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FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS FOR HOOKING UP: A MIXED-METHODS EXAMINATION OF NORMATIVE PEER PERCEPTIONS AND PERSONAL HOOKUP PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

This study used content analysis techniques to explore 221 first-year college women's perceptions of female peers' reasons (i.e., normative perceptions) for hooking up. Data on personal participation in hooking up were also collected. The well-established Drinking Motives Questionnaire (Cooper, 1994) was used as a framework for coding positive (enhancement or social) and negative (coping or conformity) normative hookup motivations. Participants most commonly indicated that enhancement reasons motivated peers' hookup behaviors (69.7%). Coping (23.5%), external (21.7%), social (19.5%), and conformity (16.3%) motives were cited less frequently. Furthermore, women who had hooked up since matriculating into college (61.5%, $n = 136$) were significantly *more* likely to state that their female peers hook up for enhancement reasons (a positive motive), but they were significantly *less* likely to perceive that typical female peers hook up for coping or conformity reasons (negative motives) ($ps < .001$). Findings indicate not only that college women uphold overwhelmingly positive perceptions for peers' hooking up, but there appears to be a strong relationship between college women's own hooking up participation and the positive versus negative attributions they ascribe to hooking up among their peers. This study extends the understanding of college women's perceptions and potential influences of hooking up and provides implications for harm reduction efforts.

Keywords

Hooking up; normative perceptions; hookup motives; first-year college women

College entrance marks a unique developmental stage of autonomy and self-exploration for adolescents and young adults. Alongside same-age peers and with limited parental oversight, students explore social and sexual identities in newfound collegiate contexts. Stemming from the well-established casual sex literature, increasing research attention has been drawn to hooking up as the normative sexual behavior on college campuses (see Garcia et al., 2012; Stinson, 2010). Hooking up denotes sexual behavior, ranging from kissing to sexual

intercourse, between nondating partners for whom no obligation or commitment exists. It is important to note that hooking up and casual sex are not mutually exclusive behaviors; in fact, approximately one third of hookups involve casual sex (i.e., penetrative sex; LaBrie, Hummer, Ghaidarov, Lac, & Kenney, 2012; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). In young-adult populations since the 1990s, rates of penetrative sex have decreased (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006), just as rates of other sexual activities have increased (e.g., oral sex, hooking up; see Heldman & Wade, 2010). Research has shown that, overall sexual behaviors and related consequences increase among women during the first year of college (Orchowski & Barnett, 2011; Patrick & Lee, 2010; Patrick, Maggs, & Abar, 2007). Although less is known of women's hookup-specific behaviors across this transitional period, given the salience of hooking up in college culture (Bogle, 2008; England, Shafer, & Fogerty, 2008), the current study sought to examine hooking up among a sample of incoming first-year college women.

Male and female college students hook up at similar rates—prevalence rates range from 56% to 84% (England et al., 2008; Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000). Two recent event-level studies¹ (Lewis, Granato, Blayney, Lostutter, & Kilmer, 2012; Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011) revealed that both men and women reported reactions to hookups that were more positive than negative overall. Hooking up may benefit young adults by enabling them to obtain physical sexual gratification without the need for a committed dating partner, and by facilitating the exploration and development of sexuality and sexual identity among young adults (e.g., Stinson, 2010). Despite these potential benefits, however, women tend to report less positive and more negative hookup-related outcomes than do men. Compared with their male peers, college women also report lower levels of sexual gratification (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2009) and higher levels of unwanted sex (Kahn, Fricker, Hoffman, Lambert, & Tripp, 2000; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Regan & Dreyer, 1999) associated with hooking up. Moreover, college women are susceptible to feelings of disappointment, shame, confusion, and depressive symptomatology in the aftermath of hookups (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002), with one third to half of college women reporting regret or negative reactions to hookups (LaBrie et al., 2012; Owen et al., 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002). Discrepancies between women's positive and negative hookup-related experiences point to the need to gain a better understanding of women's hookup perceptions and behaviors that, in turn, may inform initiatives aimed at raising awareness and reducing sexual harm among students transitioning to college.

