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PARTYING, DRINKING, AND HOOKING UP: THE THRILLS AND RISKS OF THE MILLENNIAL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

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I. Introduction

College social life is a fascinating and complex phenomenon. 18-22 year olds get out into the real world and experience freedom, discover new opportunities, and encounter ideas and philosophies that can test their presuppositions. Often, this comes with living away from parental/guardian supervision and meeting many new people. While it is an undoubtedly exciting and formative time in one's life, it can also be extremely challenging. The pressure to fit in and managing newfound independence and responsibility proves to be a lot for anyone to handle at once.

To make things more difficult, students are thrown into a world that can mirror broader society in general, but is often quite different from what they have previously experienced. They are surrounded by people their own age, with myriad potential sexual partners, and relatively easy access to alcohol and drugs. Students experience their first real taste of agency, and choices abound.

One common way that people socialize is through partying. This allows students to meet friends of the same and opposite sex in a loose, pleasurable environment while freely enjoying drinking, dancing, listening to music, playing drinking games, experimenting with recreational drugs, and engaging in casual sexual encounters should they wish to. Parties can be extremely popular or commonplace, and the desire to belong and conform to the high status crowd can effectively lead to people feeling a need to participate. As a result, parties have established a place in the "typical" college experience and are worthy of further investigation.

The purpose of this project is to explore college party life, people's experiences of it, and the pros and cons of such activity. By using a social psychological orientation, I will attempt to peel back the layers of youth culture, race, class, gender, sexuality, societal norms/standards,

psychological well-being, and deviant behavior to uncover why people engage in college partying and what they get out of it. And ultimately, is it worth it? Of course this can only be answered subjectively, but that is not the aim of this paper. However, by trying to objectively study the micro and macro factors in play, hopefully a fuller perspective emerges that encapsulates ideology and reasoning from numerous disciplines.

After exploring interdisciplinary research extensively, conclusions will be drawn for future research and possible proactive intervention strategies for universities, communities, and broader society. The author's opinions and views will be proffered after the literature review, along with overall takeaways from the project.

II. Alcohol Consumption: Social Scripts, Demographic Correlations, Binge Drinking, and Location

Clapp et al. (2006) explored the relationship between college students in different drinking environments, alcohol consumption among the locations, and the age of participants (under 21 or 21 and over – drinking age or underage). Surprisingly, students under 21 reported drinking more at their most recent drinking occasion than students 21 and over (279). Both groups reported drinking more frequently at parties than at bars, though. Environments in which many people are intoxicated appeal to young adults and, whether real or perceived, uncontrolled drinking settings are often sought out (282). This could be part of the reason why private settings such as house parties are pursued over public settings such as bars. Bring Your Own Beverage (BYOB) parties, though less prevalent than parties in which alcohol is provided by hosts, were associated with heavier drinking, and there was a correlation between the availability

of illicit drugs and drinking behavior (283). Thus private locales positively correlate to heavier drinking and drug use, both of which can have negative consequences and should be explored further.

Wechsler et al. (1995) analyzed college binge drinking and the potential factors that contribute to or correlate with problematic drinking behavior. They found that being white, male, having highly educated parents, being involved in Greek life, participating in binge drinking as a high school senior, and viewing parties as “very important” were all associated with binge drinking as a college student (925). Incorporating socioeconomic class and education level into future research regarding drinking would be informative and helpful as well.

The researchers also found that age and year in college were not important factors, going against the stereotype that college freshmen are more at risk of dangerous behavior with alcohol than older students (926). Overall, it appears that white men in fraternities with educated parents are the most likely to drink heavily. An important factor to keep in mind is how fraternities recruit and the culture of Greek life; since fraternities stereotypically offer many drinking opportunities to their pledges, this may be more of a Greek life trend than anything else. Perhaps the fact that white males with educated (and presumably middle or upper class) backgrounds report the highest levels of drinking illustrates the demographic typically found in fraternities. However, this is merely speculation.

In the same vein, Page & O’Hegarty (2006) studied the relationship between type of student residence and drinking behavior. They found that students living in fraternities and sororities consumed much more alcohol in an average week than those living in resident halls, apartments, and at home. Alarming, 62.9% of fraternity members and 49.3% of sorority members reported that they drink five or more alcoholic beverages per single occasion during the

average week (26). Greek life members were also more likely to become hung over or sick, to miss class or receive a poor grade on an assignment/test due to alcohol consumption, and to drive a vehicle under the influence, among other negative consequences (28). This also appears to support the popular narrative of Greek life organizations fostering an environment that encourages drinking, arguably to an excessive degree.

The lowest levels of drinking and adverse consequences resulting from drinking were among those in residence halls for men, and apartment complexes for women (28). These environments warrant further inquiry; perhaps there is mere correlation between these living situations and drinking levels, but there could be something to more traditional student housing options that fosters more of a non-drinking atmosphere.

Finally, students tended to overestimate the amount of alcohol consumed by their peers (compared to actual statistics), which implies that students think that other college students drink more than they actually do (27-28). This shows that people's expectations for college party life and alcohol consumption are often unrealistic or blown out of proportion. This could be particularly significant if students' perceptions of college drinking looks like contribute to the way they conduct themselves and the decisions they make pertaining to alcohol use. Especially in environments where peers heavily influence each other, like college, this should be kept in mind. It is important that students' impressions of the degree of drinking activity in college life is often inaccurate, as beliefs about drinking and the reality of the situation can be considerably different.

