

Gender, Heterosexuality, Sexual Violence and Identity among
Heavy-Drinking White and Asian American College Students

by

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To my family

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Abstract

Gender, Heterosexuality, Sexual Violence and Identity among Heavy-Drinking
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In this dissertation I use qualitative methods to explore the social practices, intersections and co-constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and identity in the context of campus partying. Drawing on data from 90 interviews with white and Asian American college students who identify as heavy drinkers, as well as over 30 hours of ethnographic observations of campus bars, I investigate students' experiences with partying, and develop suggestions for preventing some of the most detrimental outcomes of partying – substance abuse and sexual violence. The results of these analyses are presented here in four distinct empirical articles.

In the first article I demonstrate the importance of partying to individuals' social lives, sense of belonging, and self-identity. I suggest that reconceptualizing partying as an identity, and a social practice through which identity is constructed, could improve substance abuse intervention. In the second article I find that hooking-up while drinking is much less common, less expected, and less accepted in Asian American party cultures than in white ones; this provides support for de-linking the naturalized connection

between alcohol and sexual behavior. Further, I find both racialized gender differences and gendered racial differences in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, suggesting value of an intersectional analysis.

In the next article I explore the processes of heterosexual interaction while drinking, including how sexual interest and consent are communicated. Students report many “gray areas” around communicating sexual interest and consent, and describe the simultaneity of both sexual agency and exploitation in the context of drinking. The final empirical article draws on a subsample of 31 women and uses insights from Foucault’s theories of power to explore women’s strategies for negotiating the risks of sexual violence while partying. I show that women reproduce traditional gender norms and stereotypes in their interactions with each other, and suggest that deconstructing these patterns of interaction offers new possibilities for sexual violence prevention. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of general themes that run through all four empirical articles, offering recommendations for future research and for applying insights from these analyses to the prevention and intervention of substance abuse and sexual violence.

Chapter One

Introduction

Heavy episodic drinking in the context of partying is a common experience among college students in the U.S. (Wechsler et.al., 2002; MTF, 2007). Approximately half of all full-time college students have engaged in heavy episodic drinking (HED). This is more than the amount who participate in college athletics, hold a part-time job, or receive federal financial aid (Johnston et al., 2008; www.collegedrinkingprevention.org; Larson & Seepersad, 2003; Lindsay, 2003; Wechsler et.al. 2002). A great deal of research has explored the incidence, prevalence, correlates and consequences of HED, focusing primarily on the act of alcohol consumption itself. Most of this research has come out of psychology and public health, and has been largely quantitative in nature. In the four empirical articles that comprise this dissertation I extend existing scholarship by using qualitative methods to foreground the social practices¹, discourses, and behaviors that surround, and include, HED. I expand the focus to partying, and explore understandings and experiences of gender, sexuality and identity in the context of heavy drinking among white and Asian American college students.

¹ Here I am following Connell's (1987) conception of social practice to mean human actions that produce meaning. These are actions or behaviors that "deal with" the natural, biological, historical and structural realities – as well as those remaining from previous social practices – that result in meaning. Among the products of social practice are race, gender and sexual relations (p.79).

Campus party cultures are highly sexualized environments where heavy alcohol consumption, inter and intra-racial heterosexual interactions, “hook ups”, and sexual violence/coercion are common (Abbey, 2002; Bogle, 2008; Harrington & Leightenberg, 1994; Moffatt, 1989; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000) and where racial and gender identities and boundaries are explored, performed, surveilled, and regulated. As such, and because of the salience of identity development and experimentation among college students (Arnett, 2000), campus party cultures are important sites for studying the processes of heterosexual interaction, and social constructions of gender, race and sexuality, and for strategies to reduce some of the most serious risks associated with participating in campus party cultures – sexual violence and substance abuse.

The fundamental assumptions I hold about heavy alcohol use, and upon which this dissertation is founded, differ from those of much contemporary US scholarship and practice on alcohol and drug use. I do not assume that all heavy alcohol use is inherently problematic or worthy of moral judgment. I understand it to be a cultural practice that is associated with serious negative, and at times positive, outcomes. I understand heavy alcohol use to be a complex social and biological phenomenon with both socially productive and destructive effects. As a scholar, I am intellectually (and pragmatically) curious about heavy alcohol use as a practice that shapes many young peoples’ understandings of sexuality, gender, race, and identity at the socially and developmentally important moment of college. As a social worker and applied researcher, I am pragmatically (and intellectually) interested in what a better and more

complicated understanding of students' experiences with heavy drinking might tell us about how to improve prevention and intervention in the areas of sexual health, sexual violence, and substance abuse. The four empirical articles in this dissertation are informed by these dual commitments and goals.