Normative Perceptions of Hooking Up

College women are found to hook up for a variety of reasons. The vast majority of college women are motivated to hook up for sexual desire or physical gratification (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Garcia & Reiber, 2008). A majority (51%–65%) of college women report desires that a hookup will lead to a committed relationship, and about half report hooking up for

¹Event-level studies capture data specific to one event (e.g., behaviors and consequences related to a specific hookup), which enables researchers to causally associate behaviors and consequences directly to a specific event (i.e., hookup).

emotional gratification (Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Owen & Fincham, 2011). Other motivations include feeling sexually desirable, sexual exploration, and because “others do it.” (England et al., 2008; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Owen et al., 2011; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Regan & Dreyer, 1999). However, less is known about students’ normative peer perceptions (i.e., perceived peer attitudes or behaviors) of hooking up and how these norms may influence hookup behaviors. Studies demonstrate that students overestimate how often their peers hook up, as well as peers’ comfort levels and enjoyment related to hooking up (Bogle, 2008; Lambert et al., 2003; Reiber & Garcia, 2010). Paul and Hayes (2002) posited that women’s misperceptions of hooking up may create a “positively skewed ... glorified college norm that is out of step with the reality of many hookup experiences” (p. 657). Although sexual norms are predictive of sexual risk-taking (Bon, Hittner, & Lawandales, 2001; Hittner & Kennington, 2008; Kaly, Heesacker, & Frost, 2002), it is not known how normative perceptions specific to hooking up may influence students’ decisions to hook up.

Psychological theories, such as the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), provide a framework for better understanding how a woman’s normative hookup perceptions may influence her decisions to hook up. These theories postulate that perceived norms and attitudes are key predictors of intent and participation in potentially risky behavior. According to this theoretical framework, holding positive perceptions of peers’ reasons for hooking up (enhancement or social) should be predictive of women’s decisions to hook up, whereas holding negative perceptions (coping or conformity) should be predictive of women’s decisions to refrain from hooking up. Identifying the reasons for which college women believe their peers hook up and how this is related to women’s likelihood to hook up will shed light on the cultural mores associated with collegiate hookup contexts and will highlight normative motivations that may influence women’s personal beliefs and decisions related to hooking up.

Assessing Normative Hookup Motives

In the current study, we sought to explore students’ perceptions of peers’ reasons for hooking up. Prior research has relied primarily on forced-choice self-report methods for investigating hooking up. These methods, though readily quantified, may miss important information about women’s thinking. In the current study, participants’ views about hooking up motives were assessed using an open-ended question format. This format enabled us to collect unrestricted data of hookup-related normative beliefs. Then, using content analysis techniques, the open-ended responses were coded and allowed us to explore frequencies in categories of motives as well as associations between normative beliefs and participants’ personal hookup behavior.

Based on the premise that distinct motivations for sex are associated with distinct sexual risk-taking behaviors, Cooper, Shapiro, and Powers (1998) developed a widely used and validated measure for assessing sexual motivations. This measure uses six subscales tied to relationship-based sexual motives, including enhancement, intimacy, coping, self-affirmation, partner approval, and peer approval. However, several of these subscales are oriented around relationship intimacy and therefore are incompatible with a central component of hooking up: the lack of expectation or commitment between partners.

