

**HANGING OUT AND HOOKING UP:
AMBIGUITY IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY
CAMPUS CULTURE**

by

Jennifer Gallo

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Degree in Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology with Distinction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	VI
ABSTRACT	VII
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS	3
THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW	7
INTRODUCTION	7
THE STUDY OF SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES	7
<i>Sociology, Gender and Sexuality</i>	9
<i>Feminism, Gender and Sexuality</i>	11
<i>Anthropology, Gender, and Sexuality</i>	13
U.S. COLLEGE CULTURE	19
<i>College Community Building</i>	20
<i>Space and Liminality</i>	22
DEFINING THE “HOOK UP”	27
<i>Ambiguity of Hooking Up</i>	30
AMERICAN CULTURE AS A CONTEXT FOR RAPE	32
<i>Rape on College Campuses</i>	32
<i>Acquaintance and Party Rape</i>	33
CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THEORY: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE RESULTS FOR POLICY	36
DATA	38
INTRODUCTION	38
SECONDARY CASE MATERIAL 1: ARMSTRONG, HAMILTON & SWEENEY	38
<i>Introduction</i>	38
<i>Methods</i>	39
<i>Results</i>	40
<i>Conclusion</i>	46
SECONDARY CASE MATERIAL 2: WADE & HELDMAN	47
<i>Introduction</i>	47
<i>Methods</i>	47
<i>Results</i>	48
<i>Conclusions</i>	52
SECONDARY CASE MATERIAL 3: SCHIFFMAN	53
<i>Introduction</i>	53
<i>Methods</i>	53
<i>Results</i>	55
<i>Conclusion</i>	56

PRIMARY DATA 4: CURRENT STUDY.....	56
<i>Results</i>	56
ANALYSIS	63
INTRODUCTION	63
PROBLEMATIC FEATURES OF THE HOOKUP CULTURE	64
<i>Anticipation of College Party/Hookup Culture</i>	64
<i>Going out/ Hooking up as a necessary ritual in liminal space</i>	65
<i>Trust/ community</i>	66
<i>Hookup culture as Primary way in which sex occurs</i>	67
<i>Male Control of parties</i>	68
<i>Normalization of Male Sexual Coercion</i>	69
<i>Ambiguity surrounding Hooking up & Ambiguity surrounding Sexual Assault</i>	69
<i>Sexual Assault “Prevention”</i>	71
CONCLUSION.....	72
CONCLUSION	75
POTENTIAL POLICY CHANGES	75
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.0.....	64
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ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the “hookup culture” on the University of Delaware campus in an attempt to reveal how closely the associated behaviors are linked with the occurrence of rape and sexual assault. I am suggesting there is a causal relationship between the ambiguity of “hook ups” and party rape. My prediction is that the “hookup culture”—the dominant interacting set of cultural values, scripts and range of actions in which young heterosexual men and women engage in sexual relations with one another—creates conditions in which rape and other forms of sexual violence are at significant risk of taking place.

I compare secondary literature with my own data collected through open-ended interviews with undergraduate students from the University of Delaware, in order to identify a series of variables of the hookup culture that may have the potential to create dangerous situations for participants. The goal is first, to better understand hook up culture and behaviors related to it and second, to identify a point of intervention in this campus culture so that more effective policies and procedures may be employed to reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In this study, I examine the increasingly visible “hookup culture” on college campuses in order to understand how the associated behaviors might be linked with the occurrence of rape and sexual assault. Hooking up is the primary way in which young men and women engage in sexual activity while in college. I am referring to it as a hookup culture, rather than just hooking up, because it is not simply about engaging in sexual activity; it is a way of life in which many aspects of student activity revolve around this activity and the behaviors associated with it.

My primary argument is that there is a relationship between the ambiguity of hooking up and sexual violence. My prediction is that the “hookup culture” creates conditions in which rape and other forms of sexual violence are at significant risk of taking place. The goal is to better understand hook up culture and behaviors related to it, to at least begin to identify what the conditions in hook up culture are that might give rise to sexual violence, and to identify a point or process of intervention in this campus culture so that more effective policies and procedures may be employed to reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

In this paper, I will attempt to identify the main variables that cause the

hookup culture to have the potential to be problematic by comparing the results of my primary data with the results of other studies. In Chapter 2, I will describe the methodology used to collect primary data. Chapter 3 will provide the reader with an extensive theory and literature review. Chapter 4 will present the data collected from primary and secondary sources. Chapter 5 will discuss and analyze the variables that came out of the data sets. Chapter 6 will suggest policy changes and will suggest point of further research.

This is only a preliminary study, as this topic is dense and there is only so much time allotted to complete a senior thesis. Despite its preliminary nature, it is suggestive of areas in which more research should to be done and can be used to justify larger, more in-depth research. If future studies can be based on the results of this study, more effective prevention programs might be implemented.

Chapter 2

METHODS

In conducting this study, I employ both a classic review of the theoretical literature and draw upon the results of my own primary research using ethnographic methods. Most of the literature was obtained through the holdings and databases of the Morris Library at the University.

In my ethnographic research, I conducted thirteen open-ended interviews of a small judgment sample of students from the University of Delaware¹ from October to December of 2011. These open-ended conversations encouraged students to define and discuss concepts such as “hooking up” and involved follow up questions based on the topics the interviewees brought up. The content of the open-ended, unstructured interviews took the form of conversations about social relationships between different genders at the University of Delaware. Those conversation topics were defined by participants, not the researcher, and ranged from non-participation in the hookup culture to full participation, from positive experiences to sexual assault and rape. No questionnaires were administered, and no statistical data was gathered. Instead, this was an interactive exploratory approach to identifying cultural concepts

¹ The University of Delaware as a universe for my sample is further discussed in the methods section of the description of my preliminary ethnographic study.

and their meanings from the points of view of participants in a certain way of life, in this case, the way of life of students at the University of Delaware.

Basic demographic information was collected, such as college class, ethnic background, state of residence, involvement in college sports or Greek Life, gender, sexual orientation, family upbringing, employment status, living situation, and others for the purpose of understanding the scope of the students involved and where they are coming from.

I employed judgment sampling methods in order to recruit interviewees. In judgment sampling, the researcher decides the purpose they want a participant to serve, and then seeks an individual who meets this criteria. As the study is being conducted, the researcher learns in the field the next relevant units of analysis to seek. In this case, I wanted to speak with any student at UD who is over the age of 18 and who can speak about hooking up. The first participant to respond to my call for research was female freshman, so I then began to ask in places where more men and upperclassmen would be.

In order to recruit participants, I utilized popular social media websites to “invite” students to participate in my study. Once they revealed interest in participating, I sent them a consent form and described in full detail the intentions of my research. I also went to class lectures and gave a brief description of my project. I handed out my consent form and passed a sign up sheet around. Students who were interested and signed up for an interview returned the consent form when we met.

Because this was a judgment sample, it is non-generalizable for three reasons. First, my participants were not selected to be representative of all college students. Related to this, given the way I recruited participants, those who did participate were self-selected in the sense that they volunteered to participate, and others who knew about the study did not. This is a common characteristic of participants in ethnographic research. While they definitely are not statistically representative of a universe, the potential qualitative cultural perspectives and depth of information they often provide the researcher are the positive trade offs in relation to the limitations on their degree of representation of that universe. These qualities often provide the qualitative information to better define a research problem and the variables in it in order to later conduct more productive research with statistically representative sample participants to yield more meaningful quantitative results. I saw the training in ethnographic field methods as one of the primary training goals of doing senior thesis research. In my research, the judgment sample participants were more likely to be female, from the Mid-Atlantic region, living on-campus and of upper-middle classes. Second, participants in my study were likely to be interested in sharing their perspective on hooking up due to their non-participation, or modified participation, in hooking up. They often felt they had an alternative view to share, and that made them more likely to want to talk about it. Those who felt they fully participated in this culture might have nothing to add to or gain from this experience. Thirdly, with a sample of thirteen, I could not possibly get a comprehensive report of the full range of perspectives exist on this campus. Due to time constraints, a larger

sample was not possible. Though the results are not generalizable, they are useful and provide some insights, especially in the context of comparison with other studies involving larger samples researched over a longer time period.

Chapter 3
THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, I am examining the “hookup culture” on the University of Delaware campus in relation to rape and sexual assault. The primary goal of my study is to identify variables that, in combination, might work together to create a situations in which sexual violence or rape may be a result of the dynamics of hooking up itself. The secondary goal is to identify an intervention point or process that might provide a more effective pathway toward prevention.

This chapter offers the reader an overview of the existing theoretical literature most directly relevant to the study at hand. It primarily addresses theories concerning sex, gender and sexuality in the social sciences—particularly in sociology, women’s studies and anthropology. The purpose of this discussion is to familiarize the reader with the theoretical frameworks that include elements of the approach I am taking to the “hookup culture.”

The Study of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in the Social Sciences

The topics of sex, gender and sexuality have recently become more acceptable in academic research. The subject has expanded in scope from its original

place in the realm of biomedical and sexological investigation, to its current position throughout a wide range of the social sciences (Aggleton and Parker 2010: 1).

According to Aggleton and Parker, the social sciences—such as history, anthropology, sociology and psychology—are adept at seeking new ways of understanding a world in which sex and sexuality are becoming highly visible (2010:1).

In our rapidly changing society, there has been an increasing amount of attention—in the media, academic research and in policy—placed on sex and sexuality. This, in part, is due to a combination of a few factors, including a series of social movements around issues of sex and sexuality and the growing concerns for issues related to sex, such as population growth, reproductive health, and sexual rights. As sexual topics prove to be increasingly relevant in today's society, so too does the concern to investigate and understand sexual topics.

Rather than dealing primarily with demographic representations of sexual behavior and focusing on the promotion of reproductive health, the study of sex has shifted to a set of more socially-related goals, which seeks to understand sexuality, sexual expression, power, and rights (Aggleton and Parker, 2010: 2). The study of sex and sexuality in the social sciences is primarily concerned with the social, economic, historical, and cultural factors which shape sexuality, as well as the complex meanings associated with sexual experience both for individuals and social groups (Aggleton

and Parker 2010: 1). The social sciences, and particularly anthropology, are perfect for exploring the issues surrounding this particular kind of human interaction.

Anthropologists argue that while the capacity for sexual pleasure may be biologically embedded, human sexual behavior is more of a sociological and cultural force than a mere bodily relation of two individuals (Malinowski 1929) (Sanday 2007: 10). This implies that human sexuality sits on the divide between individualized sensations and culturalized meanings, making it both social and psychological. Sexuality straddles two worlds—the biological and the social (Sanday 2007: 10).

This leads to my overview of the sociological, feminist and anthropological histories and theories of sexuality. I deliberately chose to discuss these fields in this particular order. Sociology is addressed first because this discipline paved the way for the other social sciences in terms of studying sex; feminist theory/women's studies appears second, as it historically stems from sociology; anthropology is discussed last due to its interesting history with the study of sexuality and gender, and its unique theoretical frameworks.