Bersamin et al. (2012) examined the relationships between college drinking, different locations where people commonly drink, and sexual activity. They found that "...Greek parties, followed by residence-hall and off-campus parties, are high-risk settings for having alcohol-

related sexual intercourse with a stranger relative to other locations” (279). This is somewhat expected, as people often go to these types of parties without knowing a majority of the people there, and drinking is the norm at these events. With that in mind, though, sexual encounters with strangers can be problematic since the people are unfamiliar with one another, and the use of alcohol can add to the risk. Ideally, students would understand these factors prior to putting themselves in potentially precarious situations.

Lyvers et al. (2011) investigated whether the concept of “beer goggles,” when someone is intoxicated and, thus, perceives that a potential sexual partner seems more attractive, holds up scientifically or whether it is really just an urban myth. They found that perceived physical attractiveness positively correlates with heightened blood-alcohol content (BAC), as they predicted (109). Interestingly, the relationship between BAC and attractiveness rating was not substantially different for men (looking at pictures of women they did not recognize) and women (looking at pictures of men they did not recognize) (110). The authors posit that “beer goggles” could then equally affect either men or women in real life situations.

In addition, attractiveness ratings were only significantly different between intoxicated (moderately and highly) and non-intoxicated (placebo, BAC=0%) individuals, whereas those who were only moderately intoxicated (BAC of .01%-.09%) did not differ substantially from those who were highly intoxicated (BAC of .10%-.19%), revealing that the “beer goggles” phenomenon does not become significantly stronger as the person becomes more intoxicated (111). Strengths of the study included use of both men and women, including multiple intoxication levels, and by studying people at natural settings like pubs and campus parties (112).

III. Casual Sex: Norms, Attitudes, Expectations, and Reactions

Monto & Carey (2014) compared survey data from 1988-1996 with results from 2004-2012 to see whether attitudes and standards of sexual behavior have changed with time, in particular with today's Generation Y compared to previous generations. They were surprised to find out that the "...respondents from the more recent era did not report having more sexual partners, more frequent sex, or more partners during the past year than respondents from the earlier era" (611). However, new era respondents were less likely than previous era respondents to be having sex with a spouse or regular sexual partner (612), despite the recurring tendency for people to have at least one consistent sexual partner.

New era respondents were also more likely to report having sex with a friend, an acquaintance, or a casual date within the past year than previous era respondents (612). Echoing a major shift in social attitudes, new era respondents were far more accepting of two same sex individuals having sex than those in the previous era. There was no significant difference between the two eras regarding attitudes toward people having sex between ages 14 to 16, infidelity within marriage, or premarital sex (612). The researchers argue that, if today's college students live in a "hookup culture", then it appears to be similar to what earlier generations lived in (614).

Vander Ven & Beck (2009) reported on how the use of alcohol influenced college students' sexual encounters, and how those students explained and justified these situations. Many people cited the loss of inhibition that alcohol provides as a primary reason for drinking in the first place, and this "liquid courage" often facilitated sexual coupling between students (634-636). Some even claimed that... "Intoxicated sexual encounters are a 'natural' part of the drinking experience," and are, thus, normalized and accepted among college aged youth (638).

Due to the impaired decision-making and heightened risk of sexual assault and rape that comes along with alcohol use, this is alarming.

Perhaps the most interesting findings came from the explanations and justifications provided by students for questionable behavior. Alcohol was used as an excuse for poor decisions, and students often claimed that it made them act in uncharacteristic ways; in the process, this disassociated individuals' intoxicated selves from their "true selves" (639-643). This gives people an out and allows them to avoid responsibility for their actions. All personal accountability is removed when "I was drunk" is considered a legitimate reason for engaging in risky and unwise behavior. Even though students often felt guilty following intoxicated sexual encounters, they could reference alcohol use to neutralize negative feelings and maintain a positive sense of self (641-642).

Alternatively, students took care of each other in social groups to protect against unwanted sexual advances and dangerous situations (643-644). Examples of this included sticking together throughout the night (typically groups of women did this) and intervening when a friend was in a bad position (646). These informal social groups should be further promoted in education and raising awareness of sexual assault on campuses. In doing so, accountability for oneself and close friends is emphasized in a proactive, constructive way.

LaBrie et al. (2014) studied the relationship between alcohol consumption, casual sexual encounters (what they refer to as "hooking up"), the degree of physical contact during the encounter, and individual post-hookup satisfaction. "Hooking up" was deemed to encompass any of the following or a combination: just kissing, touching above the waist, touching below the waist, giving or receiving oral sex, and engaging in vaginal or anal sex. About 55% of the 828 college students who participated reported hooking up sometime within the past year (66).

Among those students, it was determined that, for a majority of them (66%), alcohol was consumed the night of the encounter (67).

They also found that only 26% of students who do not drink in a typical week hooked up, whereas 65% of students who said they drink in a typical week hooked up (66). Clearly there is a strong correlation between consistent drinking and hooking up. About one-third of the students who reported drinking prior to hooking up did so with unfamiliar partners during their most recent hookup. Again, drinking and hooking up with a new partner seem to go hand-in-hand, which seems troublesome.