Alternatively, Cooper's 20-item Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised (DMQ-R; Cooper, 1994) is a well-established and rigorously tested and validated 20-item measure assessing motives for drinking via four subscales: Enhancement, Social, Coping, and Conformity. In the DMQ-R framework, the goal of enhancement and social motives is to obtain positive outcomes (e.g., an individual may drink because it is pleasurable or because it helps him/her be more sociable at parties), while coping and conformity motives are aimed at avoiding negative outcomes (e.g., an individual may drink to feel better about him/herself or to fit in with a group of peers). This framework nicely captured previously documented motives associated with hooking up, ranging from ephemeral sexual gratification (enhancement; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Garcia & Reiber, 2008) to avoiding or obtaining relational commitment (social rewards; Garcia & Reiber, 2008), or from hooking up to cope with a lack of self-esteem or insecurities (coping; Paul et al., 2000) to hooking up to fit in with one's peer group (conformity; Buss, 2003). A further advantage of using the DMQ-R to explore motives was to differentiate positive from negative hookup-related perceptions. The DMQ-R was thus used as a framework for coding motives for hooking up because it nicely aligned with known reasons for hooking up. These four motives were adapted to code participants' raw, open-ended normative perceptions about why college women hook up. In addition, a fifth category was added to account for several participants' comments about reasons that were not motives, but rather external circumstances, internal states, or personal qualities that could account for hooking up behavior.

Study Objectives and Hypotheses

The current study explored hookup-specific normative peer beliefs by examining the open-ended responses of a large sample of first-year college women. Given that college women tend to overestimate the positive aspects of hooking up, participants were expected to report positive reasons, which were captured by the social and enhancement motives, as opposed to negative reasons, captured by the coping and conformity motives, for female peers' participation in hooking up. An additional objective of the current study was to examine how normative beliefs differed as a function of hookup participation (i.e., whether or not the participant had hooked up in college). Based on the theories of planned behavior and reasoned action, it was hypothesized that those participants who had hooked up in college would be more likely to hold positive normative peer perceptions (i.e., beliefs that female peers hook up for enhancement or social reasons), whereas participants who had not hooked up in college would be more likely to hold negative normative peer perceptions (i.e., beliefs that female peers hook up for coping or conformity reasons).

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Data used in the current study were derived from a broader intervention study focused on first-year college women. During the summer prior to matriculating into college, all incoming first-year women from a private university on the West Coast ($N = 661$) were mailed and e-mailed invitations requesting their participation in a "study on women's values and attitudes toward drinking and health issues." The e-mailed invitations contained links

that enabled participants to consent to participate in the study via electronic institutional review board (IRB)-approved informed consent forms before accessing online questionnaires. Of those invited, 270 (40.84%) participants completed the initial questionnaire, attended one group session related to alcohol use (the intervention condition was discussion-oriented and the control condition was not), and completed 10 weekly online questionnaires designed to assess alcohol use and consequences. All data used in the current study were collected during a 6-month follow-up online questionnaire that was added to the original study and completed by 221 (81.85%) participants. This 6-month questionnaire received new IRB approval and online consent from participants, and both the consent form and survey informed participants that although all responses were strictly confidential, they did not have to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. Participants received nominal stipends: \$40 for completion of the initial survey and attending the group session, and \$10 for completing each of the follow-up surveys. The current sample includes all 221 participants who completed all phases of the study. There were no significant differences in study variables by treatment condition, nor did the in-person group sessions discuss sexual behaviors. The mean age of the sample used in the current study was 17.92 years ($SD = 0.32$), and racial/ethnic composition was as follows: 57.5% ($n = 127$) Caucasian, 19.9% ($n = 44$) Hispanic/Latino, 12.2% ($n = 27$), Asian, 5.9% ($n = 13$) Black/African American, and 4.5% ($n = 10$) Other.

Measures

In addition to reporting their age, race/ethnicity, and past sexual experience, participants answered questions related to hookup behaviors in the 6-month follow-up survey. Prior to the hookup-related survey questions, participants were provided the following definition: “Hooking up is defined as having a physical encounter with someone with whom you do not have a committed relationship. Hooking up includes behaviors ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse.”

Hookup partners—Participants were asked the following open-ended question to gather data on personal involvement in hooking up: “How many people have you ‘hooked up’ with since you started college?” Answers ranged from 0 to 12.

