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Hooking up generally involves casual sex with noncommittal partners. Hooking up is prevalent on college campuses today and can negatively affect the identity development of female students. The authors examined this phenomenon with a feminist developmental perspective, evaluating hooking up in the context of sexual risk taking with physical and psychosocial consequences.

Developmentally, college students are at a point in their lives where they are beginning to differentiate from their families and explore new identities (Arnett, 2000). This exploration can include experimenting with new sexual behaviors. Today, college students are engaging in more casual sexual interactions that may or may not involve an intimate relationship, and these more casual sexual encounters typically involve alcohol, resulting in an increase in sexual risk taking among this population (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). These casual sexual interactions, or hooking up, can result in health consequences as well as identity confusion, low self-esteem, and a sense of discouragement among college women (Gilmartin, 2006; Paul & Hayes, 2002).

This article examines the relationship between the hooking-up culture of casual sex and the identity development of female students on college campuses today. We view this potential conflicted relationship from a developmental and feminist perspective, evaluating hooking up in the context of sexual risk taking with physical and psychosocial consequences. Factors influencing this behavior among female college students and recommendations for how college campuses can address this phenomenon are addressed.

HOOKING UP AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Hooking up is broadly defined as sexual activity with a casual partner ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse (Bogle, 2008; Stepp, 2007). There is some

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discrepancy in that some studies indicate that hooking up may be defined as casual one-time sexual encounters with strangers (Lambert et al., 2003; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000), whereas other studies suggest that hooking up may often occur repeatedly with the same partner, or someone considered a friend, with no expectation of commitment and little communication (Bogle, 2008; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Stepp, 2007). In all cases, there is a clear lack of expectation of an ongoing relationship,which is characterized by casual sexual behavior that may or may not include intercourse with strangers or friends (Bogle, 2008; Grello et al., 2006; Stepp, 2007).

A number of studies have found that between 56% and 88% of college students (ages 18 to 24 years) are engaging in hooking up, with more men than women reporting sexual intercourse during a hookup (Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Lambert et al., 2003; Paul et al., 2000). Erikson's (1968) psychosocial stage theory of development suggests that late adolescence to young adulthood is a time for resolving issues of identity and moving into the crisis period of intimacy versus isolation. Given this theoretical understanding of identity development, it is understandable how traditional college-age women (ages 18 to 24 years) may struggle with hooking up for sexual pleasure. In fact, recent studies indicate that these stages are more intertwined than consecutive and that women struggle with integration of their identity more than men do (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Getzels, 1985; Paul & White, 1990).

In spring 2008, the American College Health Association (ACHA) conducted the National College Health Assessment surveying a total of 80,121 college students (65% female) and found some surprising results regarding the sexual behavior of college students (ACHA, 2009). Of the total sample, 76.3% reported having had zero to one sexual partner in the past school year, whereas 94.6% perceived that the average student had had vaginal sex one or more times in the past year. On the basis of these findings, perceived norms of sexual intercourse are much higher than the reality. Of the sexually active (vaginal intercourse) female students, only 36.8% reported using condoms and only 41.6% reported using birth control pills.

The traditional college-age woman is engaging in riskier sexual behaviors and is developmentally struggling with how to integrate her new identity with the existing hooking-up culture on college campuses. A discussion of the feminist perspective on gender role expectations of women coupled with psychosocial factors influencing sexual risk taking reveals an elemental struggle many college women may experience with casual sexual encounters and the need for intimacy and relationship.

THE INFLUENCE OF FEMINISM AND GENDER ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Three areas of inquiry are especially helpful in understanding how gender issues are involved in sexual behavior among young adults in the current college environment known as the *hooking-up culture*. First, the relevant historical

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context is the women's movement, which began with the suffragists of the 19th century who advocated for basic rights that would recognize women as full citizens rather than as property or appendages of their husband. In the 20th century, the second wave of the women's movement continued the struggle for full equality under the law, as well as sexual liberation from restrictive norms that had governed sexual behavior for women (Dicker, 2008). Liberal feminism, the dominant thread in this movement, defined empowerment for women as achieving full, fair, and equal participation in the socioeconomic enterprise. This agenda meant ignoring or minimizing gender differences. The next generation—third wave feminists—embraced the legacy of their real and metaphorical mothers in their own distinctive fashion. Believing that traditional feminists had rejected or compromised their femininity, third wave feminists reclaimed "babehood" for themselves, complete with lipstick, high heels, sexy clothes, and pink "girl stuff" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000), even while extending their aggressive, independent spirits into the sexual arena where hooking up was intended to be an expression of sexual freedom, equality, and attractiveness.