Sociology, Gender and Sexuality

The theoretical literature in sociology has made an immense contribution to the study of sex, sexuality and gender in the past thirty years. Sociologists became interested in studying sexuality and gender beginning in the late 1960's and early

1970's (Gould & Kern-Daniels 1977: 182). The greatest contribution made was the distinction between the concepts of sex and gender. The terms gender and sex describe and organize different concepts and observations about women and men in the world, and they are not interchangeable terms (Gould & Kern-Daniels 1977: 183). Sex is the biological separation between female and male which is chromosomally determined (Gould & Kern-Daniels 1977: 183). Gender is that "which is recognized as masculine or feminine by a social world," meaning it is socially constructed and non-universal (Gould & Kern-Daniels 1977: 184).

According to sociologists, the act of having sex has many dimensions and levels. On one level, sex can be regarded as having both biological and social contexts (Rutter and Schwartz 2012: 3). The "biological" refers to how people use their genitalia to reproduce or engage in sexual activity. Though biologically the purpose of sex is to reproduce, biological responses make the experience of sexual pleasure a possibility, often making the intention of reproducing a minor motivation for most sexual activity (Rutter and Schwartz 2012: 3). In addition to the biological, there are many social reasons why people engage in sexual activity. Rutter and Schwartz argue that on another level, sex involves both what we actually do and how we think about it (2012: 5). "Sexual behavior" refers to the sexual acts that people engage in, while "sexual desire" is the combination of physical and mental motivation to engage in

sexual acts. Together, these concepts define sexuality (Rutter and Schwartz 2012: 5). “Gender” relates both to the biological and social context of sexual behavior and desire and is an enactment of the expectations of how men and women should look and act (Rutter and Schwartz 2012:5). Sociological inquiry has provided the social sciences with the language to discuss sex, sexuality and gender.

Feminism, Gender and Sexuality

During the 1960’s, the field of sociology underwent a paradigmatic overhaul in response to the widespread social protest and activism among the citizens of the United States (Renzetti & Curran 2003: 6-7). Out of this cultural and academic revolution emerged a number of different sociological paradigms, including the feminist paradigm. The feminist paradigm is not a single unified perspective, as there are a number of differing theoretical frameworks within the feminist paradigm. Renzetti and Curran suggest it is more accurate to think in terms of a “plurality of feminisms” (2003: 7).

Despite all of the different ‘brands’ of feminism that developed and now exist, they each stand on a similar foundation that argues that gender is socially created, rather than innately determined. Feminists view gender as a set of social expectations that is reproduced and transmitted through a process of social learning (Renzetti & Curran 2003: 7). The general belief is that the social learning of gender is

itself a social product that is generated within the context of a particular political and economic structure. Therefore, the understanding of gender relations is central to understanding other social relations (Renzetti & Curran, 2003: 9).

Individual feminist scholars have developed their own theories of gender and sexuality, which are treated as paradigmatic frameworks. One framework that is important to this study is intersectionality. Intersectionality is a term used to refer to a feminist sociological theory that analyzes how social and cultural categories intertwine—in particular, this theory examines the relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality (Knudsen 2006: 61). The concept of intersectionality can be attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw, and later, Patricia Hill Collins, both of whom are leaders in black feminism. Collins argued that cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society—such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity—throughout historical processes (Collins 2000: 42). This approach opens the door to the understanding of gender as fluid in relation to the variables it specifies and thus more clearly identifying points of intervention when undertaking actions for changes in gender construction and the sexuality related to it.

Feminist theory is important in the study of gender and sexuality because it has been highly critical of previous approaches. Through this criticism, the field has

added a great amount of literature to the subject, changing the ways in which we think about gender, sexuality and the creation of gendered oppression. Feminist theory informs my research because the intersection of variables such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, disability and others affect a student's willingness to participate in the hookup culture. On the societal and individual levels, the behavior of members of any gender group is influenced by their experiences as a person of their gender, race, class, and ethnic groups.

Anthropology, Gender, and Sexuality

The theoretical literature on the anthropology of sex is valuable and relevant to this research due to its cross-cultural, pan-historical perspective. I have chosen anthropology as the main lens through which to approach this topic because it is a field that spans both the biological and the sociocultural aspects of human life across multiple cultures and times. There is a long history within the field of anthropology in which sex has been avoided as a relevant topic and was discussed only in terms of kinship, marriage and taboo sexual activity. According to Gebhard, former director of the Kinsey Institute, anthropology did not officially recognize the importance of cross-cultural sex research until 1961 (Davis & Whitten 1987: 70). However, despite this belated official recognition, anthropologists had studied and published on sexuality throughout the previous century (Davis & Whitten 1987: 70).

In the words of Davis & Whitten, anthropology has long had a love-hate relationship with the subject (1987: 69). The field of anthropology has only recently begun to study sex, gender and sexuality; contemporary anthropologists have generally moved away from consideration of the "erotic and exotic" and toward topics that are more applicable for policy and change (Davis & Whitten 1987: 69).

Regardless of the frequency with which members of a particular culture engage in sexual activity, at least some members of all societies for which there are data talk about the concept of sex. Although sex is a biological urge experienced by all species, humans have created a unique situation in which we have a wide range of behaviors and rules associated with sex; human beings are profoundly affected by factors beyond bodily urges (Rutter and Schwartz 2012: 3). People across and within cultures rarely experience sexual activity in the same way—it is practiced and felt differently depending on the social and cultural settings in which it occurs (Donnan and Magowan 2010: vii). The study of sexuality in the social sciences is important because “sex acts are indicative of much broader societal concerns” (Donnan and Magowan 2010: 1). From an anthropological perspective, sexuality is both productive and reproductive of more extensive social identities that are constrained by official and unofficial sexual conventions. Donnan and Magowan have concluded that singular experiences of sex are the result of a multiplicity of perspectives that are

intersubjectively embodied and constrained by sociopolitical, racial, national and legal concerns (2010: 1). To clarify this point, they say that the anthropology of sex is also the anthropology of religion, economics, politics, kinship and human rights (2010: 1). Sexuality and the cultural construction of gender cannot be pushed aside as a topic of study in anthropology—it is connected to every part of life and is life itself. Gender and sexuality are embedded in the fabric of culture, as they are aspects of virtually every category of human behavior.

In their paper (1987) on the study of sexuality in anthropology, Davis and Whitten discuss the cross-cultural study of normative sexual behavior and provide a sampling of topics that anthropologists have addressed. These topics include sexuality and marriage, premarital sexual practice, extramarital sexual practice, intrafamilial sexual practice, socialization and child rearing, initiation and ceremony, sex across the lifespan, prostitution, rape, child molestation, bestiality, sexual anxiety and pollution, and culture change in relation to human sexuality (Davis and Whitten 1987: 70-78). For my research on the American college hookup culture, I am specifically interested in the categories of premarital sexual practices and rape.

Anthropology has had a long-standing interest in premarital sexuality, and the topic continues to be a focus of lively debate. Many authors have described local premarital sexual practice in different cultural contexts. Early in the development of

cultural anthropology, Margaret Mead went to Samoa to conduct her infamous study of adolescence as a cross-cultural phenomenon. The results of her work were the publications of *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and later, after doing research with the Arapesh and two other societies in New Guinea, *Sex and Temperament in Primitive Society* (1935). The sexual components of her work were overlooked and possibly intentionally ignored until the 1960's, but when debates regarding gender began then, some of her main conclusions became part of the feminist argument. Much of anthropology ignored her work because of the perceived scandalous qualities of her methods in the 1920's and 1930's, and ignoring it for much of the period after WWII—when the Freudian models and psychological anthropology became regarded as simplistic and even irrelevant. Her experience added to the avoidance of sexuality studies by anthropologists, rather than helping to create an atmosphere of scientific inquiry around the topic.

As Mead was interested in premarital sex among the Samoans, I am interested in premarital sex within the university campus culture. Zern has argued that this is one topic where the reality of local behavior is likely different from the normative ideal of behavior (Zern, 1969). The “normative behavior” regarding sex in the college context includes the pursuit of and engagement in pre-marital sex, and perhaps the script encourages aggression in order to achieve that goal.

Although ethnographers have had some historical interest in the practice of rape in many societies, it only recently became a major area of anthropological research. The current concern with the topic in the United States has led to a number of cross-cultural analyses (Sanday 1981) (Sanday 2003) (Sanday 2007). “Rape” is generally defined as “forced sexual behavior, and may be a sanctioned or unsanctioned practice within a society” (Davis & Whitten 1987: 77). In reviewing the cross-cultural data, Davis & Whitten (1987: 77) and Sanday (1981: 25-26) conclude that rape is not a human or cultural universal. Some anthropologists have attempted to explain the frequency of the practice and found factors like unequal sexual relationships, degree of Western contact, degree of likely punishment, and the presence of fraternal interest groups to be important (Davis & Whitten, 1987: 77). However, Sanday's study suggests that high degrees of interpersonal violence, male dominance and gender separation evolves in societies faced with depleting food resources, and migration are contributing factors in the prevalence of rape (1981: 25). In this study, Sanday’s findings that rape is not a cultural universal, and that environmental stresses are contributing factors to the prevalence of rape in a culture, informs my decision to conduct this research. If rape were a biologically embedded phenomenon or a cultural universal, then research on rape and the prevention of rape would be irrelevant. We know of societies where little to no rape occurs, so how can we create cultural change

that would move us in that direction?

Although the study of sexuality in anthropology is linked to many different aspects of culture, there are many limitations to studying the subject. Many of the pitfalls and problems of fieldwork have been brought to light, both by those who have criticized the methods and behavior of other researchers and by those who have retrospectively evaluated their own fieldwork (Davis & Whitten 1987: 71). The main issue is an ethical one in which anthropologists and sociologists cannot or have not verified the information their informants give them. Sexual experiences must be decoded through verbal and other symbolic attitudes, values and expressions, which is often difficult to do (Donnan and Magowan 2010: 2). This is further complicated by the probability that the same act will have many different meanings (Donnan and Magowan 2010: 2). There are rarely firsthand accounts of sexual experience in ethnography, as anthropologists are often not invited for participant observation of literal sexual activity. Rather, they are provided an analytical code about what sexuality means for those involved and how it should be approached, often through verbal accounts of gender constructs (Donnan and Magowan 2010: 2).

Anthropology has had a long and rocky relationship with the study of sexual behavior resulting in an uneven quality of the conclusions about sexual behavior when they have been made. It is only in the past thirty years that it has been

seriously considered as a relevant topic in the field. The work that has been done on the topic has been extremely important, especially the work of Sanday. Her multiple studies on the cross-cultural occurrence of rape have added to the field of anthropology, as well as to the broader social sciences, and even to the larger cultural ideas about rape. Her work on fraternity gang rape has inspired me to further understand the occurrence of rape on college campuses, as it has become an increasing issue in campus life. Anthropological study allows us to look at local issues in ways that are meaningful in bigger contexts.

U.S. College Culture

The college environment can be considered a sub-culture of the larger United States context—the territory comes with its own set of rules and expectations about the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of participants. This culture reflects many aspects of the larger society—it is not completely removed from, but is embedded within, the larger cultural context—however, the college culture contains many elements that are unique to that specific group. It can also be argued that this sub-cultural experience serves as a coming-of-age experience in our society. Without a clear marker of adulthood, some members of our society enter the college world in order to become members of the adult class. The college culture is significant in this

study because many young adults engage in sexual experimentation at this point in their lives, and unfortunately, college women are more at risk for rape and other forms of sexual assault than women the same age but who are not in college (Cantalupo 2009: 617).

