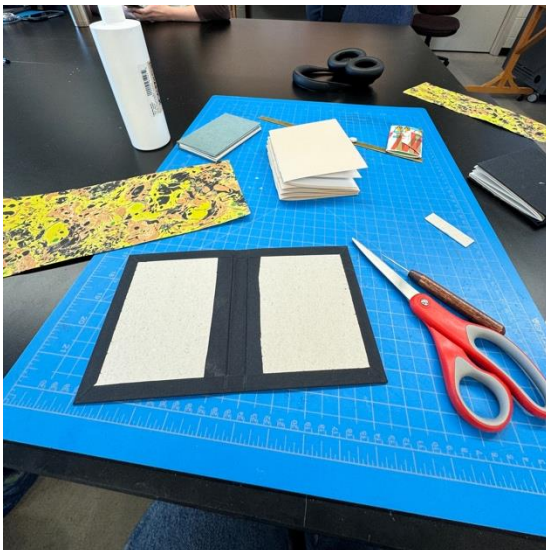
Once folded seven times, I unfold the paper to reveal the accordion structure. Next, I cut several pieces of paper slightly smaller than the accordion panels to create folio pages, which will be sewn into the accordion's valley folds. Utilizing my awl, I poke three holes evenly into the accordion and folio folds, ensuring they all match up evenly. I carefully stitch each folio page onto the accordion using a needle and white linen thread, ensuring it's securely attached with a square knot. The sewing adds strength to the binding and allows the pages to lie flat when the book is opened.

Moving on to the hardcover, I measured and cut the book board to the desired size. For this book, I made the cover slightly larger than the accordion pages to provide a border. I cut just enough black book binding fabric to cover the spine, back, and front cover and then glued it securely to the book board. I also cut decorative marbled paper to cover the hardcover on the front to indicate where the book starts while adding an aesthetic touch

to the finished product. The choice of marbled paper stems from its ‘toxic’ appeal, tying back to my topic of the project.

Using book arts glue, I carefully adhere the decorative paper to the hardcover, ensuring it is smooth and free of air bubbles. Once the cover is dry, I attach the accordion flyleaf pages to the inside of the cover. I apply glue along the spine of the accordion and carefully press it onto the inside of the cover, making sure it's centered and aligned.

To complete the book, I fold the cover over the accordion pages and apply pressure using book weights and wooden boards to either side to ensure a strong bond. I then let the book dry completely before handling it further. Once dry, I use the bone folder to gently crease the folds and ensure the book opens and closes smoothly. This versatile binding technique creates a sturdy yet elegant book perfect for showcasing art, photographs, or written content which I felt was perfect for what I was trying to accomplish with this project.



MARBLED PAPER PROCESS

1. Alum (aluminum sulfate)
2. Carrageenan or methylcellulose
3. Marbling paints or pigments
4. Droppers or brushes for applying the paints
5. Water
6. A large tray or shallow container for the marbling bath
7. Sheets of paper (preferably high-quality, smooth paper)
8. Stirrers or combs for creating patterns
9. Apron and gloves (Recommended)

I start by filling the shallow tray with water, ensuring it is deep enough to accommodate my paper sheets. Then, I add a small amount of carrageenan to the water, following the instructions on the package to achieve the desired consistency. I allow the mixture to sit for a while to remove any air bubbles.

I dissolve alum in water in a separate container to create a sizing solution. I then gently brush the solution onto each sheet of paper, ensuring they are evenly coated. I then hang the papers to dry completely. Sizing the paper with this solution helps the colors adhere better and prevents them from bleeding.

I prepare my desired color palette by using small plastic cups or containers. I shake the paints well before mixing them with water to ensure a smooth consistency. Then, I add a few drops of pigment to each cup, which helps disperse the paint on the surface of the marbling bath.

Using droppers or brushes, I gently apply the paints onto the water's surface, experimenting with different techniques, such as dripping, swirling, or combing, to create captivating patterns and designs.

