

# **Risk Factors and Consequences of Unwanted Sex Among University Students**

## **Hooking Up, Alcohol, and Stress Response**

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This is the first study of unwanted sexual experiences in the collegiate “hooking-up” culture. In a representative sample of 178 students at a small liberal arts university. Twenty-three percent of women and 7% of men surveyed reported one or more experiences of unwanted sexual intercourse. Seventy-eight percent of unwanted vaginal, anal, and oral incidents took place while—“hooking up,”— whereas 78% of unwanted fondling incidents occurred at parties or bars. The most frequently endorsed reason for unwanted sexual intercourse was impaired judgment due to alcohol. The most frequently endorsed reason for unwanted fondling was that it happened before the perpetrator could be stopped. Of those affected by unwanted sexual intercourse or unwanted fondling, 46.7% and 19.2% reported unwanted memories, 50% and 32.7% reported avoidance and numbing responses, and 30% and 26.9%

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reported hyperarousal responses, respectively. A preliminary model of unwanted sex and collegiate social dynamics is proposed to provide a heuristic for further research.

**Keywords:** *unwanted sex; hooking up; alcohol; psychological stress; college students*

Unwanted sexual behavior, including assault and rape, remains an all too common experience among college students (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Unwanted sexual behavior is a general concept that includes sexual assault or rape but that may also incorporate any behavior involving sexual contact experienced as harmful or regretful during or following the incident. Thus, in addition to unwanted sexual intercourse involving vaginal, anal, or genital-oral contact, fondling (nonpenetrating) behavior is also included under this rubric. Unlike sexual assault or rape, the correlates and consequences of unwanted sexual behavior are not yet well understood. The purpose of the present, survey-based study of female and male university students was to investigate relationships among four types of unwanted sexual behavior (vaginal, anal, and oral intercourse and fondling), likely risk factors such as female gender and alcohol intoxication, presumable but not yet documented risk factors such as “hooking up,” and subsequent symptoms of posttraumatic stress (PTS).

Studies conducted on national and representative samples of college students have revealed high proportions of unwanted sexual experiences, particularly although not exclusively among young women (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan, 1996; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Struckman-Johnson, 1988; U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Koss and colleagues (1987) indicated that 27.5% of the college women in their national sample reported incidents of unwanted sex that met the legal definition of rape or attempted rape. Most of these assaults were committed in the context of a “date,” and most were not labeled by survivors as either rape or attempted rape. Although the Koss et al. findings have been the subject of debate in the popular press (e.g., Roiphe, 1993), more recent national data on sexual assaults of college women (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000) are consistent with the “one-in-four” figure often cited for the percentage of women who experience sexual assault.

Sexual assault among college students is known to occur frequently in the context of romantic or intimate dating (e.g., Abbey et al., 1996). However, the nature of intimate contact among college students appears to be changing.

Single, casual encounters known as “hooking up,” sometimes involving sexual intercourse but with no expectation of future commitment, appear to be increasingly prevalent in this population (Institute for American Values, 2001; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Although hooking up is not yet well understood, women commonly but men rarely describe their worst hookup experiences as involving pressure to engage in unwanted sexual behavior, and women are more likely than men to feel shame for engaging in these behaviors during a hookup (Paul & Hayes, 2002). However, no research has yet examined whether hooking up increases the risk of unwanted sexual contact over and above other forms of heterosexual interaction.

One factor that has been shown to be strongly related to sexual assault among college students is the consumption of alcohol (National Research Council, 1996). The Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002) reports that approximately 40% of college students indicate regular, heavy use of alcohol, often with serious consequences, including sexual assault and victimization. As with sexual assault, the broader category of unwanted sex also seems likely to be related to the use of alcohol.

Finally, the experience of sexual assault is also strongly related to subsequent symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among women (Gavranidou & Rosner, 2003; National Research Council, 1996), including sexual assaults experienced by female college students (Layman, Gidycz, & Lynn, 1996). Among men, the relationship between PTSD and sexual victimization is less clear because incidents of sexual victimization (during adulthood) reported by men are so few in number and perhaps because men are less likely to report PTS (Gavranidou & Rosner, 2003). Because the category of unwanted sexual behavior includes experiences that are, presumably, less psychologically stressful (e.g., fondling and intercourse that is not forced), the extent to which these events are related to subsequent stress responses is as yet unclear.