For males who met their partner for the first time the night of the hookup, about 58% said they were content with the encounter. Females who met their partner for the first time the night of the hookup, on the other hand, were content with the encounter only 34% of the time (68). Thus women are far more likely to have unenjoyable hookup experiences with strangers, as two out of three will not be content following their hookup. Even for men, more than four out of ten will experience displeasure with their hookup experience with a stranger. Both men and women need to be aware of these statistics prior to engaging in what many assume will be an enjoyable experience.

Subsequently, only 43% of females and 50% of males who reported drinking prior to hooking up said that they would still have hooked up with their partners had alcohol not been involved (69). “The combination of alcohol and unfamiliar partners was associated with engaging in advanced sexual behaviors as well as greater levels of retrospective discontentment and regret” (71-72). This is discouraging and worth emphasizing in university awareness and advocacy programs, since so many students do not enjoy their hookup experiences. People should know that before deciding to engage in a sexual hookup.

Owen et al. (2010) explored the correlation between demographic and psychological variables and hooking up. They found that, though the proportions of men and women who had hooked up were similar, the way that men and women reacted to hookup encounters was significantly different (658). 26% of women reported a positive reaction to hooking up, 49% reported a negative reaction, and 25% reported an ambivalent reaction (658). The fact that three out of four women reported negative or conflicted reactions is troubling, as hooking up has been shown to be both quite common and also fairly significant towards shaping one's sense of self. Conversely, 50% of men reported a positive reaction to hooking up, 26% reported a negative reaction, and 24% reported an ambivalent reaction (658-659). While men and women did not significantly differ in regard to proportion of ambivalent reactions, men were twice as likely to have a positive reaction, and women were twice as likely to have a negative reaction. Clearly, the playing field is not even and women are disproportionately more vulnerable to an adverse hookup experience.

They also found that hooking up was related to higher parental income, higher levels of alcohol consumption, and having more positive attitudes about hooking up (658). It seems that alcohol use, personal views, and family background may all contribute heavily to whether one decides to engage in casual sexual encounters, which is to be expected. However, religiosity, psychological well-being, and ethnicity were not significant predictors of having hooked up within the past year (659). Exploring the link (or lack thereof) between religion and sexual behavior in further detail could yield fascinating results in the future. Perhaps less surprisingly, lower psychological well-being correlated with less accepting attitudes toward hooking up. This may have to do with people having poor experiences in the past or low self-esteem impacting someone's willingness to become intimate/vulnerable with another person (659-661).

However, Owen & Fincham (2011) found that both men and women reported more positive emotional reactions to hooking up than negative (325). This conflicts with some other research, but it is at least promising that men and women both potentially have positive sexual encounters. Of the two, men experienced more positive and less negative emotional reactions than women, though, which is consistent with other research. Consistent with social stereotypes, women (65%) were more likely than men (45%) to hope that their hooking up encounter would develop into a committed relationship (325). This reflects how men and women tend to look at casual sex and relationships differently.

Condom use also differed between men and women. For women, condom use was “...associated with less positive reactions and more negative emotional reactions” (327) – whereas men had fewer negative emotional reactions when contraception was used (325). Contraception may symbolize less commitment, honesty, and emotional connectivity, which research shows that women yearn for in relationships. For men, however, the lessened chances of contracting STIs or pregnancy may take away much of the stress surrounding casual sexual encounters, potentially making them more enjoyable. Men also had less negative emotional reactions when they engaged in coital hookups as opposed to non-coital hookups, but the same was not found for women (327). This seems to point to men seeking intercourse during hookups more often than women, probably because it satisfies their intimacy needs; women may seek more emotional and relational closeness with a partner to achieve optimal intimacy.

Grello et al. (2006) delved into the individual factors (primarily gender, age of lost virginity, drug/alcohol use, depressive symptoms, etc.) that affect casual sex behavior in college aged students. Gender and depressive symptoms seemed to be the most decisive factors. They found that males (52%) were significantly more likely to have had a casual sexual encounter than

females (36%). However, they discovered that females, on average, reported transitioning to sexual behavior about six months earlier (in age) than males (259). This is significant because they also found a correlation between age of first intercourse and depressive symptoms, with more symptoms the earlier the age of first sexual encounter (263).

Echoing Glindemann et al.'s (1999) work, the researchers found that the most likely groups to engage in casual sex were women with the most depressive symptomology and men with the least depressive symptomology (265-266). This seems like a negative cycle, as women who have depressive symptoms tend to have casual sex earlier and more often than women with fewer depressive symptoms, and then they tend to rate the experience as less enjoyable than their less afflicted counterparts, and the process repeats. Unfortunately, a couple other factors appear to work against women. As the number of partners that women had increased, there was an increase in depressive symptomology (261). In addition, women who had casual sex were more likely to report negative and less pleasurable first experiences, especially if it was with someone who they did not know (261-264). As other research has shown, more sex with more people and less commitment does not necessarily lead to happier individuals.