Nevertheless, hooking up presents some problems for young women because their psychosocial developmental processes differ in significant ways from those of young men. Object relations theorists, notably Nancy Chodorow (1978), posit that girls and boys develop different relational capacities and senses of self as a result of their identification with their first object of attachment and their primary caregiver—their mothers. Because a girl's identity is continuous with this same-sex parent, she does not have to separate from her in the same way boys do. To shift their identity to their fathers and identify as a male, boys must give up their attachment to and identification with their mothers, thereby rejecting and repressing their sense of connectedness and relatedness. Thus, boys and men forge their identities in autonomy and separateness, whereas girls develop in a context of closeness and connectedness. The result is that young "adult women find comfort and solace in connection and are frightened of separation, [whereas] men find security in independence and are frightened of attachments which they fear will obliterate their identity as males" (Tavris, 1992, p. 81). Self-in-relation theorists also "propose that women and men differ fundamentally in their needs for attachment and separation, and in their valuing of intimacy and connection in relationships" (Worell & Remer, 2003, p. 90).

Carol Gilligan (1982) pointed out that "male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation" (p. 8), but because societal norms favor the male experience of self, "when women do not conform to the standards of psychological expectations, the conclusion has generally been that something is wrong with the women" (p. 14). Within a society that differentially rewards the masculine, it is understandable that the less powerful group would try to adopt those masculine behaviors. The double standard of sexual behavior has long been a focal point for feminism's challenging of accepted gender norms. Yet "the new sexual freedom for women seems

to have rather definite limits. Rather than being a gender-neutral freedom, it is freedom with a male bias" (Crawford & Unger, 2004, p. 339), which can ultimately disappoint, lower self-esteem, and become counterproductive because it feels inauthentic and incomplete.

Embracing a sexual paradigm based on aloofness, emotional detachment, indifference, and insouciance may very well be creating barriers to the healthy development of young women (Stepp, 2007). Unfortunately, this shift in the paradigm for women within the hooking-up culture of college campuses along with other factors influencing sexual risk taking may result in psychosocial and health consequences for college women.

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING HOOKING UP FOR COLLEGE WOMEN

In addition to the developmental and gender role expectations challenging college women, there exist in the research literature a number of studies that identify psychosocial factors that predict or influence sexual risk taking and/or hooking-up behavior. These factors need to be considered in addressing the hooking-up culture and healthy development of college women.

Two of the most common predictors of sexual risk-taking behavior among college women are alcohol usage and perception of peers' behavior (Kaly, Heesacker, & Frost, 2002). Female college students who engage in heavier or binge drinking are more likely to engage in riskier sexual behavior, which is generally defined as not using condoms and having a number of sexual partners (Lambert et al., 2003). Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009) found that psychological disinhibition (primarily produced by alcohol usage) was a significant factor in sexual risk taking and that 80% of respondents reported that alcohol usage was involved in their hooking-up experiences.

A survey conducted by ACHA found that college students believed that their peers were having many more partners than they were themselves (ACHA, 2009). Student perception of the sexual activity of others tends to be inflated as compared with self-report of how sexually active the individual behaves (Bogle, 2008; Lambert et al., 2003). Lambert et al. (2003) used the concept of pluralistic ignorance to describe this phenomenon, suggesting that within a group, individuals tend to perceive that their beliefs and actions differ from their peer group's beliefs and actions. The individual tends to yield to the group norm. So for the college woman, she realizes that her values regarding sexual behavior may differ from those of her friends, yet she may hook up or go along with the norm of her group because of a desire to fit in despite her own discomfort with or disapproval of the action. It is interesting that college students who perceive that their peers are having unsafe sex tend to engage in riskier sexual behavior, but college students who actually talked with their peers about sexual activity and condom use tended to engage in less risky sexual behavior (Rit-

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tenour & Booth-Butterfield, 2006). This study suggests that communication about sexual activity, rather than believing assumed perceptions of peers, may reduce sexual risk taking.