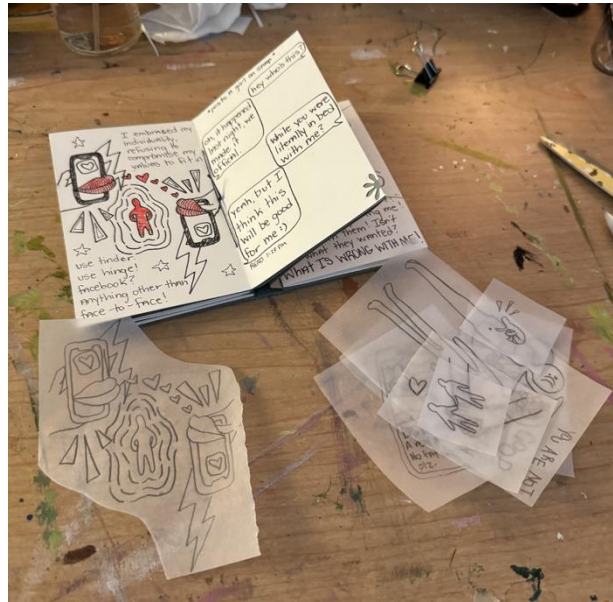
Once I was satisfied with my design, I carefully placed the now-dry alum-coated paper onto the surface of the marbling bath. Gently pressing down on the paper's corners ensured the colors transferred evenly. After a few seconds, I lifted the paper from the bath, making sure not to smudge the design.

After marbling each sheet of paper, I laid them flat on a drying rack to dry completely, blotting any excess water with a clean towel.

After they dried entirely, I put them under some weight to lie flat, which made them more accessible to cut and work with to bind for my book's cover.



BOOK CONTENT BACKGROUND



As I began assembling content about hookup culture in modern society, I found myself navigating through a complex web of social dynamics, personal experiences, and societal norms. My aim was not to merely skim the surface but to delve deep into the nuances, shedding light on both the appeal and the toxicity intertwined within this phenomenon.

I spent a lot of time researching hookup culture by reading academic papers, psychological studies, and sociological analyses. Through this research, I gained a better understanding of how hookup culture came to be, how it has changed over time, and how it affects people and communities. What I learned is that hookup culture is a complex phenomenon that reflects changing attitudes towards intimacy, relationships, and personal autonomy. As I gained a deeper understanding of the topic, it became clear that behind the facade of freedom and empowerment, there was a darker reality. I paid close attention to the experiences shared by individuals, which highlighted the profound emotional toll of