Romantic relationship expectations also appeared to differ by gender, consistent with Owen & Fincham's work (2011). Though most participants knew that casual sexual encounters would most likely not lead to a romantic relationship, women (18%) were six times more likely than men (3%) to hold out hope for romantic involvement with their partner moving forward (264). Males (33%), however, were twice as likely as women (16%) to think that the experience would be the beginning of a casual sexual relationship (260). Expectations play a large role in sexual enjoyment and fulfillment, so the fact that men and women differ in what they tend to look for following casual sex is important. These differences also reflect a rift in sexuality by

gender, as women more typically expect or hope for longer lasting, more committed relationships following a casual encounter, but men are more likely to pursue “friends with benefits” arrangements or strictly casual, sexual relationships.

Most participants reported engaging in casual sex with a friend (63%) rather than a stranger or someone they did not know well (37%); thus familiarity with one’s partner seems to be an appealing and sought after trait for intimate encounters (260). Substance use also was significant. Consistent with LaBrie’s (2014) research, almost two-thirds (65%) of the participants reported drug or alcohol use before or during their most recent casual sexual encounter (259). Thus college students seem to be attracted to situations with people they are close with and alcohol and drugs are readily available, acting as social lubricants.

Berntson et al. (2014) investigated the factors that correlate with hooking up and other forms of college relationships. They found that gender, race, alcohol consumption, and perception of peers all had significant impacts on whether/how often students engage in sexual hookups (SHU) or friends with benefits (FWB) relationships. In particular, men, non-Whites, frequent/regular drinkers, and those who think that their friends have had SHUs or FWBs are more likely to engage in SHUs and FWBs; women, Whites, infrequent drinkers/nondrinkers, and those who think that their friends have not had SHUs or FWBs are not as likely to engage in SHUs and FWBs (157-159). While drinking and perception of friends would seem like decent predictors of hooking up or a casual sexual relationship, it is unclear if the other factors can be generalized. Social class, Greek life affiliation, and religion did not affect rates of SHUs or FWBs (160-162).

The researchers also found that for on-going relationships, both committed and “seeing each other” agreements (sexual and not necessarily serious/going somewhere, but more

committed than FWB), only a student's perceptions of their close friends and whether they (peers) engaged in on-going relationships were significant factors (162). Continuing a recurring theme, since peer groups and social perception have a lot to do with how college students conduct themselves and what types of relationships or interactions they pursue, this is not surprising. Students may just tend to be close with those who share similar views and experiences, or one's social environment and friend group(s) could impact the choices people make and the types of behavior they engage in. Regardless, college life as a whole, not just the types of relationships people have, is largely shaped by the people who students choose to surround themselves with.

Armstrong et al. (2012) examined the differences between relationship sex and hookups, particularly from a female perspective. They found that women experienced orgasm more often in repeat hookups (with the same partner) than in hookups with a new partner, and that relationship sex resulted in orgasm most often among the groups (442). Thus familiarity, comfort with one's partner, and mutual understanding of likes and boundaries appear to lead to heightened intimacy and more sexual fulfillment, at least if measured by orgasm. Subsequently, women described enjoying sexual activity "very much" in relationship sex (81%) more often than in hookups (50%); this indicates an overall trend that, in addition to experiencing orgasm more often in relationship sex, women simply enjoy sex within relationships more subjectively than in hookup contexts (454). Plus, women reported orgasming more often when their partners were caring, attentive to their needs, and communicated well (454-455). While not surprising, this is worth noting, especially considering how many people engage in casual sexual behavior with uncommitted, onetime or short-term partners.

Other interesting findings dealt with the sexual double standard and how men and women approached hookups differently. Interestingly, both men and women felt that their partners' sexual pleasure and fulfillment were important to them within a relationship; however, the same was not true for hookups. Women felt concern over their male partners' hookup pleasure, yet men tended to not feel the same way toward their female hookup partners, noting that hooking up was more of a "selfish thing" (455-457). Men took their entitlement to sexual pleasure in hookups for granted, but women often questioned whether they were entitled to the same, which reflects a culture of male dominance and a lack of sexual equality in hookup situations (456). And when asked whether they ever felt like someone respected them less after hooking up with them, 22% of heterosexual men and 54% of heterosexual women said yes (457). Consequently, women are far more likely than men to feel judged or guilty after casual sexual encounters. This is unfortunate, and it unfairly puts criticism and unhealthy standards on women while men tend to be able to do as they wish without facing the same kind of backlash.

IV. Sexual Double Standard: Gender, Stigma, and Navigating the Sexual Landscape

Conley et al. (2012) compared the role of stigma or perceived stigma in acceptance or rejection of casual sex offers, with a particular emphasis on how this differed by gender. They found that, when participants read a hypothetical scenario in which either a man or woman receives an invitation to a casual sexual encounter with a stranger of the opposite sex and accepts, the woman in the scenario received more criticism from participants than the man (396). This was true for male and female respondents, and is consistent with the idea of a sexual double

standard that sees women arbitrarily criticized for engaging in uncommitted casual sex, without males receiving the same sort of negative reaction.

In addition, they found that women were less likely to accept offers for casual sex than men in real life, in large part because they anticipated backlash and criticism for accepting (397-398). Conversely, men were more likely to accept the offer, since they are socially encouraged to do so, and they expected to be perceived more negatively for rejecting (397). Thus women have incentive to reject such offers in order to avoid negative feedback that could result from their decision; men have incentive to accept in order to maintain their masculine status among peers and to avoid appearing as possibly homosexual (399). Overall, women were more affected by the potential for negative feedback/stigma, and this fear impacted their decision-making pertaining to engaging in casual sex with a stranger more than men. This gives men greater freedom than women in sexual contexts, because they do not fear stigmatization in the same way that women do (400-403).