College Community Building

The college community is the primary location for the hookup culture to exist. Without a sense of community, this cultural pattern could not exist, as it relies heavily on an interconnected network of students. Community is what allows for “hooking up” to occur, and as I argue, also allows for rape to occur. I will address this in more detail later on in my analysis section.

Lloyd-Jones (1989) defined “community” as the binding together of individuals toward a common cause or experience (Elkins, Forrester & Noel-Elkins 2011: 107). The sense of community on any university/college campus is varied based on a number of factors. Lounsbury and DeNeui found that: 1.) the psychological sense of community (PSC) was found to be negatively related to institution size; 2.) extroverted students reported higher PSC scores than introverted students; 3.) students living on-campus reported higher PSC scores than those living off-campus; 4.) students involved in Greek organizations reported higher PSC scores than non-Greek; 5.) out-of-state students reported higher PSC scores than in-state-students (1996)

(DeNeui 2003: 225). According to Boyer (1990), a college or university provides a strong sense of community if it is effective in providing six characteristics of a community: educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and collaborative (Elkins, Forrester & Noel-Elkins, 2011: 107).

Creating a sense of community on college campuses is advantageous because it gives students membership, providing them with boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 9). It also creates bidirectional influence within the community, meaning that, on the one hand, individual members are influenced by the greater group, and, on the other, individual members have influence on the group (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 11). Additionally, a sense of community provides fulfillment of needs and a shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 14).

Community building on college campuses is relevant in this study because of the affects it has in situations of rape and sexual assault. Despite these apparent advantages, this sense of community can become dangerous in certain situations. Multiple studies have shown that the majority of college women who were victims of rapes and attempted rapes knew their assailant (Abbey 1991: 165) (Cantalupo 2009: 617) (Fisher et al. 2000) (Schiffman 2010: 11). This means that a member from within

a victim's own community perpetrated an act of sexual violence against them. This contrasts with myths about rape and its sources that are part of this and the larger American culture. Various rape myths are spread through popular culture, the most pervasive being the concept that the danger or source of rape is the 'stranger', especially the 'stranger in the bushes' type of rapist. The sense of community gives students a false sense of security. It creates an in-group against out-group mentality so that students believe a member of their own group cannot hurt them. This is not only inaccurate, but it is the opposite of the available evidence, as they are more likely to be assaulted by someone that they know or who are within their own network (Abbey 1991: 165), (Armstrong, et al. 2005: 3), (Schiffman 2010:11).

Space and Liminality

The college experience often includes a combination of activities that anthropologists have long considered to be rites of passage. This experience as a whole may be seen as such a transformation in our society. This anthropological view begins with the work of Arnold van Gennep (1909). He initially recognized the fundamental configuration of all rites of passage and argued that there are three phases through which all individuals must pass while in the process of transition from one stage of life to another: separation (preliminal), margin (liminal), and aggregation (postliminal). Of these three stages, the preliminal and postliminal are not imperative

to the explanation of initiation and growth—they detach the subjects from their old places in society and return them, “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed,” to new places (Turner 1977: 36). The liminal stage is what anthropologists are most interested in when studying the rituals associated with transformation.

The liminal stage is the primary segment of the transformation. At this juncture, the subject of initiation goes through a state of ambiguity, where they are meant to discover their inner selves and personal values. There is little to remind them of their past or to foretell their future within this new environment, except their memories and premonitions. The state of liminal existence presents its own set of rules, codes, and laws. The group, being neither here nor there, resides in their own world until they are ready to emerge as members of the real adult world (Turner 1977). Among the members of the group, a strong bond is often formed as a result of their common status as members of society. In theory, the initiates are removed of their names, their previous kinship ties are postponed, just as their residential and political connections are, and they are encouraged to form subgroups amongst themselves (Turner 1977).

The university or college is the location of liminality for many contemporary young adults. As a whole, the institution provides students with all aspects of a rite of passage. This overall rite is the result of a multitude of micro

liminal experiences in the many student groups, such as fraternities, sororities, sports teams and clubs, bars, and parties in more or less private settings. Among these subgroups, forms of formal initiation may or may not be intensely practiced, and initiation may not be formal or overtly stated. The rituals are often conducted entirely by the students themselves, and taken together, they create the overall ritual transformation that they are all experiencing as college students.

One liminal space that is most relevant to the research problem I am addressing here is specific to the university and college communities: the “party.” Party behavior plays a major role in the lives of young men and women, even those not directly participating in the specific activities involved. The term “party” describes a behavioral pattern in which students come together after class hours to drink, do drugs, and socialize with members of the same and opposite gender. The party involves high levels of noise from both music and human interaction—the noise level is purposefully high because it creates an environment in which the room is apparently full of bodies, but individuals feel secluded by sound. This creates the perfect environment for “hooking up.”

While partying goes on in the United States outside of college, it is possible that the difference is in the frequency, timing, and spaces in which this activity occurs in college. People of a similar age who do not attend college usually

have jobs and are a part of the ‘real world’; partying is less frequent in that world because it is impractical. In the United States, college is a liminal period where the regular rules of society often do not apply (Kottak 2009: 301).

In the ‘real world,’ one does not party everyday, but, instead, one is expected to live a reasonably responsible, scheduled, and rational life. The opposite is the case for many in college. Student culture supports the prescriptive value that one must party at every chance one gets. The dominant party culture justifies for many students the ideas that excessive drinking, drug consumption, and sex are normal aspects of this stage of their development. It is typical that during liminality sexual taboos may be intensified, or, conversely, sexual excesses may be encouraged (Kottak 2009: 302). The students are usually aware of the fact that they will not be able to act out such licentious behavior after leaving this environment, so the sense of a fleeting opportunity often justifies their behavior. Because the physical space and time are liminal and “not real life,” sexual behaviors and partners become “not real” as well, creating an opportunity for sexual violence to occur.

It is in this arena that men and women, who otherwise often are separated for most of the day interact. This is especially so if they reside in single-gender residence halls or are members of single gender institutions. It is important to note that many men’s institutions (e.g., fraternities and athletic teams) provide much of the

alcohol and the locations for these parties on campus. The members of these men's institutions highly value phallogentric principles and men's power/control. Fraternities and sports teams provide an all-male environment for young men to find comfort and support in the unfamiliar college environment. These institutions encourage preoccupation about maleness, and encourage young men to divorce themselves from any aspect of their own personalities or behaviors that could be construed as feminine. This internalized rejection of femininity is sometimes manifested as hostile and aggressive behavior toward young women in general (Schiffman 2010: 20). These beliefs and attitudes, when combined with partying, can result in situations that increase the probabilities of actions that are threatening to women. For some young men, alcohol and drugs become tools to achieving status-boosting heterosexual sex, and acquaintance rape is an outcome that is more probable.

Sororities and other women's institutions are operating simultaneously, emphasizing what it means to be a female in college, enforcing the values of femaleness and marginalizing those who exhibit behavior that does not fit that script. Sorority members who frequently socialize with fraternities are twice as likely to experience unwanted sexual assault and are more frequently the victims of date rape and sexual assault than non-members (Wechsler & Wuethrich 2002) (Schiffman 2010:11). Both women's and men's institutions are constructing gender consciously

and unconsciously, and through specific behavioral scripts, are attempting to maintain those created boundaries. I am trying to figure out how the dominant gender scripts, created by gendered institutions, brings men and women together in hooking up and creates the ambiguity that contributes to a context for rape to take place.

Defining the “Hook up”

The concept of the “hookup” is central to this study because of the pervasiveness of the hook-up culture on college campuses, especially in the context of other party activities. It is the primary arena in which members of the opposite gender interact with one another. It is also the arena in which acquaintance and party rape most commonly occur. In studying the hook-up culture, I hope to uncover exactly how these scripts allow for and even accommodate rape.

According to Laura Sessions Stepp, young people have abandoned dating and replaced it with group get-togethers and sexual behaviors that are detached from love or commitment (2008: 17). Relationships have been replaced by the casual sexual encounters known as “hookups” (Stepp 2008: 17). “Hooking up” has emerged in recent history as a term among younger people to generally refer to an intimate interaction. Hooking up has no universal definition. However, several authors use definitions with a similar premise (Stinson 2010: 99). According to Bogle’s survey, the phrase “hooking up” has consistently been used on college campuses to describe the

predominant way for men and women to get together and form potential relationships on campus (2008: 25). Not all students participate in hooking up, but the data results suggest that hooking up is the primary means for initiating sexual and romantic relations among students (Bogle 2010: 25). Glenn and Marquardt define a hookup as a “distinctive sex-without-commitment interaction between college women and men” in which “a girl and a guy get together for a physical encounter and don’t necessarily expect anything further” (2001). Paul and colleagues define it as “a sexual encounter that may or may not include sexual intercourse, usually occurring on only one occasion between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances” (in Stinson 2010: 99).

Step thinks that hooking up carries no commitment or accountability for the current young generation (2008: 17). She says that “partners hook up with the understanding that however far they go sexually, neither should become romantically involved in any serious way. Hooking up’s defining characteristic is the ability to unhook from a partner at any time, “just as they might delete an old song on their iPod or an out-of-date ‘away’ message on their computer” (Step 2008: 17-18). Hooking up often stems from a night out at parties or bars and involves alcohol as a social lubricant (Stinson 2010: 99). Its cultural script emphasizes flirtation and non-verbal signals, followed by some form of a sexual interaction in which the partners often do

not communicate about what is happening, and it ends when one person leaves, passes out, climaxes, or the encounter is interrupted (Stinson 2010: 99). College is conducive to hooking up because it is a space to experiment with and negotiate sexual boundaries (Stinson 2010: 100). Whatever definition is used, most authors agree that hooking up is a major feature of the college environment, involves casual sex practices, includes anything from kissing to intercourse, and the interactions have no strings attached (Stinson 2010: 99).

In the context of these definitions and concepts of “hooking up from other studies, for the purpose of this study, the operational definition of the hook up is fluid and dynamic. I define only the extreme boundaries of hook up behavior. The following aspects are included in my definition: two heterosexual people interact who may or may not have ever met before. The context may include other people around them or not, but it is usually a social setting such as a party or bar. Flirting language, spoken and kinesic in form, is an expected flow on which the activity takes place and moves or stops. The outcome may or may not be sexual intercourse, but both know that it is a possibility. One defining feature of the hook up is that the individual employing that term consciously or unconsciously defines it, often changing the definition situationally. Such contextual definitions may take place during the time of a single hookup activity involving the same two individuals.

Ambiguity of Hooking Up

The concept of ambiguity is central to this study. Ambiguity is an important concept in anthropology, and is an important aspect of the liminal stage, as being in such a state allows young members of society to explore boundaries and understand their personal desires in life. Ambiguity is also a central to sexual activity. As can be seen in the previous section that the actual definitions of hooking up and other kinds of sexual activity are not concrete.

Part of the reason why hooking up is so ambiguous is because it relies on symbols to convey messages. Liminality always involves symbols and always involves ambiguity. Symbols, by definition, are multi-vocal, meaning that they convey different meanings across individuals or for the same individual over time. This is the core of ambiguity—how can you be sure that anyone is understanding something the same way in which you are?

