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### "No, We're Just Talking": Exploring the "Talking Phase" as an Emergent Dating Phenomenon

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**“Are you guys  
dating?”**

# “No, We’re Just Talking”: Exploring the “Talking Phase” as an Emergent Dating Phenomenon

BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY HUMAN SEXUALITIES LAB

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## INTRODUCTION:

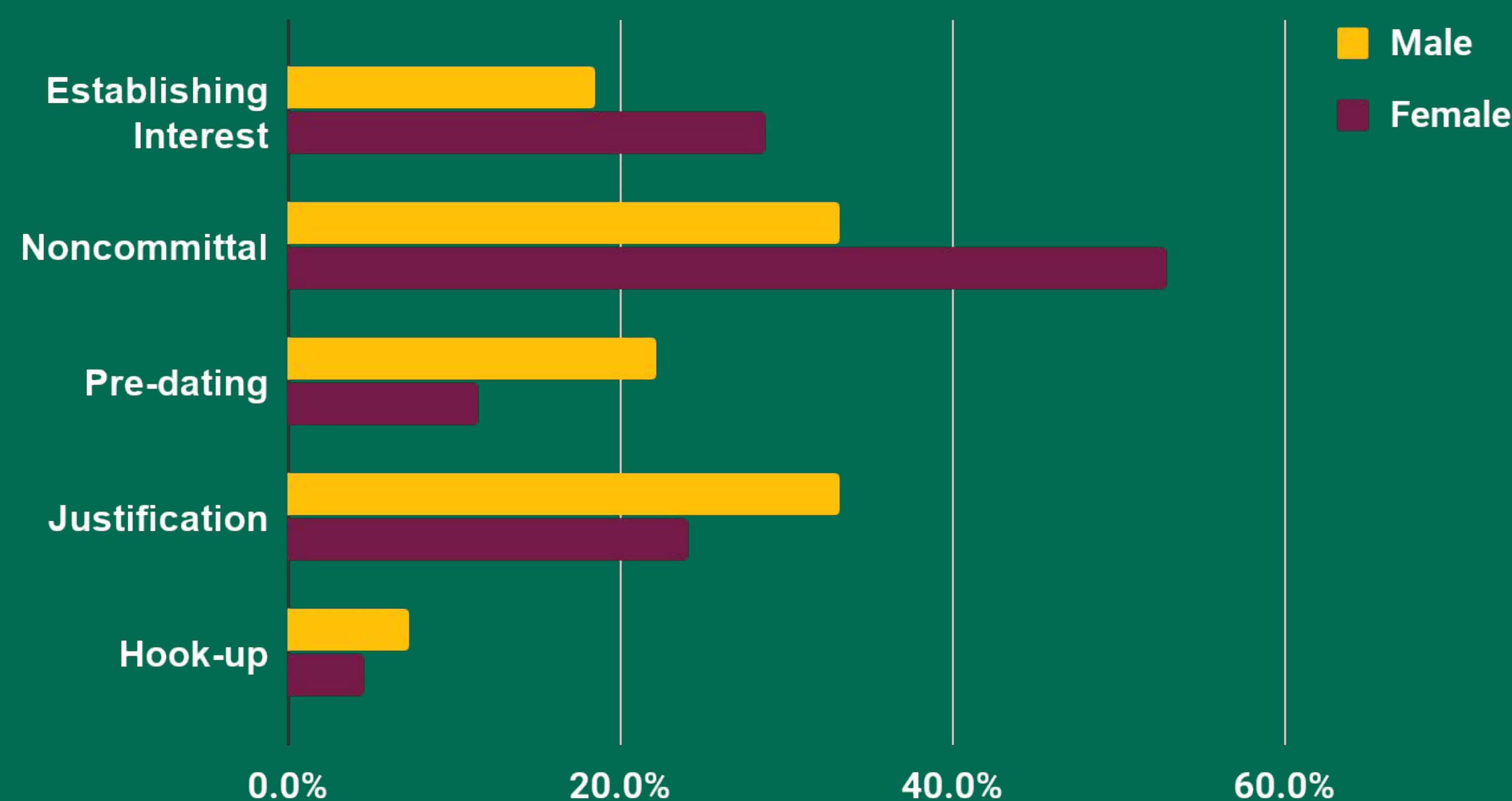
We are investigating a preliminary dating phenomenon of intimacy accumulation colloquially referred to as “just talking”. Despite widespread use of the term, the characteristics of this stage are poorly understood, and there is a scarcity of scholarly literature on the subject. Our investigation seeks to assign an operational definition to this term based on analysis of open-ended responses from college students describing their understanding of this preliminary dating stage.

## METHODS:

Undergraduate students at a mid-sized eastern university were surveyed and received credit for their participation. 75% of participants identified as female and 25% of participants identified as male. Participants were asked to define their understanding of the “just talking” phase, and to suggest what might be the purpose of saying that they are “just talking” to someone. Responses were coded by pairs of researchers and developed into a consensus codebook.

**40.1% of students state that “just talking” means that the relationship lacks labels, exclusivity, and the expectation of commitment.**

## WHY SAY YOU'RE "JUST TALKING" TO SOMEONE?



## WHY DO PEOPLE ENGAGE IN “JUST TALKING”?

- ❖ **Establishing Interest:** getting to know the other party
- ❖ **Noncommittal:** specifying no expectations of commitment or exclusivity; no labels are attached to the relationship
- ❖ **Pre-dating:** testing compatibility and gauging interest from the other party; geared towards ending up in a relationship
- ❖ **Justification:** providing a way to define the relationship to other people; allowing others to know it is an open relationship with no commitment
- ❖ **Hook-up:** establishing a purely physical relationship based around hooking up

## RESULTS:

### ❖ When asked to specify their relationship status (n=126):

- **17.5%** of students identified as “talking to or dating one or more individuals”.
- **8.7%** of students identified as being “in a casual relationship”.

### ❖ When asked why they would use the phrase “we’re just talking” (n=112):

- **40.1%** of students described a partnership lacking labels, exclusivity or commitment.
- **21.9%** of students use this term to explain the relationship to others, and to establish that they are still available to alternatives.

### ❖ When asked to describe what “just talking” means (n=112):

- **26.9% of male students** indicated that “just talking” includes sexual activity, while only **16.3% of female students** concurred.
- **52.9% of female students** said the purpose of “just talking” is to avoid the commitment associated with a relationship, while only **33.3% of male students** concurred.

## CONCLUSION:

Based on survey responses, we found that the largest percentage of students agreed that “just talking” describes an unofficial, unlabeled relationship that includes no expectations of commitment or exclusivity. Responses varied on whether this includes sexual activity, and whether it leads to a monogamous relationship.