Normative peer perceptions of hooking up—To assess normative beliefs regarding same-sex peers’ motives for hooking up, participants were asked the open-ended question, “What reasons do college women have for ‘hooking up’?”

Code Development for Hooking Up Motives

Coding schemes were developed to categorize participants’ responses to the hookup question by combining theoretically driven (“top-down”) and data-driven (“bottom-up”) approaches (Stigler, Gallimore, & Hiebert, 2000, p. 96; Braun & Clarke, 2006). As mentioned, the DMQ-R (Cooper, 1994)—a self-report measure of students’ motives—served as a starting point for developing the codes. In developing the DMQ-R, Cooper (1994) used a four-dimension classification of motivation to drink alcohol. Motives seeking to obtain positive outcomes included enhancement motives (“drinking to enhance positive mood or well-being,” e.g., “How often do you drink because you like the feeling”) and

social motives (“drinking to obtain positive social rewards,” e.g., “How often would you say you drink to be sociable?”); negative-oriented motives included conformity motives (“drinking to avoid social censure or rejection,” e.g., “How often do you drink to be liked?”); and coping motives (“drinking to reduce or regulate negative emotions,” e.g., “How often do you drink to forget your worries?”).

Code development involved adapting these categories and adding a fifth category to account for the range of responses in the hookup data. Specifically, we randomly selected a small subset of participants ($n = 30$) and discussed whether one or more of the DMQ-R motives adequately captured their response to the hookup question, which motive(s) best represented their response, and how the drinking-motives categories needed to be adapted to capture the range of responses obtained. This process resulted in definitions and coding rules for each of the original four DMQ-R motives, now adapted for hooking up behaviors.² The fifth code captured participant responses not related to motives but rather external situations and internal states or traits that might lead to hooking up. Table 1 provides definitions of each code. To fine-tune coding rules, coders independently coded a new, randomly selected subset of the data ($n = 40$) and then discussed disagreements and revised coding rules as needed.

Participants’ responses to the hookup question were compiled verbatim into a data set. For every individual’s response, coders made a yes/no decision as to whether each coding category was represented in that response. A response could be categorized into more than one category. Thus, for example, the following statement was coded as reflecting both enhancement and coping motives: “Some may be lonely, some need action, and others just feel like it is fun to get with as many people as possible before the sun comes up.” All coding was done blind to information about individuals’ personal participation in hooking up behavior.

Interobserver reliability was assessed using the kappa statistic (computed as described in Bakeman & Gottman, 1986). Unlike percent agreement, kappa accounts for agreement that might be due to chance. Reliability was established on a 20% ($n = 44$), randomly selected subset of the data that had not been used for code development. These data were coded independently by two coders, and then kappa was computed for each code. To aid with interpretation, Bakeman and Gottman (1986) characterized kappas of .40 to .60 as fair, .60 to .75 as good, and more than .75 as excellent. Reliability was excellent for all five codes, with kappas ranging from .81 to 1.0. Disagreements between coders on this subset were resolved through discussion, and the remainder of the data set was coded by one of the coders who had been part of the reliability assessment.

²Cooper (1994) conceptualized these drinking motives as reflecting two dimensions: whether drinking resulted in positive or negative reinforcements and whether those reinforcers were externally or internally derived. Thus, social motives involved external positive reinforcements; enhancement involved internal positive reinforcements; conformity involved external negative reinforcements; and coping involved internal negative reinforcements.

RESULTS

Prevalence of Personal Involvement in Hooking Up

With regard to personal hooking up participation, 61.5% of the sample reported hooking up in the past 6 months. Of these, 35.3% ($n = 48$) reported hooking up with one partner since starting college, 24.3% ($n = 33$) reported hooking up with two partners, 9.6% ($n = 13$) three partners, 5.9% ($n = 8$) four partners, 7.4% ($n = 10$) five partners, and 17.5% ($n = 24$) more than six partners. Additionally, 56.6% ($n = 77$) of these women reported ever having sexual intercourse (i.e., answered “yes” to the question, “Have you had sexual intercourse before?”); in contrast, 36.5% ($n = 31$) of participants who reported that they had not hooked up in the past 6 months were sexually experienced, $X^2(1, N = 221) = 8.50, p = .004$.

