

## Who's to Blame for Hookup Culture?

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Few things are as universally understood within the Groton gates and misunderstood outside the gates as the term “hookup culture.” I attended Groton for at least four months before someone finally explained it to me. As I understand it, it’s the notable lack of long-term relationships on campus. Rather, students pair up and go “hook up” somewhere, an umbrella term for anything from kissing to having sex.

The student body understands that the school can’t give us a special room and turn the other way, but the general consensus is that this culture needs to change. Our student handbook outlines a belief that “sexual intimacy is not appropriate until students have reached a level of maturity that generally occurs after adolescence,” essentially putting off sexual activity until after Prize Day. The handbook also states that “If students are found engaged in sexually intimate behavior, [...] the school will generally respond to the situation as a health issue.”

So does Groton School actively discourage real, healthy relationships, or does the boarding school environment naturally foster a hookup culture?

We believe it’s mainly the latter option. The Groton administration is trying to encourage healthier relationships, but this dilemma is impossible to resolve instantly. The school acts *en loco parentis*, and school officials are responsible for students’ safety and well-being. Things would get messy real fast if we were all free to have sex in our dorm rooms. Granted, no one has it all figured out, but our school’s responsibility is more to blame than our school culture itself.

Many factors contribute to Groton’s “hookup culture,” and it is a common topic for discussion and complaints. A lack of private spaces, a vicious rumor mill, and a tightly packed schedule... students lament that in a setting such as Groton, actual relationships are almost impossible. We agree; it is hard for a school to find balance between discouraging and enthusiastically allowing time and space for relationships. It is simply the overwhelming culture of boarding schools, not the particular administration of Groton, that is the root of this issue.

There is no clear solution to this dilemma. It will be slow, but we hope that with time and communication we might get closer to finding one.