## **The Present Study and Hypotheses**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships among self-reported instances of unwanted sexual behavior (unwanted vaginal, anal, and oral intercourse and unwanted fondling); the types of social circumstances in which such events occur (hookups, dating, ongoing relationships, parties, and bars); the factors that contributed to those encounters (alcohol or

other drugs, easier to just go along, happened before could be stopped, verbal and physical pressure, desired at the time, maintain a relationship); predictors of unwanted sexual behavior, including frequency of hooking up and alcohol use; and subsequent stress responses (re-experiencing, avoidance and numbing, hyperarousal) among college students.

First, we expected to replicate and extend previous findings from the literature on sexual assault in our findings on the broader problem of unwanted sexual behavior. Thus, women were expected to report more experiences of unwanted intercourse (vaginal, anal, and oral) and unwanted fondling as compared with men. Second, we hypothesized that unwanted intercourse would be reported to occur most frequently in the context of hookups and that participants who hooked up more frequently would be more likely to report unwanted intercourse. In contrast, we expected that unwanted fondling would be reported to occur most frequently in public situations such as parties or bars. Third, we predicted that alcohol would play an important role in unwanted sexual behavior, such that alcohol intoxication and subsequent deterioration in decision making would be the most frequently reported reasons for the occurrence of unwanted intercourse and unwanted fondling and that more frequent drinkers would be more likely to report unwanted sexual behavior. Fourth, we expected that reports of unwanted intercourse would be related to reports of stress responses but that reports of unwanted fondling would not.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Two hundred and fifty students older than 18 were selected randomly from the directory of a small liberal arts university in a rural region of the northeastern United States during the spring of 2002. All 178 (71% of the selected sample, including 107 women and 71 men) who were successfully contacted agreed to complete a single survey developed for use in this study (this unpublished survey is available on request from the first author). Students at this campus were predominantly Caucasian and from upper middle-class backgrounds. The first section of the survey included questions about participants' demographic characteristics, the frequency and intensity of their alcohol consumption, participants' sexual histories, and their personal experiences of hookups. Eighty-four (47.2%) were between the ages of 18 and 19, 93 (52.2%) were between 20 and 22, and 1 (0.6%) was between 23 and 25. Sixty-five (36.5%) of these participants were first-year

students, 49 (27.5%) were sophomores, 25 (14.0%) were juniors (this group was underrepresented because 42% of students at this university typically study abroad during their junior year), and 39 (21.9%) were seniors (one student who indicated fifth-year status was included with the group of seniors). Of those 113 students who were eligible for membership in Greek organizations (first-year students were not eligible for Greek membership at this university), 54 (47.8%) were members, and 59 (52.2%) were not. Forty-one (23.0%) of the students were members of university athletic teams, and 136 (76.4%) were not. One hundred and three (57.9%) characterized themselves as “religious,” whereas 74 (41.6%) did not. The vast majority of the sample indicated a heterosexual orientation (174, or 97.8%), with three students’ (1.7%) indicating a bisexual orientation and one student’s (0.6%) indicating a homosexual orientation.

Fifteen (8.4%) of the participants reported that they never consumed alcohol. Of those who did report alcohol consumption, 51 (31.3%) indicated that they usually drank one to three times per month, 66 (40.5%) one to two times per week, and 46 (28.2%) more than twice per week (one student who indicated daily use of alcohol was included in this third group). Parenthetically, of those who were not old enough to consume alcohol legally, the vast majority (73, or 86.9%) indicated that they did so, as compared with 11 (13.1%) who indicated that they did not. Frequency of alcohol consumption did not differ by gender or class year. Of those students who reported consuming alcohol, 70 (43.8%) indicated they usually drank to get “buzzed” (mildly intoxicated), whereas 90 (56.3%) reported usually drinking to get “drunk” or “wasted” (heavily intoxicated). The usual intensity of alcohol consumption did not differ by gender or class year.