Perceptions of Peers’ Motives for Hooking Up

Participants generally cited multiple motives in response to the question, “What reasons do college women have for ‘hooking up’?” The mean number of motives mentioned by participants was 1.50 ($SD = 0.78$; range = 0–4 motives). Enhancement, the motive focused on enhancing one’s emotional or physical state, was the most frequently cited, with a large majority of participants (69.7%, $n = 154$) mentioning at least one enhancement motive in response to the question. Coping, a motive focused on avoiding negative emotions, was the next most frequently cited (23.5%, $n = 52$), followed by external motives (21.7%, $n = 48$), social motives (19.5%, $n = 43$), and finally conformity motives (16.3%, $n = 36$). Five percent ($n = 11$) cited no motives in their responses (e.g., “I don’t know”).

Qualitative examination of the data was used to explore specific motives that participants invoked in each of these categories. These responses revealed the following: When citing enhancement motives, participants described a variety ways in which hooking up might enhance well-being. These included sexual gratification or pleasure (“it releases sexual needs”), acquiring new sexual experiences (“to experience new guys”), obtaining attention (“they like the attention ...”), simply liking the hookup partner (“they are attracted to/like the person they are hooking up with”), or wanting to having fun (“its [sic] fun”). Thus, not only was enhancement the most frequently cited motive, but participants described a number of different ways in which enhancement might play out. Coping motives, mentioned by about one fourth of participants, invoked reasons such as loneliness (“feel lonely”), feelings of insecurity or inadequacy (“Low self-esteem,” and “They are insecure”), and attempts to feel wanted or desired (“Feeling like they are wanted by someone”). Interestingly, social motives included two opposing desires: wanting to use hookups as a means of finding a longer-term relationship (“... she would want a relationship [sic] to form from this ‘hook up’”) or using hookups as a means of avoiding commitment (“... they don’t want to be tied down to one person/relationship”). Conformity motives included efforts at obtaining the positive regard of specific men or of peers in general (“... because they really like a guy and think that it will get him to like her back,” and “To feel socially accepted”), or efforts at conforming to perceived behavioral norms (“they think its [sic] cool ...”). Finally, regarding external reasons for hooking up, alcohol was by far the most frequently cited explanation (“THEY’RE DRUNK”).

Bivariate correlations showed negative correlations between social/enhancement motives and coping/conformity motives. Specifically, frequency of mentioning coping motives was negatively correlated with mentioning enhancement ($r = -.33, p < .001$) and social ($r = -.14, p = .042$) motives. That is, those who reported that hooking up behaviors reflected coping motives were less likely to cite the other two motives. Enhancement motives also negatively correlated with conformity motives ($r = -.22, p < .001$), with those citing enhancement less likely to mention conformity as a reason for hooking up. The negative relationships suggest that participants might have had different attitudes toward social/enhancement and coping/conformity. This interpretation was consistent with our impressions of the qualitative responses; specifically, the tone of participants' descriptions of enhancement and social motives tended to be more positive and matter-of-fact (e.g., "it's fun" and "find a guy to date") than they were for conformity and particularly coping motives (e.g., using descriptors like "lonely, sad, depressed" or "desperate"), which appeared to have somewhat more negative and evaluative tones.

Hooking Up Participation as a Function of Normative Perceptions

As shown in Table 2, women who had hooked up in college were significantly *more* likely to state that female peers hook up for enhancement reasons (a positive motive and the most frequently occurring motive category), but were significantly *less* likely to state that peers hook up for coping or conformity reasons (negative motives). Specifically, although 82.4% of those who had hooked up cited enhancement reasons, 49.4% of those who had not hooked up cited enhancement reasons, $X^2(1, N = 221) = 26.87, p < .001$. In contrast, 9.6% of participants who had hooked up cited conformity motives, compared with 27.1% of participants who had not hooked up, $X^2(1, N = 221) = 11.75, p < .001$. Further, coping motives were cited by 16.2% of participants who had hooked up, compared with 35.3% of participants who had not hooked up, $X^2(1, N = 221) = 10.63, p < .001$. Perceptions of social and external motives for hooking up were not associated with personal participation in hooking up.