Access to STD/HIV prevention information, riskier lifestyle choices, and reputational status are also factors influencing the hooking-up culture among college women. In the ACHA survey, only 35.8% of college students received STD prevention information on their college campus (ACHA, 2009). The lack of access to prevention information is inversely correlated to an increase in STDs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2008). Riskier lifestyle choices have also been identified as predicting sexual risk-taking behavior (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1988). Students who do not use seat belts regularly, smoke, or have more sexual partners are more likely to engage in riskier sexual practices, such as not using condoms or using drugs and/or alcohol with sex. Gender bias also compounds the challenge of reputational status for young college women. Bogle (2008) found that many young men receive a positively valued status from multiple hookups, whereas women are susceptible to a bad reputation. Once the bad reputation is established, women may engage in riskier sexual behavior.

Finally, there are numerous studies that suggest that self-efficacy with sexual communication (negotiating sex and safer sex behavior) influences hooking up. Women who cannot discuss sex and negotiate safer sex practices with a potential partner tend to engage in much riskier sexual behavior. Feeling confident about one's ability to communicate with a potential partner about sex, condom use, and safer sex practices is essential in reducing risk-taking behavior. (Bruhin, 2003; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Zak-Place & Stern, 2004).

Developmental needs, gender bias differences, and psychosocial factors as discussed here indicate that female college students may be experiencing conflict when negotiating sexual behavior within the current college hooking-up culture. This conflict may result in hindering healthy development and have psychosocial and physical health consequences for college women.

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF HOOKING UP

Studies are beginning to explore the connection between casual sexual interaction and personal well-being (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Grello et al., 2006). Women tend to prefer relation to others and report a desire for intimacy or connection with a sexual partner (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Grello et al., 2006; Paul & White, 1990); however, studies with college women indicate that many tend to delay the desire for a committed relationship, in part acknowledging that young men are less interested in such a relationship (Bogle, 2008; Stepp, 2007).

This tendency to engage in hooking up, despite a desire for greater communication and the intimacy of a relationship, may create psychological distress for college women. Grello et al. (2006) found persistent depressive symptoms

related to engaging in casual sex among young women. Another study found lower self-esteem and higher levels of guilt and anxiety associated with hooking up and casual sex among college students (Paul et al., 2000). Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, and Gridley (2003) found that stress-related symptoms and illness are more likely among women who lack the experience of an intimate relationship. These significant studies indicate that college woman engaging in ongoing casual sex may be experiencing greater depression, lower self-esteem, guilt and anxiety, and stress-related illnesses.

In considering the physical health consequences of sexual behavior, STDs are one of the major health concerns in the United States today, with young people, ages 15 to 24 years, accounting for almost half of all new STD infections (Weinstock, Berman, & Cates, 2004). In addition, young adults, ages 13 to 24 years, represent about half of all new HIV infections (Hall et al., 2008). Chlamydia, gonorrhea, human papillomavirus, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS are the diseases that can most adversely affect the health of female college students. In 2008, women, ages 20 to 24 years, and female adolescents, ages 15 to 19 years, had the largest reported number of chlamydia and gonorrhea cases when compared with any other age group. In addition, the syphilis rate among women increased 36% from the previous year (CDC, 2008). Untreated STDs are estimated to cause at least 24,000 women to become infertile each year in the United States. These statistics are of concern in the context of the hooking-up culture in that only 36.8% of sexually active college women are using condoms for protection (ACHA, 2009).

For the traditional college-age woman, the personal struggle of developing a new identity is complicated with a hooking-up environment that challenges her need for intimacy and relationship. As cited in the literature, the result of this conflicted developmental period may lead to psychosocial and physical health consequences, such as depression, anxiety, lower self-esteem, and the contraction of STDs. Understanding gender bias, societal expectations, and predictors of sexual risk taking among today's female college student is essential in supporting traditional-age female college students during this critical stage in their identity development. When addressing healthy relationships and counseling prevention programs for female college students, campuses need to consider these critical areas of influence.

COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Given the psychosocial and health consequences of hooking up and casual sex, coordinators of college prevention programs may need to consider interventions to address this issue. We recommend a more comprehensive approach to exploring the issues of healthy relationships and the hooking-up culture on college campuses. Well-researched, evidence-based HIV and STD prevention programs provide guidance for prevention programming on sexual risk taking

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and the hooking-up culture. Effective HIV/STD prevention programs offer curricula to promote sexual behavior change by addressing gender and power differences; developmental identity; sexual communication; self-esteem building; assertiveness training; self-efficacy in communication and condom usage; and open dialogue about perceived peer norms, values, and beliefs. These programs offer a safe environment to discuss actual sexual activity and can be implemented through individual counseling and/or group sessions. The programs may need to be altered slightly to align with a college setting. Established, evidence-based programs to be considered include the following: VOICES/VOCES, Project Respect, social skills training, healthy relationships, Popular Opinion Leader, cognitive behavior skills training, Be Proud! Be Responsible! and safer sex skills building (CDC, 2009; Kelly & Kalichman, 2002).