Given these assumptions, commitments, and goals, this work at times asks questions that disturb settled views about the role of alcohol use in peoples' lives and about the connections between alcohol and sexual behavior. I ask these questions out of intense concern about stigma, about sexual violence, and about women's empowerment. These are important issues for the sexual violence and substance abuse prevention fields. I am confident that through confronting these issues, by living with the ideological, theoretical and practical messiness of them, we will improve our ability to prevent sexual violence, to help those suffering from the pain and disillusionment of sexual violence, and to do so while supporting women's sexual agency and empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

Contemporary social theory locates race, gender and sexuality in multiple dimensions, including subjectivity, identity, interpersonal interaction, repeated performance, discourse, social structure, and the interactions among these dimensions (see, for example Butler, 1997, 1999; Collins, 2000; Connell, 1987; Foucault, 1979; 1980; Giddens, 1984; Martin, 2003, 2004; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Risman, 2004). Further, many scholars theorize reproduction of social identities and inequalities as co-constituted through iterative interactions between the social and discursive practices of

individuals and larger social structures (Bourdieu, 1977, 2001; Butler, 1997; Giddens 1984; Kondrat, 2002). Given this integrative theoretical framework, the construction and reproduction of social identities and inequalities, and the meanings attached to specific social practices, are posited to be an on-going process that is simultaneously and dialectally occurring at multiple levels of the social world. In my work, the most influential of these theories are 1) “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Fenstermaker and West, 1995), 2) the technologies of gender and power (Foucault, 1979, DeLauretis, 1987; Martin, 2003, Gavey, 1992; Butler, 1997) and 3) intersectionality (See, for example, Crenshaw, 1991, 1994; Collins, 1997, 2000; McCall, 2005).

Doing Gender

A great deal of contemporary feminist theorizing on the construction of gender utilizes the concept of “doing gender.” Drawing from earlier work by Kessler and McKenna (1977) and West and Zimmerman (1987), in their edited volume, *Doing Gender, Doing Difference*, Fenstermaker and West (1995) argue that gender (as well as race and class) is something we *do*, not something we *are*. They argue that the meaning of gender is constructed through social interaction; it is something we accomplish or achieve in the context of particular situations. Further, gender accomplishment is something for which people are subject to evaluation, based on socially constructed and situationally specific criteria. According to the concept of “doing gender,” we are all accountable to “local conceptions of appropriately gendered conduct” (p.30) even as we help shape what counts as “appropriately gendered conduct.”

Fenstermaker and West argue that gender is an accomplishment done by individuals, in the context of social interaction, and shaped by institutions. In doing so, they offer up a theory of gender, and its construction, that goes beyond exclusively individual-level or exclusively structural-level explanations. By conceptualizing gender as an accomplishment achieved by an individual in relation to both other individuals and larger institutions they theorize the meaning of the social category of gender as constructed through a reciprocal process of individual action, interpersonal interaction, and institutional forces. This conceptualization of gender is particularly relevant in theorizing meanings and constructions around gender within college campus party scenes, where the governing concern of ‘what will people think’ is widespread and the reality that there is a cost to stepping outside socially accepted conventions of gendered behavior is commonly acknowledged.