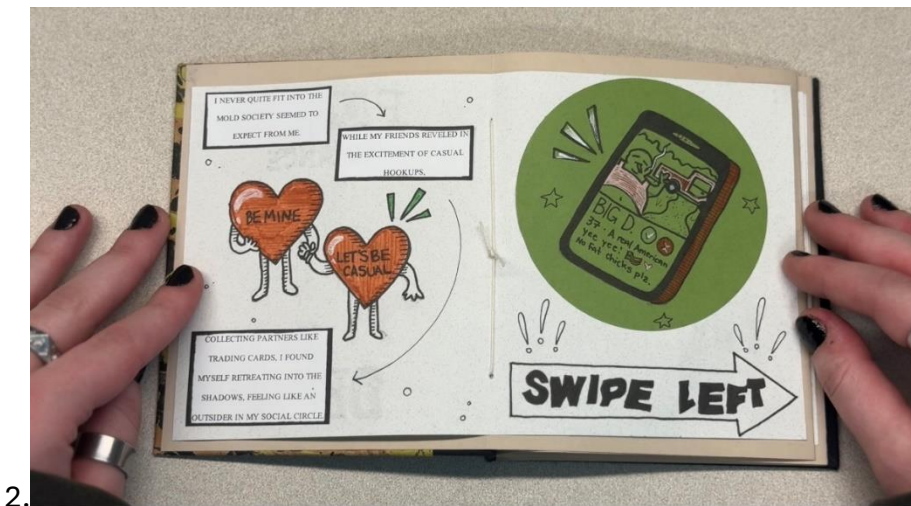
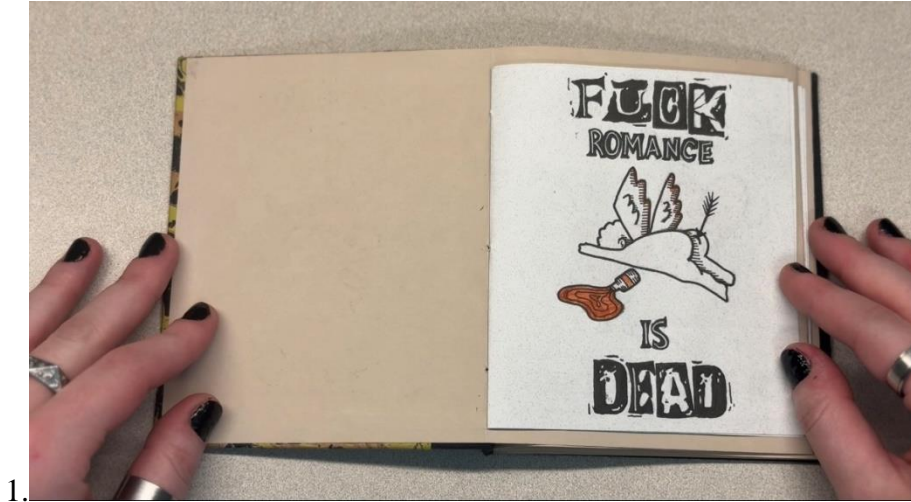
casual encounters that lacked genuine connection. Stories of disappointment, heartbreak, and a prevailing sense of emptiness painted a grim picture of the toxicity that hid beneath the surface of hookup culture.

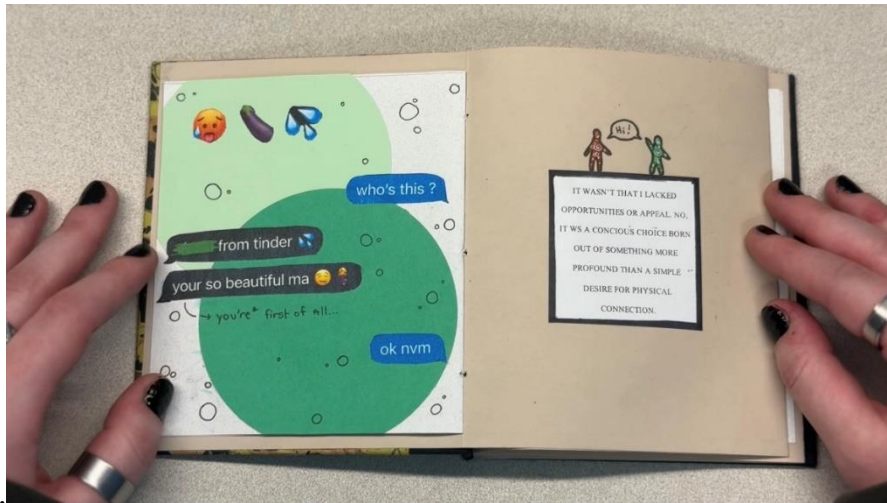
With this understanding, I started creating content that would educate and encourage thought through evocative graphics and engaging social media slang that many people my age could identify with. My goal was to question the glorification of casual dating and initiate discussions about its negative impact on mental well-being, self-esteem, and human connections. Amidst the darkness, I found glimpses of hope and resilience in others who felt the same. I met people and communities online promoting values of authenticity, communication, and genuine connection instead of shallow interactions. Their stories were beacons of light, inspiring me to amplify their voices and advocate for a more conscious and empathetic approach to intimacy and relationships.

As I contemplate my path of producing content about the harmful aspects of this culture in my thesis, I am reminded of the power of storytelling in shedding light on the intricacies of the human experience. Even though the journey may bring difficulties and uncertainties, I am still persistent in my commitment to leverage my platform, no matter how small it may be, to amplify the voices of those who have been marginalized, question societal norms, and cultivate meaningful discussions that can lead us to a more equitable and compassionate world.