DISCUSSION

Content analysis of participants' open-ended responses was used to evaluate first-year college women's normative perceptions of same-sex peers' hookup motivations and to assess whether these perceptions differed as a function of participants' own hooking up behavior. Two thirds of participants reported the perception that college women hook up for enhancement reasons (e.g., to obtain positive outcomes, such as enhancing mood, ameliorating boredom, and fulfilling physical desires). In contrast, participants were far less likely to perceive that same-sex peers were motivated to hook up for coping reasons (hooking up to regulate negative affect), social reasons (hooking up to obtain social rewards or avoid undesirable social outcomes), conformity reasons (hooking up in response to social pressure), or external reasons (hooking up because of external circumstances, internal states, or personal qualities). These normative motivational attributions indicating that, in general, college women hold perceptions that peers hook up for reasons that are predominantly positive are consistent with prior research (Paul & Hayes, 2002). Further, these overall positive perceptions correspond with participants' reported hooking up behaviors; 62% of

the women surveyed reported having hooked up within the past 6-month period, and of these, two in three had hooked up with more than one partner and nearly one in five had hooked up with more than six partners in the same period. These high prevalence rates of hooking up, and with multiple partners, are consistent with prior collegiate research showing hooking up as a normative sexual behavior among women during this developmental stage.

As hypothesized, analyses revealed that perceptions of peers' motives for hooking up differed between those who had and had not personally engaged in this behavior. Compared with participants who had not hooked up, those who had hooked up were significantly more likely to cite enhancement motives and were significantly less likely to cite conformity and coping motives as peers' reasons for hooking up. In other words, participants *with* personal histories of hooking up viewed peers' participation in this behavior as means of obtaining positive outcomes; participants *without* personal histories of hooking up viewed peers' motives as a means of avoiding negative outcomes. These divergent normative perceptions of hooking up motives suggest that college women's positive versus negative attitudes about hooking up are intertwined with their own hooking up behaviors. Although asserting causality is beyond the scope of these data, the theories of planned behavior and reasoned action support that women's perceptions of peers' hookup motives may predict their own decisions to hook up, such that positive perceptions may have influenced women's participation in hooking up, whereas negative perceptions may have influenced women's decisions to refrain from hooking up. Alternatively, findings may reflect a false consensus effect (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977) in which women form perceptions of others' hooking up reasons that align with their own behavior to cognitively normalize their behavior. For example, women who themselves hook up may be more likely to view hooking up more positively compared with those who do not, and thus these women may be inclined to report enhancement-motivated normative perceptions. Conversely, women who do not hook up may view their peers who do hook up as doing so for unhealthy reasons—whether conforming to social pressure or as a means to alleviate negative affect—which they feel they are able to resist.

These results that illustrate positive overall perceptions of peers' reasons for hooking up have important implications for interventions, particularly when interpreted in light of evidence that women often experience negative outcomes following hooking up, including confusion, shame, disappointment, and depressive symptomatology (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Grello et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2003; Owen et al., 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002). The discrepancy between normative perceptions and negative outcomes indicates that college women may benefit from open and nonjudgmental interventions that juxtapose positive normative hookup perceptions against statistics conveying negative post-hookup outcomes. Previously, interactive normative feedback approaches have demonstrated efficacy in reducing college students' misperceptions of peer drinking norms as well as drinking (LaBrie, Hummer, Grant, & Lac, 2010; LaBrie, Hummer, Huchting, & Neighbors, 2009; LaBrie, Hummer, Neighbors, & Pedersen, 2008). Such approaches, which derive and present in-vivo normative information using wireless keypad technology, may be adapted into interventions that provide accurate information about salient peer groups' actual experiences of hooking up. Targeted interventions would enable at-risk subgroups of college