When we talk about sex and hooking up, we assume that the speakers and listeners share a definition that is clear, consistent across situations, and unbiased by personal motives (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007: 256). There is limited research evaluating individuals' definitions of sex, and the research that does exist seems based on implicit assumptions that may be problematic in some ways (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007: 256). Peterson and Muehlenhard's study questions whether individuals have clear definitions of sex and if individuals' decisions about what

counts as sex always are based on those definitions (2007: 257). They found that when individuals decide how to label a sexual situation they sometimes consider the anticipated consequences of applying a particular label in addition to the match between the situation and their definition (2007: 257). Individuals sometimes choose a definition or adjust their definition from situation to situation so that their definition will result in positive consequences. These types of definitions are considered motivated definitions (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007: 257). Even statements intended by a speaker to represent a "realistic" assessment of some event or phenomenon, are efforts to persuade us about "reality" as the speaker understands it. All definitions and descriptions are persuasive, and all function to advance certain interests and not others (Schiappa 2003: 170) (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007: 257). This phenomenon could influence decisions about what counts as sex. Similarly, there is evidence that some women are motivated to label their nonconsensual sexual experiences as "not sex" because, if it was not sex, then they are not rape victims (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004, 2007) (Bart & O'Brien 1985: 18-19).

A famous example of the use of motivated definitions can be seen in President Bill Clinton's illicit relationship with former White House employee, Monica Lewinski. In this case, the definition of sex was narrowed to include only intercourse and exclude oral sex so that both parties could say that they did not engage

in ‘sexual relations’ (Bogle 2008: 27). Using ambiguous language to describe sex leaves the details of an encounter to listeners’ imaginations (Bogle 2008: 28). Some men hope the listener infers that more sexual activity occurred than actually did in reality, while some women might hope the listener infers that less sexual activity occurred than did in reality (Bogle 2008: 28).

College is a liminal period in the life of the contemporary young person. Ambiguity is actively created in liminality—the subject exists neither as they were before nor as they will be in the future. It is in this environment that licentious behavior is accepted and even encouraged—it becomes part of the normative script. In the college context, the normative behavior involves hooking up, which itself is ambiguous and sometimes contentious.

American Culture as a Context for Rape

Colleges and universities do not exist in a cultural vacuum, but they often reflect the society at large (Schiffman 2010: 12). We live in a rape culture—a culture in which sexual assaults not only occur, but are common (Schiffman 2010: 12). However, the general discussion of sexual assault, if it ever is discussed, still relies heavily on cultural myths (Schiffman 2010:12).

Rape on College Campuses

It is at this point that the issue of the community reemerges. Students’ sense of

community on their university or college campus affects their behavior. At smaller, closely-knit colleges, there is a high level of accountability, thus crimes like sexual assault seem less likely to occur. In larger university environments, student community building on a large scale is usually minimal, creating a low level of student accountability. At these larger universities, it seems there might be a false sense of community in terms of feeling safe, however the rate of sexual assault may not reflect that.

Having a strong sense of community is dangerous in combination with the many myths surrounding sexual and gendered violence in our society. The most pervasive and dangerous myth is the popular idea that women are most often raped by the ‘stranger in the bushes’ character. While stranger rape is a real threat, the reality is that it only accounts for a very small proportion of rape occurrences. Ninety percent of college women who are victims of rape or attempted rape know their assailant (Sampson 2002: 3). The attacker is usually a classmate, friend, boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, or other acquaintance, in that order.

Acquaintance and Party Rape

“Acquaintance rape” describes a rape in which the victim and the assailant know one another, whether they are friends, spouses, lovers, or people who just know each other slightly (Bohmer and Parrot 1993: 3-4). It is widely known among scholars

that on college campuses, rape is more likely to occur between acquaintances than strangers (Schiffman 2010: 11) (Abbey 1991:165). Fisher et al. (2000; cited in Schiffman 2010: 11)) found that 90 percent of college women who were victims of rapes and attempted rapes knew the assailant. Stranger rapes do occur, but in much smaller numbers. Acquaintance rape is characteristically different than stranger rape in terms of the effect on the victims, the psychology of the offenders, the likelihood of successful treatment for offenders, the reaction of response systems, and a host of other dimensions (Schiffman 2010: 11-12).

Most acquaintance rapes do not occur on a date. Rather they occur when two people are otherwise in the same place such as a party, or while studying together in a dorm room (Sampson 2002: 4). Thus, "date rape"—rape that occurs during or at the end of a date—is not the appropriate term to describe the majority of acquaintance rapes of college women, as date rapes account for only 13 percent of college rapes (Sampson 2002: 4). Because there is a tight link between alcohol consumption, partying and sexual assault, many sexual assaults that occur on college campuses can be described as “party rapes.” Party rape is beginning to be recognized as a distinct form of sexual assault (Armstrong, et al. 2005: 3). While viewed as a form of acquaintance rape, it often occurs between casual acquaintances or in-network strangers who encounter each other within a sexualized, alcohol-fueled party situation

(Armstrong, et al. 2005: 3).

The number of sexual assaults against women on college campuses is alarmingly high (Bohmer and Parrot 1993: 6). Data from recent studies have shown that between 20 and 25 percent of college women have experienced forced sex at some time in their college careers (Bohmer and Parrot, 1993: 6). About 5 percent of male college students commit rape knowing it is wrong; however, 10 to 15 percent commit acquaintance rape and date rape without knowing that what they are doing is wrong (Bohmer and Parrot 1993: 6). In Koss's famous study, only one quarter of the women who had experienced an act that met the legal definition of rape actually labeled what happened as rape, and only 10 percent told anyone what happened (Abbey 1991: 165-166).

Both men and women generally misunderstand acquaintance rape (Schiffman 2010: 12). Studies report that people feel that they can justify reasons for acquaintance rape, thus minimizing the seriousness of its occurrence (Schiffman 2010: 12). Many students believe that acquaintance rape victims are more responsible or the event compared to victims of stranger rape, particularly in a dating situation (Schiffman 2010: 12). Gender, as well as acquaintanceship, may be the most central factors in deciding attribution of responsibility for rape (Schiffman 2010: 12). This is important in my study because it affects how students define sexual assault and rape and adds to

the ambiguity of hooking up and sexual assault.

Conclusions Concerning Theory: The Research Problem and the Potential Value of the Results for Policy

This study investigates the “hookup culture” on university and college campuses in an attempt to identify the variables that, in combination, create a dynamic situation in which a range of activities might take place, including rape and sexual assault. Building on aspects of the theoretical approaches examined above, I am arguing that ambiguity is a central dynamic of the hookup culture and that there is a systemic relationship between that ambiguity and sexual violence. This, I am suggesting, makes the hookup culture inherently problematic. The policy-related goal of this approach, if it finds support in the comparison of case studies from the literature and my research, is to better understand hook up culture and behaviors related to it in order to identify a point of intervention in this area of campus culture so that more effective policies and procedures can be employed to reduce the incidence of sexual assault. The investigation will examine first-hand data, collected in open-ended interviews, as well as secondary literature, both from UD and comparison universities.

The theoretical approaches and related issues reviewed above illustrate the importance of gaining a more effective understanding of hooking up and its cultural dynamic. That more effective understanding, in turn, can be the basis for strongly

encouraging universities and colleges to evaluate the complex relationship between the dominant hookup culture and the rates of acquaintance rape on their campuses and moving to intervene in processes associated with it that may result in sexual violence, including rape. Though policies, programs and procedures exist to alleviate the effects of rape and sexual assault, rape culture still operates successfully. Not enough is currently being done in terms of prevention. I am suggesting that by looking toward the hookup culture, we may find a new point of intervention in the battle against campus sexual assault. This research helps us as anthropologists to learn things about youth culture that cannot easily be accessed as researcher, and provides us with unique, and possibly effective, policy implications.

Chapter 4

DATA

Introduction

The data that I am examining come from four separate research studies. The four sets are comprised of qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation from Armstrong and colleagues (2005), Wade and Heldman (2012), Schiffman (2010) and my own study. These data will be examined in relation to each other in an attempt to identify common themes and variables in student hookup culture.

Secondary Case Material 1: Armstrong, Hamilton & Sweeny

Introduction

In their study titled, ‘Hooking Up and Party Rape: The Social Organization of gender and sexuality at a large research university,’ Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeny conducted a series of group interviews among women college students (2006). The interviews, as cited in their 2005 preliminary report, covered a variety of topics, including general discussions of social life, transition to college, “hooking up,” relationships, sexual values, and the relationship between academic and personal life (Armstrong, et al. 2005:11-12). This study is relevant to my research because it addresses multiple levels on which the hookup and party cultures are

operating and creating situations in which acquaintance and party rape occur.

Methods

Data are from group and individual interviews, ethnographic observation, and publicly available information collected at a large Midwestern research university (Armstrong et al. 2006: 483). Located in a small city, the school has strong academic and sports programs, a large Greek system, and is sought after by students seeking a quintessential college experience (Armstrong et al. 2006: 483). The bulk of the data presented in their 2006 paper were collected as a part of ethnographic observation during the 2004-05 academic year in a residence hall identified by the students as a “party dorm” (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486). The authors and a research team were assigned a room on a floor occupied by 55 women students, who they observed on evenings and weekends throughout the school year. They collected in-depth background information via a nine-page survey that 23 women completed and conducted interviews with 42 of the women—all but seven women completed either a survey or an interview (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486).

Although partying did not occur in the dorm, this was considered a good place to study the social worlds of students at high risk of sexual assault—women attending fraternity parties in their first year of college (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486). Of course, not all of the students on this floor participated in the party/hookup culture—to participate, “one must typically be heterosexual, at least middle class, white, American-born, unmarried, childless, traditional college age, politically and socially mainstream, and interested in drinking” (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486). Over three quarters of the women on the floor they observed fit this description.

Armstrong and colleagues also conducted 16 group interviews (involving 24 men and 63 women) in spring 2004. These individuals had a more diverse relationship to the hookup culture because they came from varying backgrounds, such as residents of an alternative residence hall, lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, feminists, re-entry students, academically-focused students, fundamentalist Christians, and sorority women (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486). The group interviews covered a variety of topics, including discussions of social life, the transition to college, sexual assault, relationships, and the relationship between academic and social life (Armstrong et al. 2006: 486).

Results

This research utilizes an integrative perspective, which identifies mechanisms on multiple levels—such as individual selves, cultural rules, social interaction, and organizational arrangements—that contribute to the reproduction of gender inequality. Applying this integrative perspective enabled the researchers to identify gendered processes at individual, interactional, and organizational levels that contribute to sexual assault (Armstrong et al. 2006: 485). Through this method, they suggest that fun is produced along with sexual assault, leading students to resist criticism of the party scene (Armstrong et al. 2006: 487).

Their results appear to suggest that a motivating characteristic of participating in the hookup culture was the feeling of anticipation of the college party scene among students (Armstrong et al. 2006: 487). The media, siblings, peers, and parents were all cited as sources of anticipatory socialization—both partiers and non-

partiers agreed that one was “supposed” to party in college (Armstrong et al. 2006: 487). One participant stated:

You see these images of college that you’re supposed to go out and have fun and drink, drink lots, party and meet guys. [You are] supposed to hook up with guys, and both men and women try to live up to that. I think a lot of it is girls want to be accepted into their groups and guys want to be accepted into their groups (Armstrong et al., 2006: 487).