One tangible way that men having more freedom plays out is in dancing and initiation contexts. Ronen (2010) explored grinding, or sexualized dancing, at college parties and the ways in which these scripted interactions reflect oppressive gender norms for women and emphasize heteronormative male pleasure. These “grinding dyads” (one male, one female participant) are almost always formed when a male approaches a female (367). Males are the active ones in these situations, and females are usually stuck in responsive positions – again reflecting the cultural narrative of male dominance/control and female submissiveness (361-362).

This manifests itself when females put themselves on display, often by dancing in groups suggestively, with male onlookers as their intended audience. Males then pick out their partner and they begin dancing together. Ronen notes that this makes females “objects rather than

agents,” since they must wait for males to make a move and show interest, and thus the onus is on the women to be sexually tantalizing enough to attract the male gaze (364-366). Women’s agency in these circumstances is limited to their choice of “...submitting or withholding their bodies from initiating men” (367). This reflects the indirect nature of female control in social-sexual situations – women have choices and options available to them, but usually only in response to male advances.

A key underlying factor to these types of situations comes from the heterosexual relational imperative that women are subject to judgment if they pursue sex outside of relationships or whenever they want it, but men are expected and encouraged to seek out sexual encounters of all kinds, without the same social constraints (373). This is another example of the sexual double standard that directs socially sanctioned relational behaviors among college students.

Allison & Risman (2013) analyzed factors that contribute to attitudes about casual sex; in particular, they found that gender, age, sexual orientation, Greek life membership, and athletic participation all had significant effects on people’s attitudes. Men (25%) were more likely than women (4%) to have a traditional double standard, in which women are judged more harshly than men for hooking up frequently (1197). This is not surprising, but the low percentages reflect a growing shift in egalitarian attitudes among college aged youth; only one quarter of male respondents were harsher toward women than men, and, as expected, very few women were harsher on their female counterparts than men. Women (16%) were more likely than men (6%) to have a reverse double standard, in which men are judged more harshly than women (1197). Again, this is as one would predict, but it is encouraging that percentages of people judging one gender more than another are so low. This can also be seen in the fact that about

50% of participants (men and women) said they would lose respect for both men and women who hook up “a lot,” and almost 25% would not lose respect for either men or women who hook up “a lot” (1196). Thus 3 of 4 participants looked at males and females equally, which is positive. On the flipside, it shows that hooking up is often stigmatized and people still tend to be judgmental of those who engage in casual sexual behavior, despite how common it is.

Other findings included younger participants and non-heterosexual students holding more permissive attitudes than their older, heterosexual colleagues (1201). For men in fraternities, membership was associated with holding a traditional sexual double standard, yet the same was not found for women in sororities (1201-1202). A similar finding was revealed among athletes, as male participation in varsity athletics increased the odds of men having a traditional sexual double standard, with female athletes showing no significant effects (1201). Heterosexual males in traditional hegemonic organizations such as fraternities and athletic teams appear to have the most oppressive attitudes, which alludes to a structural level of influence in addition to individual attitudes. Addressing these incongruences should start at the level of those in authority, who can then positively influence their constituents by enacting a culture of understanding and compassion.

Currier (2013) reported on the ambiguity surrounding definitions of “sex” and “hooking up” among college students, how men and women relate to these terms differently, and the different social expectations regarding sexual behavior for men and women. She found that both men and women struggled to define “hooking up,” and that using “hookup” to describe a sexual encounter provided a way for men to promote their hegemonic masculine identities and for women to guard their own identities by walking the fine line of appropriate femininity (705). Men often did this by emphasizing and exaggerating their sexual escapades (which they are

validated for), while women usually did so in order to downplay their sexual activities and convey that they are sexual, but not promiscuous (722).

Men used “hookup” to refer to a variety of sexual activities, often to exaggerate to their male friends what they had actually done with women (711). Males sought to impress or bond with one another with the retelling of their sexual conquests, and they went out of their way to emphasize their hyper-heterosexual masculinity so as to not leave any doubt of their sexual orientation (721-722). Looking to other men to affirm one’s masculinity was an underlying current, and that can be seen quite evidently in society today. Being a “real man” means satisfying one’s sexual desires and getting what you want when you want it, and men often feel that they must prove this to themselves and others (721).

In particular, women must navigate strict sexual social norms in which they do not want to hook up “too much” (being labeled a “slut”) while still hooking up “just enough” (711). Currier’s study also revealed that sex is something that women are expected to “give up” as “gatekeepers” while downplaying their own desires during sexual encounters (716). A good example of this comes in how men are often on the receiving end of oral sex from their female partners without any expected reciprocation (714-716). On top of that, women usually downplay their sexual activities during retelling in order to avoid social shaming. This all typically results in women’s needs not being met, men’s needs being promoted and fulfilled, and a double standard in which it is perfectly acceptable for men to talk about sex and seek it, while women must regulate their own behavior, speak about sex only in guarded and modest ways, and balance between having “enough” sex without being too “promiscuous.”