Two thirds (122, or 68.5%) of the participants indicated that they had engaged in sexual intercourse at some point in time, whereas the remaining third (56, or 31.5%) indicated that they had not. History of sexual intercourse did not differ by gender or by class year. Two thirds (122 out of 178, or 68.5%) of participants in the entire sample indicated that they had hooked up at some point in time, whereas the remaining third (56, or 31.5%) indicated that they had not. Although these numbers mirror those for sexual intercourse, reports of hooking up were related to but were not simply a proxy for reports of sexual intercourse. About one fourth (28, or 23.0%) of those who reported having had sexual intercourse also reported never having hooked up, whereas another fourth (29, or 23.6%) of those who reported hooking up also reported never having had sexual intercourse:  $\chi^2(1, N = 178) = 11.47, p = .00$ , Cramér’s  $\phi = .24$ . History of hooking up differed significantly by class year; the lowest percentage of hooking up occurred among first-year students

(66.2%) and the highest among seniors (84.6%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 178) = 8.09$ ,  $p = .04$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .21$ , although it did not differ by gender.

## Measure

The second section of the survey contained questions about participants' personal experiences of unwanted sexual behaviors and associated phenomena. Separate subsections were devoted to unwanted vaginal, anal, and oral intercourse and unwanted fondling, and each began with the following question: "Have you ever engaged in vaginal intercourse (anal intercourse, oral sex) while at [the university] when you didn't want to?" and "Have you ever been fondled or fondled someone else while at [the university] when you didn't want to?" If students indicated an experience of one of these types of unwanted sexual behavior, they were asked about the frequency of this experience, followed by a series of questions about "the worst time this happened," in the following order. First, they were asked to indicate the social context (a "hookup," "date," or "relationship," and in the case of unwanted fondling, "while dancing or hanging out at a party or bar") in which the experience occurred. They were then asked to rank order the importance of all of the following factors that were relevant to the worst episode:

1. I was taken advantage of because I was wasted (i.e., passed out, blacked out, or unable to communicate or leave).
2. I decided to go along because my judgment was impaired by alcohol or drugs.
3. It was just easier to go along rather than cause trouble or make a scene.
4. It happened before I was able to stop it.
5. The other person pressured me verbally.
6. I was afraid the other person would hurt me if I didn't go along.
7. The other person pressured me by using physical force.
8. I couldn't control myself because I was so turned on.
9. I thought I wanted it at the time.
10. I wanted to establish or continue a relationship with this person.

These items were followed by a question about whether or not the participant defined this worst event as "rape" (in the case of unwanted vaginal or anal intercourse) or "sexual assault" (in the case of unwanted oral intercourse or fondling). At the end of each subsection devoted to each of the four types of unwanted sexual behavior, participants indicated if they had been affected by one or more stress responses in response to the worst such incident. The stress responses assessed in this study consisted of the 17 thoughts, feelings, and behaviors currently included as symptoms of PTSD

(American Psychiatric Association, 1994) represented by six items in the survey, two each related to re-experiencing, avoidance and numbing, and hyperarousal, as follows:

1. Having unwanted memories, thoughts, or dreams of the episode.
2. Feeling very upset or having physical reactions when reminded of the episode.
3. Avoiding talking or thinking about the episode or avoiding situations where you think the other person might be.
4. Losing interest in usual activities, feeling distant or cut off from other people, or feeling emotionally numb.
5. Being especially watchful or on guard or being easily startled.
6. Having trouble sleeping, being irritable, or having difficulty concentrating.

The language used in these six items was based on the civilian version of the PTSD Checklist for DSM-IV (Weathers, Litz, Huska, & Keane, 1994).

## **Procedure**

This study was approved by the institutional research review board of the university, and all procedures used were in compliance with the ethics code of the American Psychological Association (2002). Participants filled out surveys individually, in a large classroom, in the presence of student members of the research team. Anonymity was assured by having participants seal their completed surveys in an envelope and placing the envelope into a slotted box. Participants were each reimbursed \$7.00 for their time and effort, and a written debriefing was provided to explain the purpose of the study.