Partying and hooking up are seen as ways to feel a part of college life (Armstrong et al. 2006: 487). Most women told the researchers that they wanted to fit in, be popular, and have friends.

A gendered motivation for partying was that partying was the primary way to meet men on campus. Their floor was off-limits to non-residents, so men were not coming over to the dorms. Additionally, they expressed that they found it difficult to meet men in their classes. Meeting men at parties was important to most of the women on the floor, as they found men’s sexual interest at parties to be a source of higher self-esteem and status (Armstrong et al. 2006: 488). Men derived higher status from securing sex (from high-status women), while women derived that status from getting attention (from high-status men). These agendas are both complementary and adversarial: men give attention to women en route to sex, and women are unlikely to become interested in sex without getting attention first (Armstrong et al. 2006: 488). The psychological benefits of admiration from men in the party scene were such that women in relationships sometimes felt deprived (Armstrong et al. 2006: 488).

Armstrong and colleagues explain that the university, Greek system, and other related organizations structure student life through rules, distribution of resources, and procedures (Armstrong et al. 2006: 488). They say that sexual danger is an unintended consequence of many university practices intended to be gender neutral

because the clustering of homogenous students intensifies the dynamics of student peer cultures and heightens motivations to party (Armstrong et al. 2006: 488-9). The rules of the residence halls push alcohol-seeking students off-campus to bars, fraternity and house parties. While factors that increase the risk of party rape are present at varying degrees in all party venues, Armstrong and colleagues focus on fraternity parties because they were the typical party venue for the women they observed, since fraternities are the most reliable and private source of alcohol for first-year students excluded from the bar-scene and house parties because of age and social networks (2006: 489).

The researchers found that the lack of comfortable public space for informal socializing in the residence hall served as a push factor for participation in the party-related hookup culture. A large central bathroom divided the floor, a sterile lounge was rarely used for socializing, there was no cafeteria, only a convenience store and a snack bar with a “cavernous” room furnished with big-screen televisions (Armstrong et al. 2006: 489). Residence life sponsored alternatives to the party scene such as “movie night” and special dinners, but these typically occurred early in the evening. Students defined these events as uncool (Armstrong et al. 2006: 489). Most students on the floor seemed to lack the identities or network connections necessary for entry into alternative worlds. Those who most needed an alternative to the social world of the party dorm were often ill-equipped to actively seek it out—they either integrated themselves into partying or found themselves alone in their rooms (Armstrong et al. 2006: 494). One participant said that, “When everyone is going out on a Thursday and you are in the room by yourself and there are only two or three

other people on the floor, that's not fun, it's not the college life that you want" rooms (Armstrong et al. 2006: 494).

Armstrong et al. (2006: 489) suggest that the homogeneity of the floor intensified peer dynamics. The floor was homogenous in terms of race, sexual orientation, class and appearance. This intensified social anxiety and heightened the importance of partying for making friends. The authors describe the anxiety as "palpable" on weekend nights as women assessed their social options by asking where people were going, when, and with whom. At the beginning of the semester, "going out" on weekends was virtually compulsory (Armstrong et al. 2006: 489). Perhaps the anxiety stems from the pressure of having to perform the actions of partying, as college partying and hooking up involves predictable activities in a predictable order—getting ready, pre-gaming, getting to the party, getting drunk, flirtation or sexual interaction, getting home, sharing stories (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). It is characterized by "shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation" (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). Partiers are expected to like and trust party-mates; partiers are expected to never display unhappiness or tension. Drinking assists people in transitioning from everyday life to a state of euphoria (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490).

Another factor that the researchers noted was the male control of fraternity parties. Fraternities control every aspect of parties at their houses: "themes, music, transportation, admission, access to alcohol, and movements of guests" (Armstrong et al. 2006: 489). Some fraternities require pledges to transport first-year students from the residence halls to the fraternity houses, while leaving transportation home an uncertainty (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). Fraternities police the door at their parties,

allowing in desirable guests (women) and turning away others (unaffiliated men). They also controlled the quality and quantity of alcohol available to the guests—the promise of more or better alcohol was used to lure women into private spaces of the fraternities (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). As guests, women cede control of turf, transportation and liquor, and are expected to be grateful for men’s hospitality (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). The pressure to be deferential and gracious makes women vulnerable to sexual assault only if men exploit their socialized gendered demeanor (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491). A male student in their study wrote this description of parties at his house:

Girls are continually fed drinks of alcohol. It’s mainly to party but my roomies are also aware of the inhibition-lowering effects. I’ve seen an old roomie block doors when girls want to leave his room; and other times I’ve driven women home who can’t remember much of an evening yet sex did occur. Rarely if ever has a night of drinking for my roommate ended without sex. I know it isn’t necessarily and assuredly sexual assault, but with the amount of liquor in the house I question the amount of consent a lot (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491).

Getting women drunk, blocking doors, and controlling transportation are common ways men try to prevent women from leaving sexual situations. Rape culture beliefs, such as the belief that men are “naturally” sexually aggressive, normalize these coercive strategies (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491). Assigning women the role of “gatekeeper” relieves men from responsibility for obtaining authentic consent, and enables them to view sex obtained by undermining women’s ability to resist it as “consensual” (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491). In a focus group, one woman provided an example of a partying situation that devolved into sexual assault:

It kind of happened to me freshman year. I’m not positive about what happened, that’s the worst part about it. I drank too much at a frat one night, I blacked out and I woke up the next morning with nothing on in their cold dorms, so I don’t really know what happened and the guy

wasn't in the bed anymore, I don't even think I could tell you who the hell he was, no I couldn't (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491).

This woman's confusion demonstrates the usefulness of alcohol as a weapon. From the perspective of the authors, her intoxication undermined her ability to resist sex, her clarity about what happened, and her feelings of entitlement to report it (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491).

Armstrong and colleagues heard many stories of sexual assault—at least one heterosexual woman reported having experienced sexual assault in each focus group they spoke with (2006: 492). Party rape is accomplished without weapons, and is carried out through the combination of low-level forms of coercion, which includes liquor and persuasion, manipulation of situations so that women cannot leave, and sometimes force (Armstrong et al. 2006: 492). These forms of coercion are made effective by organizational arrangements that provide men with control over partying and by expectations that women trust their community members (Armstrong et al. 2006: 492). Armstrong and colleagues argue that this systematic and effective method of extracting non-consensual sex is invisible and ambiguous, which makes it difficult for women who find themselves in negative situations to recognize that a crime occurred against them (Armstrong et al. 2006: 492).

The factors discussed, such as elements of peer culture and organizational arrangements, in combination, set up risky partying conditions, but this does not explain *how* student interactions at parties generate sexual assault (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). Armstrong and colleagues argue that at the interactional level, we see the mechanisms through which sexual assault is produced and as interactions necessarily involve individuals with particular characteristics and occur in specific organizational settings, all three levels meet when interactions take place (2006: 490). Here, gendered

and gender neutral expectation and routines are intricately woven together to create party rape. Party rape “is the result of fun situations that shift—either gradually or quite suddenly—into coercive situations” (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). This shift from consensual sexual activity to party rape can be further explained by the ambiguous nature of hooking up, as I will discuss later in my analysis section.

Conclusion

The data demonstrate how social organization and peer culture work together to create sexual danger on this campus (Armstrong et al. 2005: 12). Students arrive on campus enmeshed in a gendered peer culture that generates interest in the party scene (Armstrong et al. 2005: 12). Peer culture shapes the social, erotic, and romantic agendas of women and leads them to conclude that attendance at fraternity parties may help them achieve these agendas (Armstrong et al. 2005: 12). Although women experience low level fear, sexual disrespect, and, more occasionally, sexual violence in the party scene, the scene is resilient because it also produces fun (Armstrong et al. 2005: 13). Women perceive few other places to experience high sexual energy with members of the opposite gender (Armstrong et al. 2005: 13). Thus, motivation exists for both men and women to discount women’s negative experiences in the party scene (Armstrong et al. 2005: 13). Working the party scene to one’s advantage becomes a marker of competency for women, serving as evidence of adulthood (Armstrong et al. 2005: 13). Without alternative venues in which to express sexuality, prove adult competency, gain social status, and build shared social meanings, the party scene will likely remain appealing (Armstrong et al. 2005: 13).

Secondary Case Material 2: Wade & Heldman

Introduction

This study takes a life course perspective on sexuality, bringing the changes that occur as one ages into dialogue with one's biography, demographic characteristics, and the cultural and historical context in which one lives (Wade & Heldman 2012: 129). Wade and Heldman report that the first year of college is a life stage transition that requires the negotiation of a new script for sexual expression dictated by hookup culture (Wade & Heldman 2012: 129). They conclude that their findings confirm previous research indicating that the hookup script includes alcohol use, an open-ended sexual encounter, and a casual attitude toward sex (Wade & Heldman 2012: 144). This study is useful in terms of this paper because it identifies multiple features of the hookup culture that are problematic and may lead to or encourage rape and sexual assault.

Methods

Data for this project, titled "Hooking up and Opting out: Negotiating Sex in the First Year of College," were collected from 48 first-year students who were enrolled in a second-semester, sexuality related writing course cotaught by the authors of this chapter (Wade & Heldman 2012: 132). Participants were asked to write two narratives in which they reflected on how and why their sexual attitudes and behaviors did or did not change over the course of their first year (Wade & Heldman 2012: 132). Their final sample consisted of 44 students: 33 women and 11 men (Wade & Heldman 2012: 132).

Three women identified as bisexual; no respondents identified as gay or lesbian (Weade & Heldman 2012: 132). The respondents included 22 Whites, eight Latinos, seven Asians, two Blacks, and one mixed-race individual (Wade & Heladman 2006: 132). The researchers note that their sample is nongeneralizable because their respondents were overwhelmingly female, self-selected into this course, and read materials throughout the course that might have altered their views.

Results

The findings of this research suggest that students anticipated certain aspects of college life based on media portrayals of college life. Students cited a list of television shows and movies that made them think college would be “a wild, sexual party scene [filled with] alcohol, weed, and sex” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 134). A male student thought college would involve “countless nights in which I would be totally hammered and have sex with extremely attractive girls...not a week would go by in which I would not have sex at least a dozen times” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 134). Students began to change their behavior in advance so that they could be prepared for the sexual climate in college. They saw virginity as a stigma, and a number of students tried to lose their virginity in high school so that they could fully participate in in the hookup culture when they arrived (Wade & Heldman 2012: 134).

The students in this study expressed feeling pressure to participate in the hookup culture because of the proximity of students living in the dorms. One female student explains this: “During high school you could go home or stay away from the crowd for a while and you would not have any pressure on you...[Here,] if you do not socialize you are automatically excluded from anything and everything.” This is

considered an institutional issue because most schools require students to live on campus during their first, or even second, years. Because hookup culture pervaded dorm life, living in the dorms meant that the hookup culture was practically inescapable. Many students felt that opting out of the hookup culture meant opting out of socializing in general (Wade & Heldman 2012: 135).

Wade and Heldman assert that in addition to institutional support for the hookup culture, there is also a considerable amount of social support (2012: 135). A male student explained that the hookup culture is “definitive of sexual relations between college students” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 135). A female student said that “expectations to hook up at a party are over the charts. Many times that is the only reason students want to socialize” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 135).