women (e.g., first-years, Greeks) to develop a more comprehensive understanding of hooking up; would improve awareness of potential psychological, emotional, and physical risks associated with hooking up; and would facilitate more informed hookup-related decision-making. Moreover, protective strategy skills training may help women maximize the positive aspects of hooking up while minimizing potential negative outcomes of hooking up.

Both hooking up and alcohol consumption are prevalent risk behaviors in collegiate populations, and these findings highlight parallels that may be drawn between motivations for engaging in both. Studies examining the relationship between heavy drinking and risky sexual behaviors have revealed a strong global association (for reviews, see Cooper, 2002; Weinhardt & Carey, 2000). It is possible then that a more general motivation for enhancement may underlie engaging in both of these high-risk behaviors. Therefore, it would be interesting to assess whether students reporting greater enhancement motives for drinking are also more likely to report that they hook up for enhancement reasons. Further, because drinking motives have been conceptualized as the final common pathway to drinking behavior (Cox & Klinger, 1988), and hence are seen as highly influential to individual's consumption of alcohol, examining whether hooking up motives and hooking up behaviors are similarly related would be useful. Sexual harm reduction interventions targeting heavy drinkers who may be predisposed to risky enhancement-motivated drinking and hooking up may be warranted.

Although students consistently report that alcohol facilitates sexual encounters (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Lindgren, Pantalone, Lewis, & George, 2009), support for the causal relationship between drinking and risky sexual behaviors is mixed. In reviews of event-level studies, Weinhardt and Carey (2000) found little evidence supporting a prospective link between drinking with sexual risk-taking, whereas Cooper (2002) found strong causal support for a situational-specific alcohol-risky sex relationship: In eight of nine between-persons event-level analyses and two of two within-persons event-level analyses, drinking was positively associated with having casual sex partners. Further event-level investigation, particularly ecologically valid diary studies, is needed to test the causal effects of alcohol consumption on hooking up behaviors.

Methodologically, the current study used a straightforward coding framework and single open-ended question that offers an easy-to-implement method of assessment with considerable potential for replication and transportability. This approach could be applied to a number of populations (e.g., college, noncollege, high school), using multiple forms of data collection (e.g., survey, interview, focus group).

Limitations

The current study is limited by its correlational and cross-sectional design. Future research is needed to shed light on the directionality of the relationships between normative perceptions and personal hookup behaviors. It is possible that normative perceptions may shift across a longer assessment period, perhaps as a function of hookup participation. For example, women who subsequently engage in a hookup may experience a shift in the attitudinal judgment they attach to hooking up motivations. Therefore, longitudinal designs can be used

to confirm the directionality of underlying relationships between normative perceptions and hooking up behaviors. Additionally, future research should aim to uncover variables that moderate the relationships observed in the current study. For example, there is evidence that college hookup prevalence rates may differ by race (Owen et al., 2010). Therefore, exploring how normative hookup perceptions differ by race and ethnicity, and whether the relationships we observed hold across demographic groups, would yield greater insight into subgroup differences in hooking up processes among young adults. A final limitation of this study is that we were unable to differentiate hookups that involved sexual intercourse from those that did not. Descriptive data demonstrated that 43.4% ($n = 59$) of women reporting hooking up in the past 6 months had *never* had sexual intercourse. Although this does not indicate that the other 56.6% ($n = 77$) of women reporting past 6-month hookups had penetrative sex during any of their reported hookup events, the data indicate that, at a minimum, nearly half of the women in this sample who reported hooking up in the past 6 months did not have sexual intercourse during any of these hookups. Given that distinct hookup behaviors are associated with distinct consequences (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; LaBrie et al., 2012), differentiating penetrative hookups (i.e., casual sex) from nonpenetrative hookups in examinations of normative and personal motivations may advance this line of research.