V. Removing the Veneer: Rape, Assault, Adverse Health Outcomes, and Risk

Paul & Hayes (2002) asked college students to describe a typical hookup, as well as their best and worst hookup experiences. What happened before, during, and after these sexual hookup encounters was also investigated. The authors concluded that, though hooking up is considered by most to be casual, there really is nothing casual or emotionally uninvolved about “casual sex” (656). Many participants described a high level of emotional ambivalence, often with a mix of positive and negative emotions within a description of one hookup experience (653-654). These conflicting and confusing emotions often can lead to personal distress, doubts, and regret. Sometimes there was even the expectation or hope of a potential relationship following a hookup, particularly for women, which can set people up for harsh realizations and frustration later on (654).

To complicate matters, men and women often had differing degrees and descriptions of regret as well. For females, this stemmed from shame and self-blame for engaging in sexual behaviors that they later wish they had refrained from (655). For men, this came from disappointment in partner choice (girl perceived to be “slutty” or unattractive) (656). This reflects the sexual double standard in which women are unable to avoid stringent standards that inevitably lead to negative reactions after having sex in ways that are not socially sanctioned, and men are able to pursue sex with the most physically attractive women (which is decided arbitrarily) while holding them to unfair expectations – they have to be available, not prudish, but also not too experienced, able satisfying a male’s sexual needs, etc.

Both men and women cited alcohol as a primary cause for acting regrettably (654). Though the loss of inhibition was sometimes referred to as a positive factor, the fact that alcohol significantly factored into many descriptions of worst hookup experiences is noteworthy, though

unsurprising. Not remembering the previous night's events or one's partner, being unable to remove oneself from a negative situation due to intoxication, and engaging in sexual behaviors that one later regrets are all substantial negative aspects of drinking that often are ignored, and this needs to change (652-656).

In addition, though there were some differences between individuals' typical and best hookup descriptions, more difference was found between participants' typical and worst hookup descriptions (653). This means that students' depictions of a typical hookup more closely resembled a "best hookup," giving "typical hookups" a positive spin that may not be deserved. This sets students up for disappointment, especially if their sexual experiences do not match up with the normalized, romanticized hookup experience (656). And when participants did have negative hookup experiences, they were far less likely to share details with their peers (656-657). This has major implications, particularly for women, especially considering the fact that many women said that pressure for females to engage in unwanted sexual behavior categorized their worst hookup experience (654-655). Aforementioned shame, disgust, regret, and low self-esteem often followed, which, according to the study, means that they were subsequently less likely to talk about their experience with others.

This opens the door for a) sexual assault and rape being unreported, since it was a negative experience that people understandably do not wish to talk about, b) psychological harm for those who have bad experiences that do not match up with what they have heard about hooking up, c) a culture of sexual shame and secrecy for any unwanted negative experiences that isolates people who have been through them, and d) legitimate cases of maltreatment being swept under the rug, which helps maintain an unhelpful and unrealistic sexual standard for college students and young adults.

Flack et al. (2007) looked into adverse outcomes from unwanted sex among college students, with a particular emphasis on gender, setting, the type of sexual encounter, and if alcohol was involved. 17% of the students within their sample indicated that they had experienced unwanted vaginal, oral, or anal sex during their college years, and 29% reported having experienced unwanted fondling during that time (145-146). This percentage is alarmingly high, and reveals that these topics need to be explored more fully.

There was a high correlation between unwanted sexual encounters and hooking up, as 78% of the reported cases of unwanted sex occurred during a hookup (150). Students who reported unwanted sexual encounters also reported drinking more often (147). Casual sexual encounters, while not inherently dangerous, seem to be the most likely to lead to such experiences, and alcohol is often involved. Impaired judgment due to alcohol consumption was the most cited reason behind these unwanted sexual encounters (152). This should be emphasized in research and education on the topics. Doing so would give people a more realistic picture of alcohol use, which is needed.

The researchers also found that women are more likely to experience unwanted sexual intercourse or fondling than men (150). Unfortunately, many of these incidents are not reported to campus security or the proper authorities. And since many of the reported incidents occur at campus parties, fraternities, and bars (settings typically controlled by men), women can be more at risk than men (154). The strict and complex sexual social standards that women must navigate could contribute to these incidents not being reported, and social shaming and pressure may also play a part unfortunately.

Armstrong et al. (2006) studied the women on a “party floor” of a prominent public Midwestern university by conducting interviews and a thorough ethnography for the duration of

an academic year. They determined that “party rape” results from fun situations becoming coercive situations (490). Oftentimes, women are blamed for being naïve, making poor decisions, or not being careful enough when they are raped or assaulted, which shifts blame away from the men who mistreat and take advantage of them (493). In addition, men, particularly those in fraternities or houses that host parties, control resources (i.e. alcohol, location of the party), dictate what is worn and how people interact, and are owners of status and influence (494).

The authors argue that sexual assault education needs to “...shift in emphasis from educating women on preventative measures to educating both men and women about the coercive behavior of men and the sources of victim-blaming” (496). This seems like an excellent suggestion as it not only educates both men and women, but it also removes the responsibility merely from women for being “careful” in their drinking and sexual activity, instead looking at the key role men play in these situations as opposed to pointing to “victims.”