Wade and Heldman’s data are their basis for suggesting that there are three key features of the hookup script: troubled cross-sex friendships, the normalization of male sexual coercion, and alcohol as an indicator of carelessness (2012: 136-139). The female students in their study reported that it was nearly impossible to have male friends because the hookup culture positioned everyone as a sexual partner (Wade & Heldman 2012: 136). Despite the ‘friends with benefits’ idea, the hookup culture actually undermined cross-sex friendships, as one student explained:

They all have sex on their minds. Every guy I connect with here on a purely friendly level has sent me numerous texts around 2 am asking, “Hey you. What are you up to?”...straight guys rarely want to be just friends with women. Even if the girl is ugly, he could drink enough to make her pretty (Wade & Heldman 2012: 136).

Many women reported that a friendship was compromised, no matter how close they and a male friend appeared to be, after a hookup took place. One woman described it

as, “You could have labeled it friends with benefits, without the friendship maybe?” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 137).

The more serious feature of the hookup culture, and more relevant to this research, is the normalization of male sexual coercion. Wade and Heldman suggest that the hookup script involved, and even normalized, sexual pressure from men. Several women reported emotional and psychological coercion and sexual assault. For example, one woman said, “A lot of boys...feel that it is necessary to drink hardcore and when they are drunk they try to push you into engaging in sex.” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 137). Another student agreed and said that even nice guys “feel pressured into having sex and thus pressure women into having sex with them.” (Wade & Heldman, 2012: 137). Another woman told the researchers of two instances in which men had repeatedly ignored her when she said “no” because, she wrote, “according to them, they like to hear me say no.” (Wade & Heldman 2012:137).

Besides constantly needing to refuse the advances of men in whom they were not interested, women reported having a difficult time shaping sexual activity once it had begun. One woman testified:

[He] was much more experienced and aggressive than the other guys I dated...we did stuff almost every day we hung out and it became very hard for me to say no to having sex because we had already done everything else I was comfortable with. He tried to pressure me into it [penile-vaginal intercourse] just like he pressured me into doing other stuff that I normally wouldn't do so soon or as often (Wade & Heldman 2012: 138).

Women reported being manipulated into performing fellatio, and recalled consenting to sexual activity they did not desire, because they felt it was their only option, “despite the absence of physical coercion, threats, or incapacitation” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 138).

Eight women and one man volunteered stories in which they were sexually assaulted. Four women were unsure or did not believe that their experience qualified as sexual coercion (Wade & Heldman 2012: 138). The study's authors conclude that sexual coercion was a routine feature of hookup culture that, for many students, seemed normal or inevitable (Wade & Heldman 2012: 138).

The last primary feature of the hookup culture that Wade and Heldman identified was the use of alcohol to indicate carelessness. Half of the students they interviewed remarked upon the intersection of heavy drinking and sexual activity. They reported that “more than simply disinhibiting students or excusing their behavior alcohol replaced mutual attraction as the supposed fuel for sexual interaction” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 139). One woman explained that none of her male friends “have ever made sexual advances sober” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 139). Based on this, she concluded that only sober advances are considered “real” (Wade & Heldman 2012: 139). The presence of alcohol allowed students to preserve the illusion that they were engaging in sex carelessly, meaning that one does not have to choose their partner carefully, think carefully whether or not to have sex, or care for their partner's well-being. On the contrary, “a sober hookup indicates one that is more serious, which either no one is interested in, or no one is brave enough to admit they want” (Wade & Heldman 2012:139).

Wade and Heldman found that most students, both men and women, were seeking one of three things, which drove them to participate in the hookup culture: meaningfulness, empowerment, and pleasure (2012: 140). Most students were dissatisfied with the hookup culture because they often failed to accomplish any of these goals. They often faced a disconnect between their desires and their experiences

and reported mixed or negative feelings about hooking up after participating in the culture for a year (Wade & Heldman 2012: 142). Some students chose to opt out of the hookup culture after their first year as a result of their dissatisfaction. For most, hooking up was a price they were willing to pay for the opportunity to have sex and the small possibility that hookups would lead to pleasure, empowerment, or a relationship (Wade & Heldman 2012: 144).

Conclusions

Wade and Heldman conclude that their findings confirm previous research indicating that the hookup script includes alcohol use, and open-ended sexual encounter, and a casual attitude toward sex (2012: 144). They found through the students' narratives that alcohol does not simply disinhibit students, but also affirms the illusion that sexual partners do not care about each other. In such a context, they argue, men and women may orient toward one another antagonistically, making it difficult to establish and maintain cross-sex friendships (Wade & Heldman 2012: 144). Few students expressed enthusiastic appreciation for hooking up, while most reported that it failed to provide anything that students wanted out of sex—instead they felt disconnection from sexual partners, feelings of objectification and disempowerment, and unpleasant and unpleasurable sex (Wade & Heldman 2012: 144). Additionally, and more seriously, sexual assault was found to be an outcome of the hookup script. Students reported reevaluating hookup culture, causing them to shift their priorities and behaviors. However, the authors conclude, because hookup culture is hegemonic and pervasive, participants had little vision of an alternative, and, they

instead opted out of sexual relationships temporarily or permanently (Wade & Heldman 2012: 145).

Secondary Case Material 3: Schiffman

Introduction

This project examines anti-rape policies and educational programs to reduce sexual assaults at the University of Delaware. Schiffman argues that the policies and programs are intertwined so both must be examined to understand how sexual assault is addressed on campus (Schiffman, 2010: 1). The goal of this research was to produce recommendations to strengthen and streamline the dual initiatives in hope of reducing the incidence of sexual assault. Schiffman's research, though it does not address hooking up in relation to sexual assault, is relevant to this study because it highlights the University of Delaware's relevant policies and programs. I chose to discuss these data third because of its small, but important relevance for my research problem.

Methods

The University of Delaware is a mid-sized research institution of approximately 16,000 undergraduate and almost 3,000 graduate students located in Newark, Delaware. The University dominates the small town where it is situated. Schiffman states that part of its appeal to potential students and their parents, concerned about safety issues, is the sense of security provided by Newark as a quiet community (2010: 7). There are numerous campus safety features including blue

lights, indicating emergency phones and located in prominent sites throughout the campus, electronic access keys for dorms, etc. (Schiffman 2010: 7). Campus police can escort students who do not feel safe, and can also provide anti-assault education, including Rape Aggression Defense workshops (Schiffman 2010: 8).

Most institutions have policies addressing sexual assault and many support educational programs that attempt to guide beliefs and behavior about rape and related violence. Institutions of higher education are also subject to legal mandates to report sexual assaults, adding to concerns about liability and public relations—the University of Delaware is typical in this regard (Schiffman 2010: 8).

Two methods were used to gather information for this project. In depth interviews were conducted with 29 people from the following units and groups: students who work on sexual assault issues, Faculty who teach about sexual assault, Center for Counseling and Student Development, Intercollegiate Athletics, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of Student Conduct, Office of Women's Affairs, Public Safety, Residence Life, Student Centers, Student Health Service, Sexual Offense Support Services, and Wellspring: Student Wellness Program (Schiffman 2010: 35). In addition, Schiffman reviewed documents from three institutions renowned for their sexual assault policies and programs(2010: 35). The University of Virginia, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey and the University of Maryland were mentioned during interviews with several participants as models that the University of Delaware should consider emulating.

Results

Schiffman indicates that the most urgent need that arose during the interviews was for increased sexual assault education. None of the participants for this study felt that sexual assault education at the University is adequate (Schiffman 2010: 118). Schiffman notes that this was not a reflection on the quality of current programs, as most respondents respect what is currently in place, particularly given the meager financial support that underpins the efforts. The most frequent concern was that students opt out of the programs offered (Schiffman 2010: 118). Based on her interviews, there was strong support for required sexual assault education, particularly for first-year students. Rutgers has a required attendance program, where one unit has the responsibility to provide comprehensive sexual assault education to all students. The University of Delaware already has a unit in place (Sexual Offense Support Services) that provides sexual assault education, though most participation in that education is voluntary on the part of students (Schiffman 2010: 118). While its efforts are highly regarded, it does not reach as many students as needed. More staffing and funds are necessary to improve the outreach of this organization (Schiffman 2010: 118).

Schiffman (2010: 119) notes that there is an apparent disconnect between the educative function of the University and the argument that education is precisely what is required to address sexual assault. Unfortunately the faculty are missing from the process. The suggestion to work more closely with faculty came up several times in interviews (Schiffman 2010: 119). Schiffman argues that faculty could offer their expertise to anti-sexual assault efforts (2010: 119). The advantage is that adding faculty to the equation does not require additional funding.

Resources can take many forms, but the current budget for sexual assault education is small (Schiffman 2010: 122). No funds are earmarked for these efforts by higher administration. The Office of Women's Affairs (which was disbanded in fall 2009) set aside \$3,000 of its annual budget for this purpose and additional funds are garnered from multiple sources such as student groups, academic departments, and various student life units (Schiffman 2010: 122).

Conclusion

How the University of Delaware responds to sexual assault is important. According to Schiffman, we are at a crucial point in our approach to sexual assault policy and education (2010: 134). Change appears to be valued in addressing numerous systems and procedures across campus. People involved in anti-rape work are eager to embrace new ideas (Schiffman 2010: 135).

Primary Data 4: Current Study

(For Introduction and Methods, please see Chapters 1 and 2.)

Results

As I mentioned in my Methods Chapter, the topics of conversation in the open-ended interviews were defined by participants. The following discussion addresses the major features of the hook up culture that came up in student interviews.

I found that many students anticipated the party and hookup cultures associated with college life. Movies, television shows, peers, older siblings and parents were all cited as sources of information regarding what to expect and how to

behave upon arrival here. One freshman brought up her surprise at finding out that UD had the reputation of being a party school:

...this summer at my camp, someone would be like, “Oh where are you going?” and I’d say, “Oh, UD”, and they’d say something like, “Oh you won’t be able to stay with your boyfriend at UDel,” like, “There’s so many parties at UDel,” and I was just like “Really?...” I didn’t really know it was that much.

Many students discussed how, because of this anticipation, they began their freshman years as full participants in the hookup culture in order to fit in. As time went on, many chose to opt out or modify their behavior due to disillusionment with the whole scene. An upperclassman said: “when I was a freshman I was a little bit more carefree, so I would hook up with a lot of guys, just at parties, or just, you just meet them at parties or something” due to the anticipation and expectation to behave this way.

Another issue that came up was defining hooking up. When prompted to define hooking up, every student expressed frustration in trying to pin down such a dynamic concept. Many used the phrase, “it depends,” multiple times in describing the fluidity of the behaviors associated with the concept. One woman described hooking up as:

Umm... hooking up just means, I guess, it can mean as little as making out, all the way to like, having actual vaginal sex or any kind of sex. But um, I guess it means different things to me in different settings. Like, say if I were to hook up with some guy and only make out with him, versus if I hooked up with another guy and did more than that I would still just say I hooked up. It just, it can mean anything and everything.

Another woman said that it is “hard to define hooking up” because over the past three years she has hooked up with several people and “it has all been very different experiences.”