Technologies of Gender and Foucauldian Power

Among the most influential scholars of the twentieth century, Foucault (1979, 1980) offered a new, and somewhat challenging, conceptualization of power. Previous scholars had theorized power as a force held by individuals (or states) that allowed one to impose one’s will on others. In contrast, Foucault conceptualized power as omnipresent, as everywhere. Power, for Foucault, is a productive and constitutive force as well as one that is disciplinary and regulatory. Power, he theorized, produces regulation and control, but also the beliefs, ideas, hopes, and social practices that give meaning and understanding to our lives. He uses the concept of “technologies of power” to describe the many locations and processes (knowledge, discourse, practice,

etc) through which power operates. Feminists (DeLauretis, 1987; Martin, 2003; Gavey, 1992) have taken up this technologies metaphor to theorize the iterative constructions and operations of gender and sexuality. They use this metaphor to explain how cultural discourses and practices (child birth, heterosexual sex, sexual coercion, cinema) become part of the consciousness of individual women and men, and are thus reproduced through those women and men's interactions with each other and social structures. These authors use the tool of Foucault's concept of *technologies* to make sense of the process by which women and men embrace and take ownership of hegemonic ideas and practices of gender. It is through the process of internalizing these technologies that the "social," in this case in the form of cultural narratives about normative gender, becomes part of the self, and what is socially constructed appears and is experienced as being, natural. These scholars theorize that gender does not exist, or is not constructed, solely at the levels of social practice and social structure. Rather, the construction of gender is also an internalized and intra-psychic process.

This process of internalizing technologies of gender is similar to what Butler (1997) describes as a subject's "passionate attachments" to the conditions of his/her own subordination, specifically, in the case of women, to their gender subordination. Butler theorizes that individuals come into subjectivity – understand themselves beings with a self-identity – through and because of the simultaneously regulatory and productive interworkings of power, such as that associated with gender, race, and sexuality. Because an individual's understanding of him/herself is dependent upon the dominating (as well as constitutive) forces of power, s/he becomes psychically attached

to those conditions of domination – they are necessary for the subject’s sense of self-identity. Thus being “passionately attached” to the conditions of one’s own privilege or oppression is an effect of power and an important source of continued inequality.

Intersectionality

Drawing from feminist theories of intersectionality and co-constitutivity, many scholars theorize the multiple dimensions of race, gender, sexuality and social inequality to be simultaneously, and mutually (if not equally) implicated in the constructions and implications of each other and of human actors (McCall, 2005). By this, I mean that race, class, gender, and social identities and categories are always and necessarily operating simultaneously and iteratively. For example, the meanings and effects of gender are necessarily shaped by understandings of class and race. As McClintock (1995) writes, “Race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively... Rather they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other - if in contradictory and conflictual ways” (p.5).

Important theoretical and political elements of intersectionality are, and historically have been, issues of power, privilege, and oppression. The concept of intersectionality was first articulated by Black/African American Feminists (Combahee River Collective, 1983; Carby, 1985; Collins, 1990/2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Williams, 1991) to describe the simultaneous and interlocking nature of oppressions, such that oppressions of (for example) race and gender were not experienced separately, nor additively, but as necessarily interconnected and inseparable from each other. Recent

work by Pyke & Dang (2003) and Pyke & Johnson (2003) on racialized Asian-American femininities and the role of internalized racism and intra-ethnic “othering” among Asian-American women is particularly relevant to this project and useful for conceptualizing the intersections of not only race and gender, but race and gender and sexuality. Their work, and that of many others, demonstrates the value of intersectionality as a theoretical framework that is useful in conceptualizing and exploring the persistent existence of, and interrelationships between, social identities and social inequalities.

Intersectionality, as influential as it has been in feminist theorizing, has most often remained focused on the analysis and interrogation of race and gender, and occasionally sexuality and gender. Less often has it been applied to theorizing about race and sexuality. Although the links between sexuality and race are not as immediately obvious as those between sexuality and gender, racial and ethnic identities are also constructed through and within heterosexual interactions and relationships. In their respective work on “brown-skinned white girls” of African descent and white-skinned “Puerto Rican wannabees,” Winddance Twine (1997) and Wilkins (2004), demonstrate that one’s racial identity can be shaped by the racial identity of who one dates, who one has sex with, and who finds one attractive. Additionally, the racialized experiences of college students who participate in frequent binge drinking and campus party cultures are highly under-explored. The little research that analyzes race in this context focuses on differences between white and Black students and does not include the experience of Asian-American students (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, & Nelson, 2002).