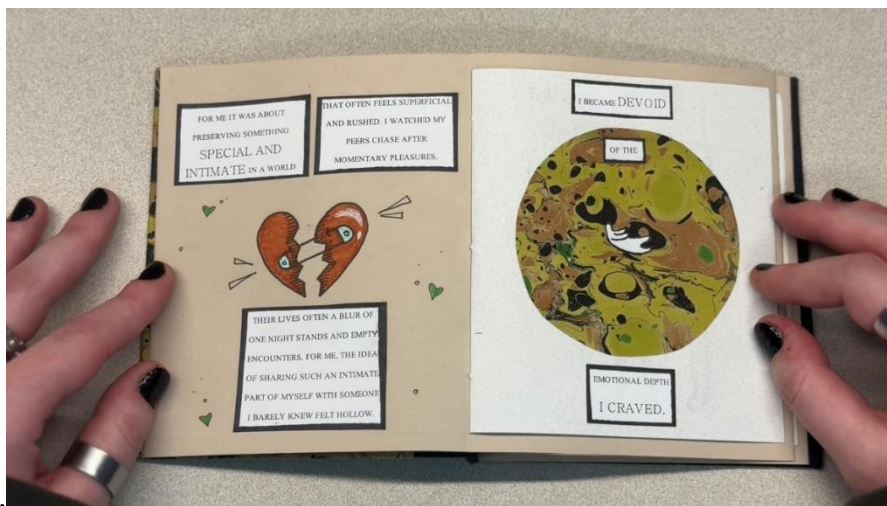
BOOK SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSCRIPT

Disconnected Intimacy:

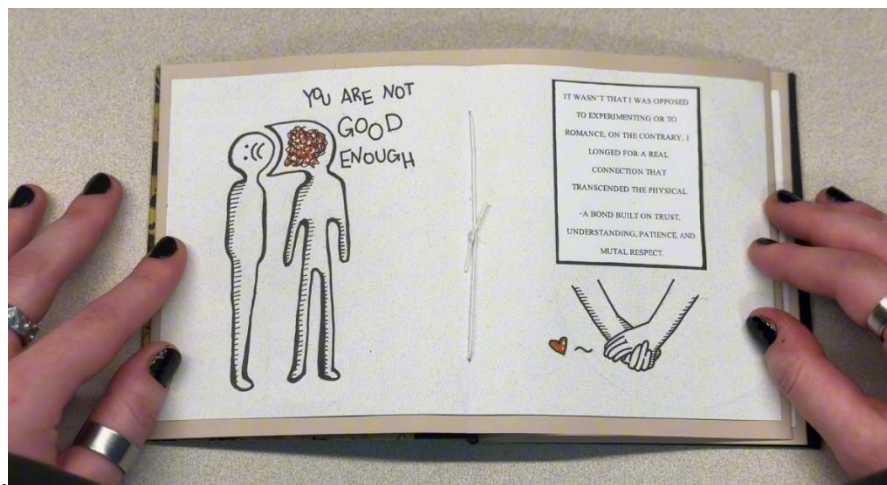




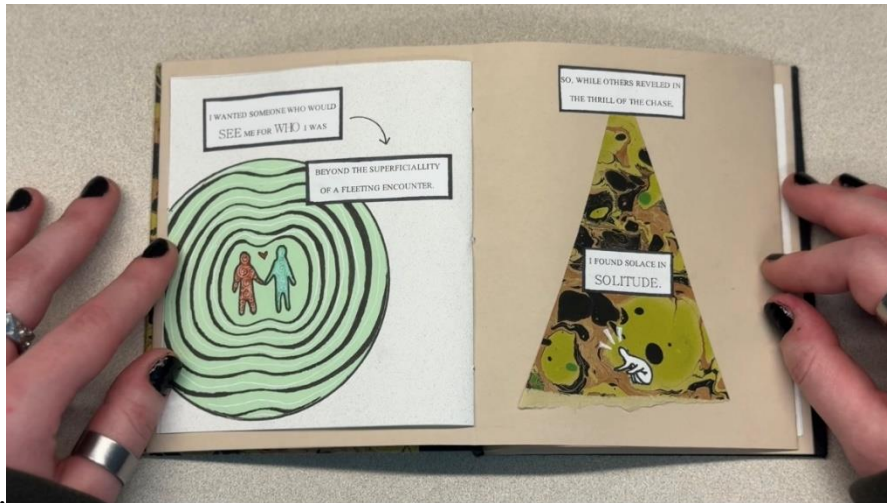
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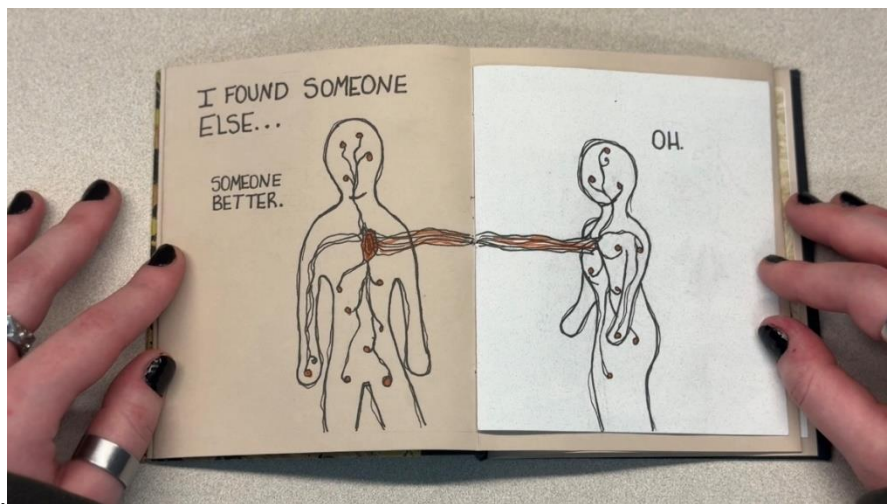
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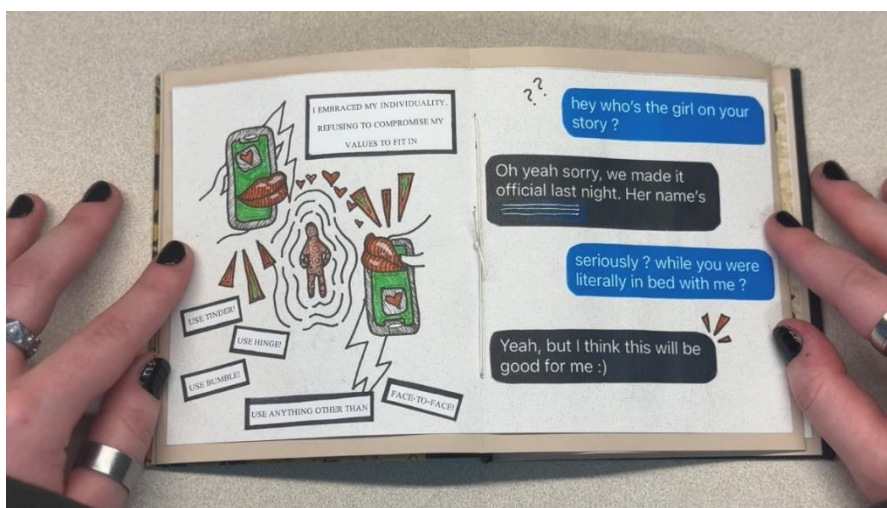
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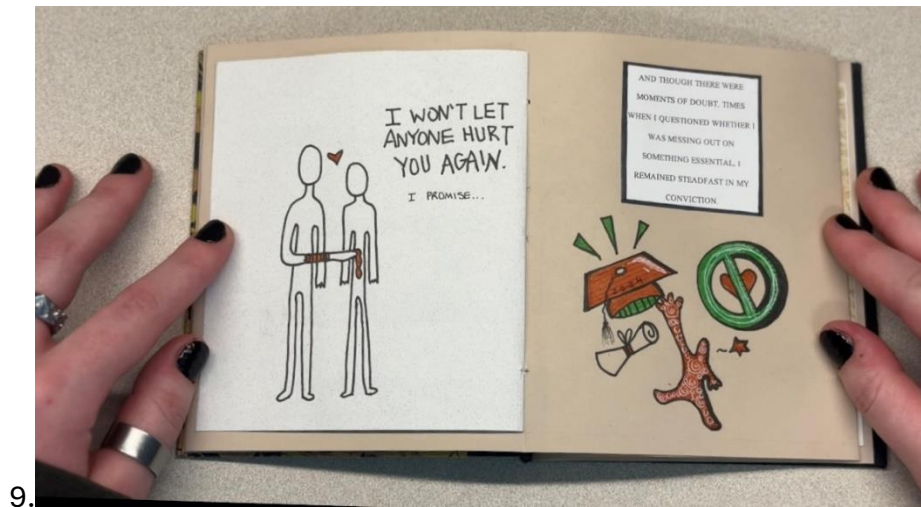
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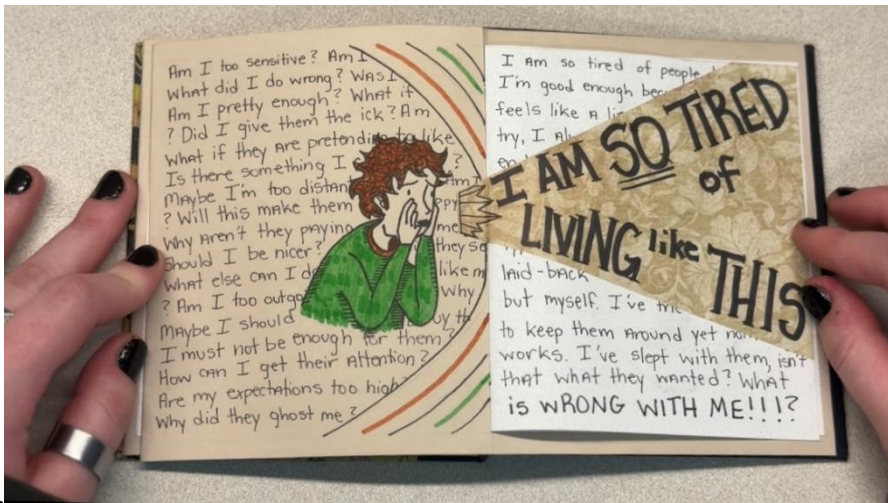
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TRANSCRIPT