While I can conclude from the way they defined hooking up that it is an ambiguous concept, students from all graduating classes and of all genders recognized the ambiguity of hooking up and expressed gratitude for the confusion surrounding the concept. One female student liked to use the term hooking up because she felt it allowed her to control how little her peers know about her sexual life:

I like that term, hooking up, because a lot of people ask what happened, if you just say hooking up that usually just stops them from asking [further]. Some people, they don't mind sharing, but I'm not one of those, and I like to keep it as ambiguous as possible, because I'm shy. It makes me uncomfortable.

A male student expressed:

I guess that's why hooking up is such a useful phrase, because its so vague, so you can just say, "Oh I hooked up with this girl!" and that's like, well I don't know, you did something but I don't know what it is. So I guess that's why people use it, kind of—to avoid directly talking about it.

Students expressed that the goal of going out on the weekend was to hook up. That is why students in relationships and those who wish to remain sexually active either do not participate, or do so in modified ways. One woman, who really enjoyed the hookup culture, said that her "goal was to get there in my heels, meet a boy, dance and make out with him, maybe get his number, maybe go home with him. If I didn't meet a boy, it wasn't a successful night." Another female student, who has mixed feelings about the hookup culture, said that the point of going out was to "be crazy and be reminded that I'm young." One student, who happens to be in a relationship, said:

I feel like a lot of people's main goal for partying is for the hookup and to meet people and to have a good time and like, go crazy... Um, but I do think like, at least for what I've made of it, and the reason why I don't like going out as much as other people, is because like, the main focus of a lot of parties is to hook up and to get with people and get drunk.

In asking students to define hooking up, many admitted that they felt they were not representative of the general student population due to their decisions to opt out. Three female students were virgins at the time of their interview, and had plans to remain that way until marriage, or at least until they fell in love. Two other students were in relationships, causing them to also opt out of the hook up culture. These students felt marginalized by the hookup culture because they felt it was predominant on campus. Whether the majority of students are actually engaging in hookup behavior is irrelevant because students have the perception that everyone is participating. It is their perception of the prevalence of hookup culture that informs their decisions to either participate or not. A freshman woman in a long-distance relationship expressed her struggle with finding an alternative group to hang out with on the weekends to avoid the hookup scene:

I kind of struggled, I had to find a different group of people to hang out with when I didn't want to go out because, like, both my roommates are single and all my group of girl friends are single, and then there's me. It's not even that just because I have a boyfriend I don't want to hook up, it's just because like, I've never been that type of person, I don't feel comfortable with the whole random people thing. So like, at first like it was almost hard for me because there were so many people that were hooking up that I almost, like, wouldn't want to go out with them because they'd find a guy and I would have to walk home by myself or find someone else. So I think it really influences, like, who you hang out with and what you do. Now I have two groups of friends. I have my group of friends that I'll stay in with and I have my group of friends who I'll go out with.

A male student who participates in the hook up culture, though isn't sure if he enjoys it, felt that there aren't really other options on the weekend. He mentioned that alternative weekend events planned by the school are usually "uncool" and it is "unrealistic to assume that students will enjoy these types of events." This exemplifies

how influential the hookup culture is, even to those who do not want to participate in it. They can choose to opt out, however they cannot ignore it when their roommates and friends in the dorms are coming home drunk late at night, or when they need to find an alternative group of friends to hang out with on the weekends.

A common issue that came up regarding hooking up was reporting back to friends. When one female student's roommate would come home early in the morning after a night of partying, she would often be greeted with questions such as, "What did you do last night?" by her friends on the dorm floor. One male student reported that hooking up serves as a form of entertainment: "You get a lot of funny stories. Sometimes the focus is more on the story-telling aspect of it than the actual actions."

While students spoke about how hooking up can be funny sometimes, there were also negative consequences. Men often expressed regret for acting like a "douchebag" toward women with whom they were friends prior to hooking up with them. Being a "douchebag," in this context, often involved hooking up with a girl and then ignoring her afterwards. Men did not feel remorse when they hooked up with a stranger, but if they behaved this way toward a friend or acquaintance, they often felt bad. Women were a lot more vague in discussing the negative effects of hooking up. Many said that "bad" or "embarrassing" things might happen, though they had a difficult time articulating what "bad" means. One woman alludes to sexual assault in her response, but never actually uses that term:

Sometimes the other person might want to go further than you and that can lead to an uncomfortable conversation about boundaries. It's also possible that a partner might misinterpret or deliberately ignore what you tell them you want or don't want. Drugs and alcohol play a huge role and could loosen your inhibitions. Most people have done something they regret under the influence of alcohol.

Another woman was much more explicit in letting me know that sexual assault and rape are a possibility. She disclosed a situation in which she experienced rape, and proceeded to discuss the serious dangers of the hookup culture for many women who are not even aware of the fact that a crime has been perpetrated against them. She expressed that the hookup culture is dangerous because it masks problematic behavior. It took her months to realize that what happened to her was not simply “just hooking up.” She spoke of how she struggled to remember exactly what happened that night, and only described what happened to her as rape when she started experiencing flashbacks and nightmares of that night:

It was, “Oh, we just hooked up,” for the longest time. It was so internalized, that that’s what was supposed to happen. Like, I got really drunk and then we hooked up, and that’s how it’s supposed to happen. Like, it could not have been a problem, it could not have been painful and wrong because this is how hooking up works.

As we can see in the above statement, male sexual coercion is normalized and rape and sexual assault are hidden under the blanket term of hooking up. Many of the men in my sample spoke to this issue, and often blamed fraternities for perpetuating gendered violence. The men I interviewed were all non-Greek, and they all expressed dissatisfaction with the way those organizations are run and the power they have on our campus. One male student said:

On the weekends at parties, they’re [fraternities] the ones who set the norm for how to treat women and how to behave. They dominate the party culture because they throw all of the parties.

Another male student expressed initial satisfaction with fraternity parties, because it gave him a venue to drink as a freshman. He said that it was the “only option” as a freshman, and it was “fun to dance in basements and grind up on girls without having to speak to them.” However, he became dissatisfied with these types of parties because

as a non-member, he was scrutinized and wasn't always allowed in. He also did not like such interactions with women, and now hangs out in smaller groups where talking is the main form of communication.

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS

Introduction

There are several features of the hookup culture that I am arguing, in combination with one another, create a system in which rape is a possibility. These features include: (1) anticipation of the college party and hookup cultures; (2) going out and hooking up as a ritual within a liminal space; (3) compulsory trust of all community members; (4) hooking up as the primary way in which sex occurs in college; (5) ambiguity surrounding hooking up; (6) ambiguity surrounding sexual assault; (7) male control at parties; (8) normalization of male sexual coercion; (9) inadequate sexual assault education. The table below shows the existence of the variables listed in relation to the data sets used in this study. Data Set 1 and 4 had the strongest support for my hypothesis, while Data Set 2 showed some support. Data Set 3 discussed only one of the nine variables here, and that is because the focus of this study was very different than my focus. Schiffman's research was on the attitudes of people working in sexual assault prevention, so her study really helped in coming up with solutions for the current state of the hookup culture.

Table 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Data Set 1 Armstrong et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data Set 2 Wade & Heldman	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
Data Set 3 Schiffman									✓
Data Set 4 Current	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Problematic Features of the Hookup Culture

Anticipation of College Party/Hookup Culture

Long before students arrive at college, they receive messages about what college life is like. Media, siblings, peers, and parents all serve as sources of anticipatory socialization—both partiers and non-partiers agreed that one was “supposed” to party in college (Armstrong et al. 2006: 487). This anticipation was discussed in Wade and Heldman’s, Armstrong et al.’s and my interviews. Wade and Heldman reported that students began to change their behavior in advance so that they could be prepared for the sexual climate in college. They saw virginity as a stigma, and a number of students tried to lose their virginity in high school so that they could fully participate in in the hookup culture when they arrived (Wade & Heldman 2012: 134).

This is also anticipation for liminality. As discussed in my theory chapter, college is a coming of age experience, of sorts, that puts students in a position of

liminality. They are no longer full members of society, as they have been removed from the larger group and placed in a relatively closed off world. Anticipating this change in status is part of the preliminal stage. Students learn from the media and their peers what it is they are supposed to do when they enter this new and exciting world. For many students, the desire to fit in is very high, and so they take the advice they have received very seriously. This feature is included in this model because it puts immense pressure on students to participate in the hook up culture before they even get to college. They are already beginning to formulate beliefs, values, judgments and opinions on activities in which they may or may not participate.

Going out/ Hooking up as a necessary ritual in liminal space

As the evidence shows, students feel an overwhelming amount of pressure to participate in the hookup culture. Those who opted out felt marginalized and felt as though alternative options were “uncool” or “unrealistic.” The college experience often serves as a coming of age experience. At this liminal juncture, the subject of initiation goes through a state of ambiguity, where they are meant to discover their inner selves and personal values. The state of liminal existence presents its own set of rules, codes, and laws. In this case, the expectations are that the students engaging in hookup behavior. Among the members of the group, a strong bond is often formed as a result of their common stripping of previous humanity and participation in common rituals.

Going out to parties and hooking up are rituals which help in creating that

strong bond between initiates. The behavior itself is taboo in larger society, because it doesn't fit into the average lifestyle. In college, this transgressive set of behaviors is permissible and even encouraged. In the United States, college is a liminal period where the regular rules of society often do not apply (Kottak 2009: 301). Student culture supports the prescriptive value that one must party at every chance one gets. The dominant party culture justifies for many students the ideas that excessive drinking, drug consumption, and sex are normal aspects of this stage of their development. It is typical that during liminality sexual taboos may be intensified, or, conversely, sexual excesses may be encouraged (Kottak 2009: 302). The students are usually aware of the fact that they will not be able to act out such licentious behavior after leaving this environment, so the sense of a fleeting opportunity often justifies their behavior. Because the physical space and time are liminal and "not real life," sexual behaviors and partners become "not real" as well, creating an opportunity for sexual violence to occur.

Trust/ community

Because of their shared experience with the hooking up ritual, students often feel as though they can, and should, trust other partygoers. Armstrong and colleagues suggest that there is a strong belief among students that partiers are expected to like and trust party-mates; partiers are expected to never display

unhappiness or tension (2006: 490). Creating a sense of community on college campuses is advantageous because it gives students membership, providing them with boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 9).

Trusting community members also creates dangerous situations in which rape and sexual assault go unnoticed. As stated in the theory chapter, multiple studies have shown that the majority of college women who were victims of rapes and attempted rapes knew their assailant (Abbey, 1991: 165) (Cantalupo 2009: 617) (Fisher et al. 2000) (Schiffman 2010: 11). This means that a member from within a victim's own community perpetrated an act of sexual violence against them. This contrasts with myths about rape and its sources that are part of this and the larger American culture. Various rape myths are spread through popular culture, the most pervasive being the concept that the danger or source of rape is the stranger. The sense of community gives students a false sense of security. It creates an in-group against out-group mentality so that students believe a member of their own group cannot hurt them.

Hookup culture as Primary way in which sex occurs

This category is very similar to the category that makes hooking up a necessary ritual. Once again, students experience an immense amount of pressure to participate in this script because it is a marker of belonging to the liminal group that is

transitioning into adulthood. There are very few other options for students to explore their sexuality without participating in this cultural script. Alternative activities or pathways to sex are marginalized, making it difficult for students to even discover these alternative pathways. This is problematic because students who do not even want to participate in the hookup culture are sometimes forced to because they cannot imagine a different way of life in college. This makes cultural change difficult to achieve. Despite the flaws they see with the culture, students still feel pressure to fit in and participate with their peer group, and so they continue to participate in a flawed system rather than working on creating a visible and viable alternative.