## **Results**

### **Unwanted Sexual Intercourse and Unwanted Fondling**

Thirty (16.9%) out of 178 participants in the sample indicated that they had experienced at least one of the three types of unwanted sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, oral) while at the university. Among these 30 participants, 59 incidents of unwanted intercourse were reported. Nineteen (10.7%) participants (16 women and 3 men) reported at least one incident of unwanted vaginal sex (27 such incidents were reported in all), 2 (1.1%) participants (both women) reported one incident each of unwanted anal sex, and 16 (9.0%)

students (12 women and 4 men) reported at least one incident of unwanted oral sex (30 such incidents were reported in all) while at the university. More women (25, or 23.4% of all women in the sample) than men (5, or 7.0% of all men in the sample) reported experiences of one of the three types of unwanted intercourse:  $\chi^2(1, N = 178) = 8.11, p = .00$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .21$ . Reports of at least one of the three types of unwanted intercourse differed marginally by class year: 7 (10.8%) first-year students, 8 (16.3%) sophomores, 3 (12.0%) juniors, and 12 (30.8%) seniors:  $\chi^2(3, N = 178) = 7.54, p = .06$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .21$ .

Fifty-two (29.2%) of the participants indicated that they had experienced unwanted fondling while at the university, and these students reported a total of 153 such instances. More women (39, or 36.8% of the women in the sample) than men (13, or 18.3% of the men in the sample) reported experiences of unwanted fondling:  $\chi^2(1, N = 178) = 7.00, p = .01$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .20$ . Reports of unwanted fondling did not differ by class year.

### **Hooking Up, Unwanted Sexual Intercourse, and Unwanted Fondling**

The 30 participants who had experienced unwanted vaginal ( $n = 19$ ), anal ( $n = 2$ ), and/or oral ( $n = 16$ ) intercourse were asked to indicate the context in which the only or worst such incident occurred. One participant failed to answer this question. Of the remaining 36 incidents, most were reported to have taken place in the context of a hookup (28, or 77.8%). Substantially fewer incidents were reported to have taken place in the context of a date (3, or 8.3%) or in the context of an ongoing relationship (5, or 13.9%). In contrast, most (40, or 78.4%) of the 52 students who reported experiences of unwanted fondling indicated that their worst or only incident took place while dancing or hanging out at a party or bar. Only 6 (11.8%) indicated that it happened during a hookup, 1 (2.0%) in the context of an ongoing relationship, and the remaining 4 (7.8%) in an unspecified context. One student did not answer this question.

As expected, students with a history of hooking up were more likely to report incidents of unwanted intercourse. In fact, 30 of the 122 students who had hooked up reported unwanted intercourse compared to none of the 55 students who had never hooked up:  $\chi^2(1, N = 177) = 16.29, p = .00$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .30$ . Nearly a third (25, or 32.5%) of the women who had hooked up reported having experienced unwanted sexual intercourse. The incidence rate of unwanted intercourse among men who had hooked up was considerably less (5, or 10.9%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 7.50, p = .01$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .25$ . Among students with some history of hooking up, the number of hookups was not



related to whether they had ( $M = 13.70$ ,  $SD = 10.99$ ) or had not ( $M = 10.43$ ,  $SD = 15.79$ ) experienced unwanted intercourse:  $t(120) = 1.064$ ,  $p = .15$ , Cohen's  $d = .22$ .

### **Alcohol, Unwanted Sexual Intercourse, and Unwanted Fondling**

The frequencies of affected women and men who ranked each item listed among the top three reasons for their worst or only experience of each type of unwanted sexual intercourse and unwanted fondling are contained in Table 1. The reasons most frequently ranked in the top three across all types of unwanted sexual intercourse were “judgment impaired by alcohol or drugs” (in relation to 23, or 62.2%, of 37 worst or only incidents), “happened before I could stop it” (14, or 37.8%), “taken advantage of because wasted” (12, or 32.4%), “thought I wanted it at the time” (12, 32.4%), “easier to go along than cause trouble” (9, or 24.3%), “other person pressured me verbally” (9, or 24.3%), and “couldn’t control myself because I was so turned on” (8, or 21.6%). All other reasons listed were ranked first, second, or third in relation to less than 20% of the incidents.