I never quite fit into the mold society seemed to expect of me. While my friends reveled in the excitement of casual hookups, collecting partners like trading cards, I found myself retreating into the shadows, feeling like an outsider in my social circle.

It wasn't that I lacked opportunities or appeal. No, it was a conscious choice born out of something more profound than a simple desire for physical connection. For me, it was about preserving something sacred and intimate in a world that often felt superficial and rushed.

I watched as my peers chased after momentary pleasures, their lives a blur of one-night stands and empty encounters. But for me, the idea of sharing such an intimate part of myself with someone I barely knew felt hollow; I became devoid of the emotional depth I craved.

It wasn't that I was opposed to love or romance. On the contrary, I longed for a connection that transcended the physical—a bond built on trust, understanding, and mutual respect. I wanted someone who would see me for who I was beyond the superficiality of a fleeting encounter.

So, while others reveled in the thrill of the chase, I found solace in solitude. I embraced my individuality, refusing to compromise my values to fit in. And though there were moments of doubt, times when I questioned whether I was missing out on something essential, I remained steadfast in my conviction.

In a world consumed by hookup culture, I chose to swim against the current, guided by the belief that true fulfillment could only be found in genuine connection. While my path may be uncommon, it led me to a place of authenticity and self-discovery, where I learned to cherish the beauty of intimacy in all its forms.