Male Control of parties

Wade and Heldman's, Armstrong et al.'s, and my own data all suggested that the alcohol policies at many universities creates a situation in which all of the power in partying is put into the hands of male-dominated institutions. Because students cannot drink on campus, they seek it elsewhere. Fraternities capitalize on this situation, and throw the largest and most "successful" parties. These all-male institutions control every aspect of parties at their houses: "themes, music, transportation, admission, access to alcohol, and movements of guests" (Armstrong et al. 2006: 489). Some fraternities require pledges to transport first-year students from the residence halls to the fraternity houses, while leaving transportation home an uncertainty (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). As guests, women cede control of turf, transportation and liquor, and are expected to be grateful for men's hospitality (Armstrong et al. 2006: 490). The implications of this variable are that men are in complete control of the physical spaces in which hooking up is taking place. They

have created a system in which they can rarely fail in having a successful hookup since young drunk women are abundant and young unaffiliated men are not.

Normalization of Male Sexual Coercion

In addition to controlling the physical space in which hooking up is most likely to occur, men have the potential to be coercive in obtaining hookups. Getting women drunk, blocking doors, and controlling transportation are common ways men try to prevent women from leaving sexual situations. Rape culture beliefs, such as the belief that men are “naturally” sexually aggressive, normalize these coercive strategies (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491). Assigning women the role of “gatekeeper” relieves men from responsibility for obtaining authentic consent, and enables them to view sex obtained by undermining women’s ability to resist it as “consensual” (Armstrong et al. 2006: 491). Wade and Heldman, Armstrong et al., and I all heard retellings of sexual assault experiences in our interviews in which the coercion involved was either ambiguously defined or considered normal. Multiple women in my interviews expressed the belief that men and women are inherently different, and that men cannot control their desire for non-committal sex. As anthropologists, such as Peggy Sanday, have shown, rape is not a human universal, nor is it biologically wired into male behavior (1981) (2003). This normalization of encultured gender violence is problematic for obvious reasons, as it makes identifying and charging sexual assault difficult.

Ambiguity surrounding Hooking up & Ambiguity surrounding Sexual Assault

I am discussing these variables together because the same process of ambiguity blurs the line of consent in sexual situations. As I discussed in my theory

section, the concept of ambiguity is central to this study. Ambiguity is an important concept in anthropology, and is an important aspect of the liminal stage, as being in such a state allows young members of society to explore boundaries and understand their personal desires in life. Ambiguity is also a central to sexual activity. The actual definitions of hooking up and other kinds of sexual activity are not concrete.

Part of the reason why hooking up is so ambiguous is because it relies on symbols to convey messages. Liminality always involves symbols and always involves ambiguity. Symbols, as I mentioned earlier, are multi-vocal, meaning that they convey different meanings across individuals or for the same individual over time. This is the core of ambiguity—no one consistently understands symbols in the same way. So while two individuals are interacting in a hookup situation, they can be receiving very different messages about what is actually going on. Additionally, Peterson and Muehlenhard's study suggests that individuals sometimes choose a definition or adjust their definition from situation to situation so that their definition will result in positive consequences. These types of definitions are considered motivated definitions (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2007: 257). It is suggested from the literature, as well as from the data, that participants constantly redefine hooking up to suit their needs, whether that means to prevent feeling rejected or to convince oneself that what occurred was not sexual assault.

In all of the interviews in which sexual assault and rape came up, the actual terms were rarely used. Students were often unsure of whether sexual assault occurred or if their experience is just a normal and expected outcome of hooking up. The one student in my own study who experienced rape reported that it took her months to understand that what had happened to her was indeed rape. She said, “Like, it could not have been a problem, it could not have been painful and wrong because this is how hooking up works.” The difference between hooking up and rape is sometimes very minimal.

Sexual Assault “Prevention”

Sexual assault prevention often takes the form of victim-blaming programs that teach women how to avoid being raped. Self-defense courses are taught at many universities, including UD, so that women can protect themselves from rapists. This approach does not take into account that most rapes are perpetrated by people that women know, and without the use of physical force. Self-defense is useless in a party situation in which everyone is intoxicated, having fun and is a trusted community member. Schiffman suggests that it is clear that education and policy are intertwined and mutually reinforcing branches. They must be addressed as a totality in order to create meaningful change. Elements of a coordinated campus system have worked well at other institutions and provide useful lessons as we contemplate restructuring our own work.

Conclusion

After comparing my own ethnographic data with the reports from other studies, my findings suggest that most students come into the university expecting to participate in the hook up culture that they have been told, or even warned, about. Once they get here, much of this evidence suggests they experience high levels of pressure to participate because hooking up is a necessary ritual for becoming an adult in this context. They are not explicitly aware of the ritualistic role that hooking up serves, however they do ascribe status to hooking up. The more successful a student is at hooking up, the higher status they achieve. This is related to the fact that the hookup culture is the primary way in which men and women engage in sexual activity together. There are no other alternative sexual cultures that are given as much visibility and status. Students who opt out of hooking up for religious reasons or because they are in relationships often feel marginalized because there are no other “cool” options for weekend activities. They sometimes go to parties and peripherally participate in hookup culture, however they often end up in situations in which they did not want to be in, or end up stranded as their friends leave with men.

Because of the idea that hooking up is a ritual that is a part of the college liminal experience, there are not only high expectations to participate and a large range of visibility, but the student population is also brought closer together because of hooking up. In liminal states, members of the community are closely bonded together because of the shared state and participation in common rituals. This creates a sense of community on college campuses, in which students are encouraged and expected to trust all members of their community. Those who are not members of this culture are seen as a threat, while those within the boundaries are trusted. This is

dangerous because students are not thinking about the fact that a member of this college community can hurt them just as much as a stranger can.

On that note, a large part of the hookup culture involves Greek organizations. Campus policy generally does not allow drinking in the dorms, so students seek alcohol outside of the campus limits. Fraternities hold the largest and most “successful” parties. Students, especially freshmen who cannot access alcohol or fun anywhere else due to being underage and having limited social networks, attend these parties where men control every aspect of the party, including noise level, amount and quality of alcohol available, who enters and who does not, and sometimes even transportation to and from the party. This, in combination with the normalization of male sexual coercion, creates a situation in which fraternity members virtually cannot fail at hooking up. There is an abundance of young women seeking alcohol, which they provide, a lack of competing men, and complete control of the space. They set the stage for normal behavior, and so when they have sex with a highly intoxicated woman, it goes unquestioned due to the frequency and timing of these events.

Both hooking up and sexual assault are not clearly defined actions. They are inherently ambiguous. Ambiguity is central to liminality, as a liminal place and time is one in which there are very few rules of the outside world, and new rules are created that suit the needs of the liminal group. In the “real world,” partying and hooking up with strangers is generally allowed, however in college this is expected. Hooking up is ambiguous because the point of it is that it is dynamic and pliable to suit the situation. Hooking up allows the participant to never fail, because they can change the definition to imply that they were successful at hooking up, when they might not have been by a previously created definition. Sexual assault is also

ambiguous, as many people do not want to consider themselves victims. Women who experience sexual assault in the hookup culture often use the ambiguity of the situation to craft the situation into one in which they had some control. They define it as a hookup because that is less painful than saying that they blacked out at a party and were raped.

Finally, the kinds of sexual assault prevention and policies that currently exist are often victim-blaming. They teach self-defense, which ignores the fact that most rapes occur in party situations between people who trust one another, due to the sense of community among partygoers. There are some programs that address sexual assault and rape in effective ways, however there is not enough funding to expand these programs and make them mandatory. The reality is that students opt out of such programs when given the choice, and there are not enough resources and staff to implement these programs on a university-wide scale.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

College is a fun and exciting time for students. Many use it as an opportunity to explore their sexuality. The way in which the college culture is structured, it is difficult to experiment sexually without participating in the hookup culture. It is pervasive on college campuses, as it is the primary way in which sex occurs. While my research suggests that the hookup culture has the potential to be dangerous, I am not suggesting that we do away with it entirely. Despite the potential damage, it is an important, and even necessary, part of the college experience. We know that students are going to have sex no matter what, and they are entitled to do so.

Hooking up is not inherently bad; it is definitely inherently ambiguous, and that ambiguity causes problems in combination with other variables. However, it can become a much more positive human interaction if there is a shift in the culture. With the right prevention programs, the occurrence of sexual assault and rape can be diminished.

Potential Policy Changes

In looking at the hookup culture anthropologically, my approach is ethnographic, giving priority to the value of what research participants had to say. The research participants created the categories that became relevant in this study due to the open-ended nature of the discussions. This is relevant because we get to see the

perspectives of the people who are actually affected by the events taking place in the hookup culture.

Having said that, it is important to note that in all of my interviews, students expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to talk about hooking up. They all claimed to have learned something about either themselves, the hookup culture in general, or about their own values in relation to the larger culture. They said they never have had to talk about these topics in such direct ways. Their testimonies are wonderful indications of the kinds of programs that need to exist on this campus in order to create cultural change. Cultural change cannot come from bureaucratic policies imposed on a target group. Instead it must come from the active participation of people at the ground level living in that culture. If the administration is to be involved, the approach to change would need to be one of mutual respect and mutual learning. Just as I learned of what variables were important to examine in the hookup culture based on the student discussions, I also learned what kind of programs should be implemented with the support of administrations. Programs that tell students what or how to think about the hookup culture are not and will not be effective. Students unfortunately do not like to be told what to do. What is more likely to work are programs that place priority of value on the students' categories and perspectives. If a program can be developed that enables students to participate in their own education, they might be able to create the tools and strategies to avoid violence and rape, as well as to avoid perpetrating such acts.

Implementing such a program would be costly, as it would be a mandatory requirement that all students attend for four years. The group size would have to be small to ensure that the students involved can actively participate in the discussions.

Thus, it would require many resources, hiring and training of staff, and time. However, the advantage of a program that places priority on the perspectives of the students is that it would not need revision once it is in place. As student culture begins to shift, the “lessons” in this program won’t be outdated because the lessons really are the ideas that the students bring to the program. Additionally, the program itself could collect data about hooking up, sexual assault, and other issues on campus as a feedback channel. The university could continuously find out whether or not rates of rape and sexual assault were decreasing, and what students think would further help to reduce crime on campus.

Suggestions for Further Research

The goal of this study was to get a basic understanding of hookup culture and its potential role in triggering sexual violence and rape. The UD research, when compared with the results of longer-term more comprehensive studies, provided results that are suggestive about how students perceive the hookup culture on the University of Delaware’s campus and the kinds of future research that can clarify the understanding of this aspect of student culture. Using evidence from studies conducted at other universities, I was able to identify a few of the variables at work in this culture that increase the danger of sexual assault. Due to the time frame in which I was working I was unable to collect comprehensive data, though my data does suggest that there is some kind of a connection between the hookup culture and sexual assault. More research needs to be conducted, and on a much larger scale. Future research on this topic should include a larger sample of students from each graduating class, major, residence hall, Greek organization, race, ethnicity, gender, as well as other categories that are not yet evident.

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