The reasons most frequently ranked in the top three for unwanted fondling were “happened before I could stop it” (in relation to 35, or 67.3% of worst or only incidents), “judgment impaired by alcohol or drugs” (23, or 44.2%), and “easier to go along than cause trouble” (16, or 21.2%). All other reasons listed were ranked first, second, or third in relation to less than 20% of the incidents.

Important differences in the reasons cited for unwanted fondling and unwanted sexual intercourse emerged. “Happened before I could stop it” was more frequently endorsed as a reason for unwanted fondling (35, or 67.3%) than it was for unwanted intercourse (14, or 37.8%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 89) = 7.59$ ,  $p = .01$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .29$ . In addition, “taken advantage of because wasted” was more frequently endorsed as a reason for unwanted intercourse (12, or 32.4%) than it was for unwanted fondling (6, or 11.5%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 89) = 5.89$ ,  $p = .02$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .26$ .

Students who reported experiencing unwanted sexual behavior also reported drinking more frequently. On average, those who experienced unwanted intercourse reported that they drank more than once a week ( $M = 105.88$ ), whereas those who had not experienced unwanted intercourse reported that they drank less than once a week ( $M = 85.07$ ),  $W = 12505.50$ ,  $p = .04$ . Similarly, those who experienced unwanted fondling reported more frequent drinking ( $M = 130.07$ ) than those who had not experienced unwanted fondling ( $M = 87.31$ ),  $W = 14842.50$ ,  $p = .03$ .

**Table 1**  
**Frequencies and Percentages of Students Endorsing**  
**Top Three Reasons for Worst or Only Experience**  
**of Unwanted Sex**

Reason	Type of unwanted sex			
	Vaginal ( $n_{\text{women}} = 16$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 3$ ) Freq. (%)	Anal ( $n_{\text{women}} = 2$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 0$ ) Freq. (%)	Oral ( $n_{\text{women}} = 12$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 4$ ) Freq. (%)	Fondling ( $n_{\text{women}} = 39$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 13$ ) Freq. (%)
Judgment impaired by alcohol or drugs				
Women	11 (68.8%)	0 (0%)	9 (75.0%)	15 (38.5%)
Men	2 (66.7%)	— —	1 (25.0%)	8 (61.5%)
Taken advantage of because wasted				
Women	3 (18.8%)	0 (0%)	7 (58.3%)	5 (12.8%)
Men	2 (66.7%)	— —	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)
Thought I wanted it at the time				
Women	6 (37.5%)	1 (50.0%)	3 (25.0%)	5 (12.8%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	1 (25.0%)	5 (38.5%)
Easier to go along than cause trouble				
Women	3 (18.8%)	1 (50.0%)	5 (41.7%)	7 (17.9%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)
Happened before I could stop it				
Women	8 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)	4 (33.3%)	29 (74.4%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	0 (0%)	6 (46.2%)

(continued)

**Table 1 (continued)**

Other person pressured me verbally				
Women	3 (18.8%)	0 (0%)	5 (41.7%)	1 (2.6%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)
Couldn't control myself because so turned on				
Women	5 (31.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (5.1%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	1 (25.0%)	5 (38.5%)
Wanted to establish or continue a relationship				
Women	3 (18.8%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.6%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	2 (50.0%)	2 (15.4%)
Afraid other person would hurt me				
Women	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)	0 (0%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other person pressured me physically				
Women	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (5.1%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

### Incidents of Unwanted Sex Defined as Rape or Assault, and Reports to Authorities

Only 2 of the 18 women (11.1%) and none of the three men who reported unwanted vaginal or anal intercourse defined their worst or only such incidents as “rape.” Three (18.8%) of the students who reported experiences of unwanted oral sex and 13 (25.0%) of the students who reported experiences of unwanted fondling defined their worst or only such incidents as a “sexual assault.” Only 2 (3.1%) of the students who indicated experiences of any type of unwanted sexual behavior reported these incidents to university authorities.