Data and Methods

This qualitative dissertation began as an interview project focused on heavy-drinking women's experiences in campus party cultures, with a particular emphasis on their understandings and negotiations of the risk of sexual violence while partying. Preliminary analysis of the first interviews I conducted raised important questions for me regarding the interrelated constructions and experiences of race and masculinity among binge-drinking college students, and about sexual behaviors beyond those that were obviously violent or coercive. Drawing on grounded theory techniques (ala Charmaz, 2006) to explicitly and intentionally address these emerging questions, as well as my original ones about experiences with partying, I used theoretical sampling to guide the remaining data collection. This method led to an interview sample that allowed for direct comparison between men and women, and between the two largest racial/ethnic groups in my original project sample – whites and Asian Americans. This method also led me to complement interviews with limited ethnographic observation at selected campus bars and nightclubs.

I chose to interview only white and Asian-American students for empirical and theoretical reasons. Empirically, my earlier research on heavy-drinking college women's experiences in party culture elicited very interesting racialized gender differences and conceptualizations of risk between the Asian-American and white women I interviewed. These differences are central to those explored in this current study. Theoretically, I am interested in investigating intersecting constructions and experiences of gender and race among college students. I am also committed, due to a paucity of scholarship in the

area, to focusing that exploration on the constructions and experiences of somewhat privileged races. These empirical and theoretical concerns led me to focus on white and Asian-American students.

The category of Asian-American, however, is incredibly heterogeneous and has major ethnic and cultural variability. To address the diversity within the racial group of Asian American I initially decided to focus specifically on one Asian American ethnicity, Chinese Americans. After initial challenges with recruiting heavy drinking Chinese American students, I spoke with many Chinese and other Asian American students regarding the racial and ethnic peer cultures on campus. Through these conversations I learned that students at this university do not, in general, make important cultural distinctions among East Asian Americans (primarily, on this campus, Korean Americans and Chinese Americans). They do make important cultural distinctions between South Asian Americans and East Asian Americans, and between Southeast Asian Americans and Asian Americans, but not among East Asian Americans. Thus, I expanded the sample population to include East Asian Americans. My reasons for focusing on Chinese-American, and then East Asian American students as opposed to a different Asian region/ethnic group are again empirical and theoretical. Empirically, East Asian American women were the largest group of Asian Americans in the sample of my earlier project. Chinese and Korean Americans are also the Asian American ethnic groups that have received the most scholarly attention, particularly in terms of sexuality, masculinity and femininity. Theoretically, I again wanted to maintain my focus on relatively privileged Asian-American ethnic groups and East Asian Americans (while Americans

with Vietnamese, Filipina, or Bangladeshi histories, for example, do not necessarily) fall into that social category.

Researching Campus Party Culture: Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with white and East Asian American college students, both men and women, are the primary source of data for this dissertation. Some aspects of campus drinking and sexual violence on campus have been addressed quantitatively, particularly the prevalence and incidence of sexual violence on campus, and of rates and correlates of heavy drinking on campus. These methods have been important in shedding light on serious problems of sexual violence and the risks associated with heavy drinking. However, they are neither able to fully explore the meanings associated with these phenomena nor how people understand their experiences.

I am most interested, in this project, in how individuals understand their experiences, how they discuss and interpret their social practices and interactions, and the discourses they use to describe them. This is particularly important, as many of the experiences, social practices and discourses I explore here (such as the early stages of heterosexual interactions) are private, and highly sensitive. While it could be argued that anonymous surveys would be the ideal method for collecting data about highly sensitive topics, we do not currently have enough knowledge about the social worlds of college students to construct appropriate survey questions. Quantitative studies are limited by only being able to ask people what we already know is important to ask. Recent research on changing patterns of sexual interactions on college students and the

increasing prominence of “hookup culture” (cf., Bogle, 2008), suggests that existing survey measures may be resulting in a limited and distorted understanding of sexual patterns and their relationship to alcohol use. Further, survey questions are not well-suited for gathering subtle and nuanced data on how individuals understand, and make meaning about, their experiences. Thus, in-depth interviews are the ideal method for data collection on these topics. The level of in-depth data interviews provide vastly exceeds that which I could possibly obtain through observation at bars or night clubs alone, as much “hooking up” and other sexual interaction takes place outside of the actual bar or night club. Additionally, how individuals understand and make sense of their experiences cannot easily be explored through observation. The qualitative, interview-based method I chose for this project allows me to see and analyze the “noise” and the messiness of human experience that is often “cleaned up” in quantitative work.