Conclusions

Given the importance of contextual and social influences on college women's hookup-related beliefs and behaviors, a richer understanding of the role that normative beliefs may play is essential. Exploring associations between college women's normative and personal hookup-related beliefs and behaviors will yield greater insight into the array of factors that influence sexual exploration during this developmental period of young adulthood and, in the future, will facilitate the development of relevant measures of assessment. In sum, the high prevalence rates of hooking up on college campuses, along with evidence showing negative outcomes that can result from hooking up among women in particular, highlight the importance of identifying the processes that contribute to decision-making concerning this potentially risky behavior. The current study reveals that there is a strong relationship between college women's own hooking up participation and the positive versus negative motivations for which they believe peers hook up.

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TABLE 1

Definitions, Examples, Interobserver Reliability, and Descriptives for Hooking Up Codes

| Code | Definition | Example Responses | Descriptives | |
|---|--|--|--------------|----------|
| | | | % | <i>n</i> |
| Social | Hooking up to obtain social rewards or avoid undesirable social outcomes (e.g., unwanted commitment with a partner). Positive rewards might come from sexual partners or peers. This code is about acquiring/enhancing one's relationships or social interactions, or avoiding messy or undesirable relationships. | "want to have someone " and "they want to do something without a commitment" | 19.5 | 43 |
| Enhancement | Hooking up to enhance positive mood, well-being, to fulfill physical desires (sexual urges), or to alleviate boredom and curiosity. Enhancement refers to hooking up behaviors that are in the service of obtaining positive emotional or physical (internal) states but not for the intention of trying to avoid or ameliorate negative emotions. The latter statements are coded under Coping. | "having fun" and "pleasure" | 69.7 | 154 |
| Conformity | Hooking up in response to social pressure: to avoid social censure or rejection, to gain acceptance or attention from romantic partners or peers, to conform to perceived norms, or to enhance social status. | "to feel socially accepted" and "fitting in, becoming known and popular" | 16.3 | 36 |
| Coping | Hooking up to reduce or regulate negative emotions (e.g., insecurities, loneliness), or to fill a void. The idea of filling a void must be explicit and cannot be inferred. | "lonely, sad, depressed" and "low self-esteem" | 23.5 | 52 |
| External situation, personal qualities, internal states | Not a motive per se but rather external circumstances (e.g., being intoxicated), internal states (e.g., hormones), or personal qualities (e.g., lack of morality) that lead to hooking up behavior. | "being drunk" and "being jaded" | 21.7 | 48 |

TABLE 2
 Perceived Motives for College Women's Hooking Up Behaviors by Personal Hookup Engagement

| Variable | Level | Total | | Hooked Up in Last 6 Months | | Pearson χ^2 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-----|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | % | n | No | Yes | |
| Enhancement Motives | | | | | | |
| | No | 30.3% | 67 | 38.5% n = 85 | 61.5% n = 136 | 26.87* |
| | Yes | 69.7% | 154 | 49.4% | 82.4% | |
| Social Motives | | | | | | |
| | No | 80.5% | 178 | 85.9% | 77.2% | 2.51 |
| | Yes | 19.5% | 43 | 14.1% | 22.8% | |
| Coping Motives | | | | | | |
| | No | 76.5% | 169 | 64.7% | 83.8% | 10.63* |
| | Yes | 23.5% | 52 | 35.3% | 16.2% | |
| Conformity Motives | | | | | | |
| | No | 83.7% | 185 | 72.9% | 90.4% | 11.75* |
| | Yes | 16.3% | 36 | 27.1% | 9.6% | |
| External Motives | | | | | | |
| | No | 78.3% | 173 | 80.0% | 77.2% | 0.24 |
| | Yes | 21.7% | 48 | 20.0% | 22.8% | |

* $P < .001$.