## Stress Responses Endorsed in Relation to Unwanted Sex

The groupings of stress responses reported in association with the affected men's and women's worst or only experiences of each type of unwanted sex are contained in Table 2. Of the 30 individuals who reported at least one incident of unwanted intercourse, 14 (46.7%) endorsed at least one re-experiencing response in relation to their worst or only incidents. A significantly lower percentage of the students who reported at least one incident of unwanted fondling (10, or 19.2%) endorsed at least one re-experiencing response in relation to their worst or only incidents:  $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 6.92, p = .01$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .29$ . In addition, half (15) of the students who reported at least one incident of unwanted intercourse endorsed at least one avoidance and numbing response, while just less than one third (17, or 32.7%) of the students who reported at least one incident of unwanted fondling did so; this difference was not statistically significant:  $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 2.40, p = .12$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .17$ . Hyperarousal responses were endorsed at similar rates by the students who reported at least one incident of unwanted intercourse (9, or 30.0%) or unwanted fondling (14, or 26.9%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 0.09, p = .77$ , Cramér's  $\phi = .03$ .

## Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis that female students are more likely to experience unwanted sex (unwanted intercourse and unwanted fondling) than are male students. Twenty-three percent and 37% of women, as compared to only 7% and 18% of men, reported at least one incident of unwanted intercourse and unwanted fondling, respectively. Most students who reported experiences of unwanted sexual behavior did not classify these incidents either as "rape" or as "sexual assault," and only a tiny minority reported them to campus authorities. These findings are consistent with previous results indicating that experiences of sexual assault and victimization are more prevalent among college women than men and with differences in rates of unwanted sex as reported in anonymous surveys versus those reported to authorities. The results are also important because they extend the earlier findings to a broader domain of potentially harmful sexual experience.

The results of this study also support the hypothesis that hooking up is a risk factor for unwanted sexual intercourse. Seventy-eight percent of unwanted sexual intercourse occurred during a hookup. In addition, participants who had hooked up were significantly more likely to have experienced

**Table 2**  
**Frequencies and Percentages of Students Endorsing**  
**Stress-Response Groupings in Relation to Worst or Only**  
**Incident of Unwanted Sex and Fondling**

Stress-response grouping	Type of unwanted sex			
	Vaginal ( $n_{\text{women}} = 16$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 3$ ) Freq. (%)	Anal ( $n_{\text{women}} = 2$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 0$ ) Freq. (%)	Oral ( $n_{\text{women}} = 12$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 4$ ) Freq. (%)	Fondling ( $n_{\text{women}} = 39$ ) ( $n_{\text{men}} = 13$ ) Freq. (%)
Unwanted memories, thoughts, and/or dreams				
Women	8 (50.0%)	0 (0%)	3 (25.0%)	4 (10.3%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	0 (0%)	3 (23.1%)
Feeling upset and/or physical reactions when reminded				
Women	7 (43.8%)	1 (50.0%)	4 (33.3%)	4 (10.3%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)
Avoiding talking or thinking about and/or avoiding situations				
Women	10 (62.5%)	1 (50.0%)	6 (50.0%)	10 (25.6%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	4 (30.8%)
Losing interest; feeling distant, cut off, and/or emotionally numb				
Women	3 (18.8%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)	3 (7.7%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)
Especially watchful, on guard, and/or easily startled				
Women	2 (12.5%)	1 (50.0%)	2 (16.7%)	11 (28.2%)
Men	1 (33.3%)	— —	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)
Trouble sleeping, irritable, and/or difficulty concentrating				
Women	3 (18.8%)	0 (0%)	3 (25.0%)	3 (7.7%)
Men	0 (0%)	— —	0 (0%)	11 (84.6%)

unwanted sex than participants who had never hooked up. In contrast to unwanted sexual intercourse, only slightly more than 10% of unwanted fondling incidents were reported to have occurred during a hookup. As predicted, most of these incidents were said to have occurred in contexts such as bars or parties, where the anonymity experienced in groups or crowds, frequently combined with alcohol consumption, may foster such experiences.