CONCLUSION

The modern dating landscape is riddled with complexities, and one of the most prevalent phenomena is hookup culture. While engaging in casual sexual encounters can be exciting, it can also be challenging to navigate without compromising one's emotional well-being. However, I have discovered that authenticity and communication are crucial for successfully navigating this territory. However, I mean face-to-face interaction and communication, not over any digital media. Discussing serious matters over text messages can often lead to misinterpretation and increased frustration. I have set clear boundaries and practiced honest self-reflection to prevent misunderstandings and build stronger connections based on mutual respect and understanding. I also foster open communication with my partners to ensure a healthy and productive discussion. While this is still difficult to accomplish, taking it one step at a time has helped me tremendously. It's essential to remember that the standards of hookup culture should never define one's self-worth, and prioritizing genuine connections over fleeting encounters ultimately leads to a more fulfilling and enriching experience.

APPENDIX

Collage: A collage is a form of visual art in which visual elements are combined to create a new image that conveys a message or idea. Collage comes from the French word "collér," which means "to glue," which is often the primary means of combining images in collage art.

Book Arts: Book Arts are a group of art forms that range from traditional skills such as papermaking, letterpress printing, and bookbinding to new methods of artmaking inspired by the form and function of books.

Book Binding: Bookbinding is the work or skill of fastening loose pages together inside a cover to make a book. All bookbinding was done by hand until the 19th century.

Paper weight: Weight refers to how heavy and thick the paper is. The thicker the paper, the more it can manage. This means that if you select a thicker sheet, it has a better chance of surviving different kinds of paint and even water without curling or breaking apart.

Accordion Folds: An Accordion Fold is a document folding method that uses a series of alternating folds to create multiple panels of a similar size. The parallel pleats formed by the alternating folds resemble the expandable midsection of an Accordion musical instrument, hence the name.

Bone Folder: A bone folder, or folding bone, is a dull-edged hand tool used to fold and crease material in crafts such as bookbinding, cardmaking, origami, and other paper crafts that require a sharp crease or fold.

Folio: An individual leaf of paper or parchment folded in half occurs either loose as one of a series or forms part of a bound volume.

Awl: A stitching awl is a tool that can be used to puncture holes in various materials or existing holes that can be enlarged. It is also used for sewing heavy materials, such as leather or canvas. It is a thin, tapered metal shaft coming to a sharp point, either straight or slightly bent.

Endsheet: The endsheets or endpapers of a book consist of a double-size sheet folded, with one half pasted against an inside cover and the other serving as the first free page. Thus, the front endpapers precede the title page and the text, whereas the back endpapers follow the text.

Bookboard: Book boards are rigid, flat sheets that form the central component of book covers. They may be composed of various materials to support and protect the text block. This page includes information on book boards' history, manufacture, and conservation treatment.

Paper Marbling: Paper marbling is a method of aqueous surface design that can produce patterns like smooth marble or other stone. The patterns result from color floated on either plain water or a viscous solution known as size, then carefully transferred to an absorbent surface, such as paper or fabric.

Carrageenan and Methylcellulose: Due to their reversible thermal gelation properties, methylcellulose (MC) and kappa carrageenan (KCG) are widely used in food and pharmaceutical industries as viscosity modifiers, gelling aids, and film formers.

Subdued/ Muted Color: Muted colors are the opposite of vivid colors, and they are created by simply adding black, white, or complementary colors to a base color, making them grayed, dulled, or desaturated. "Muted colors" refers to colors with low saturation or chroma.

Texture: In visual arts, texture is the perceived surface quality of a work of art. It may be perceived physically, through touch, visually, or both. Our experience of texture in visual art relies on our experience with the physical world.

Illustration: An illustration is a decoration, interpretation, or visual explanation of a text, concept, or process designed for integration in print and digitally published media, such as posters, flyers, magazines, books, teaching materials, animations, video games, and films.

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