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An Investigation of “Just Talking”: Assigning an Operational Definition to a Contemporary Dating Phenomenon

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AN INVESTIGATION OF “JUST TALKING”: ASSIGNING AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION TO A CONTEMPORARY DATING PHENOMENON

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BACKGROUND

College students increasingly use the phrase
“Just Talking” to describe interactions with
potential romantic and sexual partners.

This project explores the meaning and purpose
of “just talking”

STUDY DESIGN

Study 1: We coded qualitative survey
responses from college students describing
their understanding of “Just Talking”

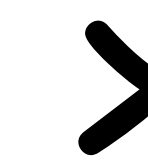
Findings indicated that “just talking” is an
ambiguous relationship phase defined by lack
of labels, commitment, and exclusivity.

Study 2: To further investigate this, we began
conducting same and mixed-gender focus
groups and analyzed conversations for
common themes and discrepancies.

Preliminary findings indicate that most
“talking” occurs over either Snapchat or other
messaging apps, and that its definition and
purpose are unclear



Focus Group Quotes



In terms of talking, that’s just like such an open term that can lead to so much interpretation... Some people take that as being exclusive, some people take that as we’re still hooking up with other people. That leads to problems when no one ever clarifies like what is this. [...] Especially if like different genders have different goals.

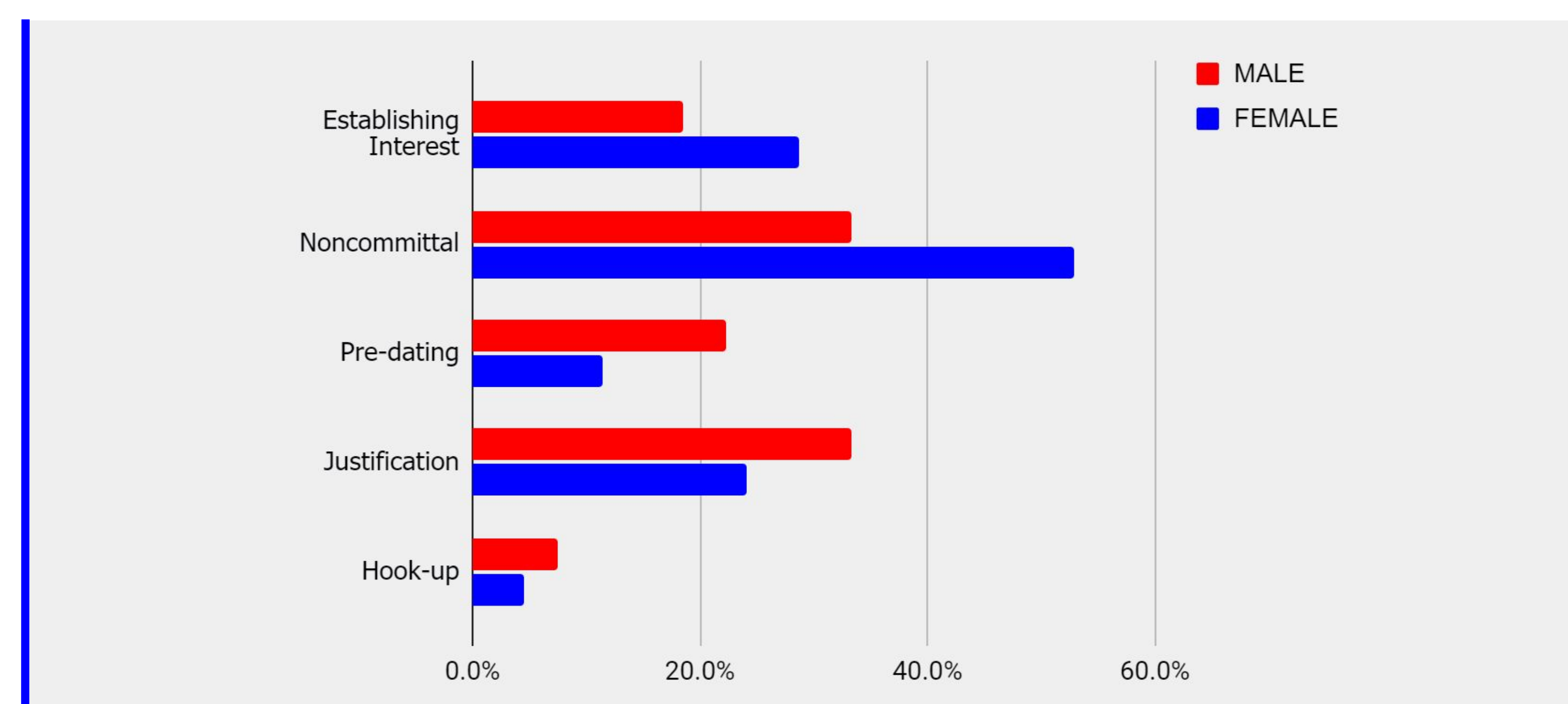
Such a gray area
Kinda just like an excuse to not commit

This is ridiculous like we literally use these terms as an excuse to just shy away from actually committing to someone and like being involved in a relationship

I feel like **girls are definitely more likely to say that talking is something that might lead to a relationship** especially college girls but **college guys in particular** I feel probably **think of it as something that doesn't require commitment** and doesn't necessarily have to lead to commitment. It could definitely be **more of a physical thing with guys** rather than an emotional

I feel like women have a **more emotional aspect** to their relationships than men do

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



DISCUSSION

STUDY 1 SURVEY RESULTS, FALL 2020

Some people have described their interactions with others with the phrase “we're just talking”. What does the phrase “just talking” mean in this context?

After almost 230 responses, our data showed that there is still no consensus

Responses ranged from: **committed** relationship to a **non-committal** relationship, a **physical** relationship to a **non-physical** relationship, and many stated it was a **pre-dating** period

“What might the purpose of saying you’re ‘just talking?’”

Responses ranged from defining the purpose of “just talking” based on traits such as the presence or lack of commitment, how casual the interaction was, or if it involved sexual encounters.

The general consensus surrounding this data supports the lack of a definitive purpose when it comes to “just talking.”

STUDY 2 FOCUS GROUP, SPRING 2021

Preliminary analysis of an all-female focus group revealed that women think **men use this phase to avoid commitment**, and are *less inclined* to view “just talking” as a **means to get into a relationship**

In the first round of focus group data collection, we found that “Just Talking” is:

Purposefully vague

Used to avoid commitment

Initiated based on physical attraction

However, previous data suggests that *women are more likely to use this phase to avoid commitment, and men are more likely to describe “just talking” as a pre-dating phase.*