The hypothesis that alcohol would play an important role in unwanted sexual behavior was also supported. First, students who reported unwanted intercourse or unwanted fondling also reported higher frequencies of drinking. Furthermore, impaired judgment because of alcohol intoxication was the most frequently endorsed of the top three reasons for the occurrence of unwanted intercourse and unwanted fondling. "Taken advantage of because I was wasted" was also endorsed by nearly a third of the students who had experienced unwanted intercourse. However, "happened before I could stop it," "thought I wanted it at the time," "other person pressured me verbally," and "easier to go along than cause trouble" were also endorsed by substantial numbers of students. Thus, although problematic alcohol consumption may be an important factor in explaining the occurrence of unwanted sexual behavior, affected students indicated that the reasons are both more numerous and more complex.

Stress responses were endorsed by significant proportions of those female respondents who reported unwanted sexual experiences. Approximately one half of students reporting one of the three types of unwanted sexual intercourse indicated at least one re-experiencing response and avoidance and numbing responses, and almost one third reported at least one hyperarousal response. However, stress responses were also reported, contrary to expectations, in relation to unwanted fondling as well. Although re-experiencing responses were endorsed twice as often in relation to unwanted sexual intercourse as compared to unwanted fondling, reports of avoidance and numbing responses were only marginally different, whereas reports of hyperarousal responses did not differ. Thus, unwanted fondling may be more stressful, and thus, potentially more harmful than most might anticipate.

## **Limitations**

Although the findings can reasonably be expected to generalize to Caucasian, heterosexual undergraduate students in similar academic and rural environments, they should not be assumed to characterize students of color, those with homosexual or bisexual orientations, those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those who are enrolled in large, public

universities, or those who live in urban environments. The manner in which participants were asked to report on stress responses, although based on language in a standard self-report measure of posttraumatic stress symptoms, did not allow for specification or independent verification of the individual symptoms of PTSD, so that at best, only general indications of stress-related reactions might emerge. Finally, while first-year students could report on events that took place during a period of time less than 1 academic year, seniors were required to recall events that may have taken place almost 3 years before the time at which they completed the survey.

### **Toward an Explanation for Unwanted Sex**

The increased prevalence of hooking up on college campuses may be the single most important factor in the currently high incidence of unwanted sex among women. Although a high incidence of "date rape" has been identified in previous research (Abbey et al., 1996; Koss et al., 1987), the replacement of traditional dating with hooking up may be especially problematic. Hooking up is typically although not always unplanned, with the often implicit assumption of physical but not necessarily emotional intimacy and with no sense of commitment over time (e.g., Institute for American Values, 2001; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). In contrast, dating is usually a planned event entailing the assumption of at least some emotional, if not physical, intimacy. What is more, hooking up is almost always associated with alcohol consumption, and often, with heavy intoxication (Flack, et al., 2005).

Thus, hooking up provides an ideal context in which some women may experience unwanted sex, for a number of reasons. Women and men are likely to differ in the level of physical intimacy that they want. Women have consistently indicated significantly less permissive attitudes toward casual sexual intercourse, as compared with men (Oliver & Hyde, 1993). More recently, we have found that 67% of college men in one sample reported that they would want to engage in oral sex or vaginal intercourse during a hookup, as compared to only 20% of women (Daubman & Schatten, 2005).

The high incidence of unwanted sex reported by women demonstrates that men often get what they want, whereas women often do not. Why is this the case? An adequate answer seems to require explanation at two interrelated levels of analysis. At the dyadic level, some incidents of unwanted sex occur because the man disregards either the woman's wishes or her lack of capacity to give consent; that is, some instances of unwanted sex constitute rape or assault. Other instances, however, may be cases of miscommunication or

even subsequent regret. The nature of hooking up makes effective communication about one's sexual limits difficult to achieve. Men, on one hand, not only want more physical intimacy than women, but many of them seem to believe that women want the same level of intimacy that they do (Daubman & Schatten, 2005). Women, on the other hand, understand that most men want to "have sex" during a hookup (Daubman & Schatten, 2005) and may feel as though they have little power (physical or social), and thus, little choice but to acquiesce ("it was easier to go along than to cause trouble"). It is one thing for a woman to understand intellectually that a man probably wants greater physical intimacy than she does; it is another to try to deal with this difference when hooking up is by far the most popular option for intimate heterosexual interaction, or more specifically, when she gets drunk and finds herself in a partner's room with his hand in her blouse or up her skirt.