The more successful HIV/AIDS prevention programs that promote healthy sexual relationships from a developmentally sound perspective typically adhere to the Social Learning Model of behavior change (Bandura, 1986) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The integration of both theories addresses behavioral intention; personal attitudes about the behavior; the influence of peer, social, and gender norms; developmental identity; self-reflection; self-efficacy in communication and behavior change; modeling of new behaviors; and the practicing (role plays) of new healthier behaviors.

A program using this theoretical approach would allow young women to talk openly in a safe environment about their thoughts, beliefs, values, and decision making related to hooking up, gender issues, and their own identities. The focus is on how to develop healthier sexual communication to reduce the potential conflict that the hooking-up culture creates. Strategies include specific role plays and practice modeling of communication regarding sexual negotiation, condom usage, and safer sex practices. Also, given the findings, a discussion of substance use in sexual situations should be integrated into the interventions. In addition to programming, learning can also occur through individual sessions or through the influence of more casual conversations with peers (Kelly & Kalichman, 2002).

Providing speakers and programs to the college campus may be another strategy for starting the dialogue on healthy relationships and sexual communication. An outside, one-time speaker can reach more students and ignite an interest in the topic. Several speakers and programs are available for campuses from the college speaking circuit and national programming resources. ACHA (www.acha.org), the American College Counseling Association (www.collegecounseling.org), and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (www.naspa.org) are three national organizations that can assist with resources in identifying programming and speakers. In addition, The BACCHUS Network, a nonprofit agency, provides resources in health education and prevention. This agency provides programs and linkages for peer educators on college campuses. One BACCHUS program of interest is SmarterSex.org.

Also, the College Agency (www.thecollegeagency.com) provides speakers and artists for college campuses. Let's Talk About "IT" (www.kellyandbecca.com) is a program on sexual assault that addresses sexually healthy relationships and communication. Starting the conversation on healthy sexual relationships on the college campus will foster greater awareness and, one hopes, shift the current peer norms of the hooking-up culture.

A variety of settings for speakers, conversations, and programming need to be considered. Some proposed approaches include offering discussion groups in residence halls, drop-in centers, women's centers, or health education programs. Student Affairs staff might also consider providing group opportunities for sororities or other women's organizations on campus, working with the counseling center or health promotion outreach staff. Conversations might also be approached in a variety of related academic course settings, such as gender studies, sexual health, media/communications, and human development courses. Each of these suggestions requires education of faculty, staff, and peer leaders. This involves raising awareness among students, faculty, and staff of the need for such dialogue; providing an overview of the gender and development challenges raised in this article; and offering tools for addressing the issue. The aforementioned resources can assist in providing these tools.

One of the challenges in addressing this issue through counseling services is the stigma associated with seeking counseling support, particularly via a campus counseling center (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). College women are reluctant to seek education or support because of this stigma. Counseling center staff, much like health center staff, may need to consider outreach to women that involves a more creative and integrative approach to engaging women in their current activities on campus, rather than expecting women to come through their doors (Parcover, Mettrick, Parcover, & Griffin-Smith, 2009).

Finally, faculty and staff who have regular contact with students should also be educated, because they are more likely to encounter students with concerns and could have a positive impact on how students cope (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). ACHA (2009) found that when asked about believability of sources of health-related information, students ranked health educators and faculty above parents and peers in believability. This finding suggests that college campus prevention programs may need to reach out to faculty and staff in creating a more innovative and effective program for addressing healthy relationships and the hooking-up culture among college women.

Further study is recommended in developing a greater understanding of the hooking-up culture and its impact on the development of college women. Research on this topic would yield strategies for addressing this challenging issue among college women. On the basis of the research, specific evidence-based prevention programs for this population and the college setting could be implemented.

Gender role expectations and psychosocial influences on sexual risk taking within the hooking-up culture of college campuses may result in hindering

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healthy development. In addition, the cultural practice of hooking up yields psychological and health consequences for college women. Continued research, awareness, education, and eventual programming will enable college campuses to begin addressing this phenomenon and assist in the healthy development of young women.

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