VI. Greek Life, Advocacy, and Education

Glindemann et al. (1999) examined the attendees at a Greek life party, and found that students with lower self-esteem became more intoxicated than those with high self-esteem (68). They also found that women with low self-esteem became more intoxicated than men with low self-esteem, which was somewhat unexpected. Interestingly, women with high self-esteem did not become as intoxicated as men with high self-esteem (68-69). These results do not reveal causation, but the correlation is certainly worth exploring. The fact that those with lower self-esteem had higher BAC levels than those with higher self-esteem is alarming though not

completely surprising. Drinking certainly is a fairly common coping mechanism for those struggling with mental health and esteem issues. The gender dynamic also creates intriguing results, since men with high self-esteem and women with low self-esteem were more intoxicated than the other intra-sex groups. If high self-esteem, intoxicated men start approaching low self-esteem, intoxicated women looking for sex, there could potentially be issues, though.

Foubert et al. (2006) explored fraternity culture and fraternity members' attitudes toward casual sex, consent, and alcohol use prior to an intimate sexual encounter, among other topics. Disturbingly, they discovered that most fraternity members do not ask for consent before having sex with female partners (366). Instead, many rely on body language and other indicators to determine whether a potential partner is interested in and safe to have sex with (367). This lack of verbal communication is alarming, and needs to be emphasized in future training and education for fraternity members and other college students. Simply assuming or "reading the signs" opens the door for a plethora of negative outcomes.

Whenever a potential partner was drinking, it was unclear whether they were able to give consent – leading to what many fraternity members referred to as "gray area." Being in some form of relationship with a woman (a potential sexual partner) led to more comfort in asking for her consent and an easier time reading the "signals" she gave off (368). Unfamiliarity with a girl led to more ambiguity, heightened "risk," and increased the odds of a situation becoming "dangerous" (369). Knowing one's partner well allowed for communication surrounding consent prior to party/drinking environments, but also opened the door for assumed agreement between partners (369). Overall, increased education for fraternity members needs to focus on when and how to ask for consent, how alcohol affects decision making, and how to identify problematic signs and behaviors for themselves, partners, and peers.

On a positive note, Moynihan & Banyard (2008) assessed the effectiveness of a sexual violence prevention program with members of Greek life and athletics at a major university. They found that the program worked well overall, with knowledge of interventions, helping attitudes, and bystander efficacy all improving significantly from pretest scores to posttest scores, along with a significant decrease in the number of times that “don’t know” was given as an answer to a knowledge question (32). The effect was greater for female participants than males, but still significant for males overall (34). The emphasis on bystander intervention proved to be a helpful approach, promoting knowledge and awareness within the community. The authors suggest broadening the scope of the program to reach more students, faculty, and staff across college campuses (35). Programs with positive empirical results should be more broadly implemented, as the material provided marks a great first step toward community engagement and participation in combatting these issues.

VII. Conclusions, Discussion, and Author’s Views

Partying is a major component of college social life, and it is crucial to understand who partakes in it, why they do it, and what its effects are. The goal of this project was to shed light on the topic and its contributing factors from a multitude of angles and perspectives. A vast catalog of interdisciplinary research was used to explore the college party scene at both micro and macro levels, and a holistic approach was taken to broaden the scope and complexity of the topic and all that it entails. It would be burdensome to summarize the findings here, but some main points can be gleaned from the project as a whole with an eye toward advocacy, education,

training, and increased understanding, with a particular focus on the students directly involved in the college party scene. Ultimately, there are a lot of things to consider moving forward.

The first and perhaps most necessary point to wrestle with is the sheer breadth of the phenomenon. Drinking on college campuses is extensive and, regardless of where one stands on the issue, it merits consideration in terms of health, safety, awareness, etc. Some estimates say that 80% of college students drink (Neighmond), a shockingly high number. About 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 receive unintentional injuries sustained while they are under the influence of alcohol per year, and about 1,825 students in the same age group will die from unintentional injuries related to alcohol per year as well (“College Drinking”). It also is estimated that about 4.9 million in the same age group will drive under the influence of alcohol each year. 696,000 more per year will be assaulted by another student who has been drinking, and 97,000 more will be victims of alcohol-related rape or sexual assault per year (“College Drinking”). With statistics that high, we have no choice but to take notice and do something about it.

The second point of discussion comes from the idea of uncommitted, casual sex. As mentioned previously, there is nothing inherently wrong with the notion of hooking up, so long as it is consensual and both parties are up for it. But perhaps we need to take a closer look at the numbers. LaBrie et al. (2014), Owen et al. (2010), and Armstrong et al. (2012) all reported that students often had negative reactions to hooking up, many felt judged afterwards, or they had conflicted emotions pertaining to “casual” sex. People should make decisions for themselves, but it is worth noting that many have bad experiences when hooking up. Drinking can be involved, which heightens the risk of poor decision-making. Often a hookup is with a stranger, which tends to be less enjoyable than with a committed, perhaps romantic sexual partner.

People's experiences are often worse than what they expect going in. Some feel shame, remorse, disgust, etc. following the encounter. It goes on and on.

One place to start is to simply paint a more realistic picture of what hooking up looks like among college students, rather than having a rosy stereotype that people look to that is not even accurate or helpful. And people are usually either ill-informed or deliberately not doing their homework. Frankly, that will not cut it. What people deserve and need, though, is to be educated about the pitfalls of drinking, hooking up, and going to parties. That does not mean that we should try to dissuade them; on the contrary, we would be giving people a fuller, more knowledgeable understanding of what the party scene and its effects look like, so they can decide for themselves whether to engage with it or not. College students are adults, and they have agency to do what they want when they want. That will not change regardless of advocacy efforts or making them sit through a sexual/drinking training seminar at freshman orientation. But we owe it to them to do everything in our collective power to guard them from destructive choices, and to proactively reach them before there is trouble and act reactively to provide resources and support when there are problems.