At the social level of analysis, the hooking up "culture" may be supported and reinforced by campus social dynamics that are largely controlled by men and dictated by blatant, if not explicit, sexist attitudes.<sup>1</sup> Cases in which the social scene on a small, relatively insulated campus is directed by a traditionally strong Greek system, and especially ones in which the power differential favoring men is maintained by factors such as differences in housing (e.g., fraternities may have houses, while sororities may only have wings of dormitories), seem especially likely to produce conditions that are unfavorable to women. Past studies have documented the hyper-masculine attitudes encouraged by fraternities, characterized by competition, athleticism, heavy drinking, sexual domination of women (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997), and sexism among fraternity members (Boeringer, 1999).

On campuses dominated by fraternities, men are clearly the ones in control. Most of the parties are held in the fraternities (parties may not even be allowed in the sorority accommodations) or in houses off campus rented by fraternity members, and when such parties are not "open," men are the ones who decide which women (and men) will be invited. Because many of the women invited are unknown to their hosts, their physical attractiveness is the factor that, presumably, leads to their invitations. Attractiveness is often determined by perusal of high school "mug shots" collected in booklets (sometimes dubbed "pig-books") that are produced and freely distributed on campus and are thus easily accessible at the start of each academic year. These may even provide further helpful information in the form of the student's name, local contact information, high school, and hometown, the last two of which can be used to make judgments about socioeconomic status. If local contact information cannot be found in the booklet, the campus



computer system (sometimes dubbed “stalker-net”) provides a backup option. Once granted admission to a fraternity party, women may be plied with sweet-tasting drinks that mask high alcohol content or with other date-rape drugs, substantially increasing the odds of overconsumption, intoxication, and amenability to intimate advances. Some men may even provide the use of their bedrooms as “hookup rooms.” Some may feel strongly compelled to seek out sexual exploits, in part because of peer pressure to collect and report publicly on their successes, a tradition sometimes referred to as “formals stories” (because the stories relate to formal dance parties). In short, there are many potential factors operating in this type of environment (only a few of which have been subjects of research to date) that may actively promote or passively reinforce the combination of hooking up and high alcohol consumption that produces the context for unwanted sexual experiences.

### **Why Does Unwanted Sex Matter?**

Unwanted sex matters, at least in part, because it may be associated with significant psychological stress. Severe, traumatic stress is often the result of an extreme violation of one’s expectations about the conduct of other people (Herman, 1992). Women whose expectations about the outcomes of intimate contact, such as hooking up, are violated may be at increased risk for subsequent stress responses. Whether such experiences are or become sufficiently severe to warrant the identification of PTSD symptoms probably depends on a combination of factors, including the individual’s previous history of stressful events, the degree of violation (e.g., unwanted fondling versus unwanted vaginal intercourse), and the availability of adequate social support.

Unwanted sex, although often a violation of campus conduct codes, is rarely reported to university authorities because of the interpersonal consequences; reporters often become pariahs as the campus society circles the wagons to maintain the sexual status quo. Like other types of stressful experiences, the few reports of unwanted sex that do become public are downplayed, put into statistical context, or otherwise quickly forgotten. Reducing the prevalence of unwanted sex requires that those of us in positions of authority acknowledge openly and report publicly about our students’ experiences and conduct the research necessary to provide crucial information about current social dynamics on college campuses. With this knowledge in hand, we can then begin to work on the means for educating our students about these matters and for helping them to choose more egalitarian and healthy means of intimacy.

## Note

1. The following material is based on anecdotal accounts given to us by students.

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