A third important idea is that there is a powerful sexual double standard that disproportionately paints women in a negative light and limits their choices in relation to men. Simply put, men are not judged in the same way that women are on a social level in the area of sexuality. They are often even encouraged to go after what women are discouraged from. Men do not receive the same degree of backlash after engaging in hookups or controversial behavior. Men boast about their sexual escapades, but women have to downplay what they do or what they want because it will not be met with open arms and empathy. Women are often powerless compared to their male counterparts, as sexual scripts call for men to be assertive and dominant,

and women to be submissive and accessible. Women are sexualized at a young age, but men are not. A whole project could be devoted to the ways in which women get the oppressed end of the gender stick.

So what can we do about it? We can educate men and women from an earlier age about gender equality in all realms of life, including sexuality. We can slowly chip away at the idea of male sexual entitlement by holding men to fair, but firm standards that respect and uphold the dignity of women and level the playing field. Men need to know that it is never acceptable to harm women. Sadly we live in a world in which we need to emphasize that men are not allowed to rape women. And there are numerous steps involved in that process, but closing the divide between how we treat men and how we treat women starts with how we relate to one another on an interpersonal level, and goes out from there. This whole conversation is part of a broader narrative in which gender equality is the focus, and sexuality is merely one part of that larger framework. We are starting to see progress and greater awareness, but we have a long way to go.

The fourth key concept surrounds rape and assault, and how we defend against it in the future. On top of that, how we discuss interpersonal sexual violence needs to do a complete 180. A recent New York Times article talked about rape prevention programs that have recently been tested, and they have started to make positive impacts on college communities (Hoffman). But even when there is progress, it seems that we are entrenched in our old ways. “Rape prevention” is such a loaded term, and unfortunately the way it usually manifests itself is through reaching out to women, teaching them self-defense, and educating them about avoiding dangerous situations (as shown in the Hoffman story). Those are all objectively good things. But since when is “rape prevention” a women’s issue?

By pointing to women and saying that the victims are the ones who need work is simply ignorant. Should women know which situations are risky, how to avoid unnecessarily putting themselves in harm's way, and how to protect themselves? Absolutely, but so should men. Those are good traits for all people to know. But why do we point to women when they are raped or assaulted and ask, "What was she doing there?" "Was she asking for it?" "What can she do next time to not get raped?" We do not treat men the same way when they are robbed or assaulted. We don't say, "What was he doing there?" "Was he asking for it?" "What can he do next time to not get robbed/assaulted?" This is not just semantics. It alludes to a huge cultural problem we have in which almost all the responsibility, focus, blame, etc. gets put on women in these situations, but men get a free pass. We can educate, advocate, and instruct all we want, but until this changes, the whole conversation is stuck in neutral and we will not go anywhere.

(In no way am I saying that all sexual assault victims are women; on the contrary, the "victim" label gets tagged onto women far more often than for males, and women are proportionately far more likely to be on the receiving end of assault and rape rather than the other way around statistically, and that only encompasses the cases that are reported. That obviously does not make women powerless or in need of male assistance, or some other pseudo masculine explanation people come up with. Cases being unreported is a whole separate issue, since the shame and secrecy that emanate from sexual assault/rape usually are enough to prevent people from talking about it or seeking the help they need. This is another area that needs reform.)

Our fifth and final point is, how we do move forward? How do we educate? What does this look like on a practical level? We need to start from the top and trickle down. That means advocacy and helpful programs in schools at earlier ages (obviously we need to be smart about

when we talk to kids about rape or assault, so determining the correct age to begin training is crucial), knowing who is most at risk, and being PROACTIVE. That means starting and perpetuating a conversation about gender violence now, not when an NFL player is suspended for beating his girlfriend. How many more cases of someone being raped or assaulted need to occur before people start noticing? Better yet, before people start caring? This apathetic malaise that we seem to be in on important issues until we are shaken from our ignorant stagnancy needs to be a thing of the past. Maybe it is our individualistic culture, but since when do we need to be persuaded to care about the good of other people? We need to start practicing love and empathy because it should be something we all have. Our world is a safer, brighter, and better place when people look out for one another and every life matters equally.

This project has been eye opening to say the least. I'm in awe of how broken our culture, society, and world are. But that isn't in doubt; what matters now is where we go from here. I majored in sociology with a minor in psychology because the topics fascinate me. They deal with real people and real issues, and they force you to think for yourself and empower you to take a stand against injustice, oppression, and pluralistic ignorance. I have a responsibility to do something about the wrongs I see, because if I don't, who will? It's time to do away with the status quo, because the status quo isn't working. Just turning on the news or spending ten minutes online will shatter the illusion that everything is right in the world. But again, that isn't the point. The key is to take that knowledge and to find your niche in society, and start to play your part to change things. I think my time as an undergraduate student has equipped me to do that, so now I need to start practicing what I'm preaching. And if you're reading this, what are you waiting for?

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