Interviews focused on the following four broad and interrelated areas: 1) definitions and patterns of partying; 2) embodied racial and gendered experiences of partying; 3) peer relationships and interactions surrounding partying, and 4) sex and sexuality, including coercive sexuality, in campus party cultures. Given the salience of gender to the topic of the interviews, I hired and trained a male graduate student to interview the men. I did not race-match the interviewees-interviewers. When consulting with members of the Asian American community on campus, they expressed concern that due to the smallness of the community, as well as the sensitivity of interview topics, having a member of the community conducting the interviews might

compromise confidentiality. Additionally, while I anticipated race to be salient to the interviewees experiences of party cultures, there was little reason to believe that racial tensions surrounding the topics of discussion in the interviews would be high – particularly not when compared to tensions around gender.

Interview data are complemented by ethnographic observation at three local campus bars/nightclubs that were identified by participants as popular and important sites for observing practices of race, gender and heterosexuality. I conducted observation at these bars for approximately 30 hours over 12 non-consecutive evenings from April to September of 2007. The goal of this component of data collection was to provide context for the social world I investigated in-depth in the interviews. While observing, I specifically watched for the ways people interacted with each other and groups of people, how much people were drinking and the process of drinking. I also watched for any observable (hetero)sexual behavior, heterosexual initiations, and how people negotiated leaving the bar.

The Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of four distinct empirical articles about white and Asian American students' experiences and understandings of partying and heavy drinking.

In the first article I delve into the social practices of partying, and into the meanings students' construct through those practices. I pay particular attention to the positive and productive aspects of partying, as students understand them. This includes a focus on the fun and sense of belonging that partying provides for participants in this

study. I intentionally located this article in the beginning of this dissertation so it could provide context for the articles that follow.

In the second empirical article in this dissertation, I compare white and Asian American students' understandings of the relationship between heterosexual interaction, or hooking-up, and alcohol use. Specifically, I explore possible racial and/or cultural differences in the expectations, interactions, and consequences of hooking up in the context of partying. I approach this analysis from a framework of intersectionality, looking for ways that gender, as well as race and/or culture, matter for understandings of the relationship between alcohol use and sexual behavior.

In the next article I examine students' descriptions of the processes of heterosexual interaction in the context of partying and heavy drinking. I explore how students communicate and interpret sexual interest and sexual consent under conditions of heavy drinking and partying. Additionally, drawing on current issues in the field of campus sexual violence prevention, I also investigate whether students believe it is possible to consent to sexual activity while drinking heavily.

The final article draws on a subsample of 31 women. In it I use insights from feminist theorists influenced by Foucault and post structuralism to analyze women's strategies for negotiating the risks of sexual violence while partying. I also examine the ways women reproduce, and potentially transform, gender through their interactions with each other.

I conclude each of these four articles by discussing the relevance of findings for substance abuse and/or sexual violence prevention and intervention. In some cases I

make specific programmatic recommendations. In others I make recommendations for theory development and future research which could lead to intervention development. In the final chapter of this dissertation, the conclusion and application chapter, I continue this pattern. In it I make recommendations for future research and theory development regarding gender, race, sexuality, identity, and alcohol use. I also make several specific recommendations for changing, and challenging, existing practices in the applied fields of sexual violence and substance abuse prevention and intervention.

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Chapter Two

Partying as Identity among Heavy-drinking College Students: “I don’t really hang out with anyone who doesn’t party, except maybe to study.”

There is widespread acknowledgment among scholars, practitioners, and the general public of what the National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov; NIAAA, 2002) has termed a “culture of drinking” on college campuses. This culture is supported by a multitude of factors at individual, interpersonal, institutional, cultural and structural levels. The combination of these factors have contributed to heavy episodic drinking on college campuses being considered both culturally normative and the major public health concern for college students (Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002; Hingson, Heeren, Winter, and Wechsler, 2005). Given this, heavy drinking among college students has received a great deal of scholarly (and public) attention. One line of research regarding college drinking focuses on individual correlates and predictors of drinking such as genetic predisposition, family history of substance abuse, depression and anxiety, and trauma exposure (c.f. Baer, 2002; Larimer and Cronce, 2002). Another line of research on college drinking focuses on institutional and organizational factors that support drinking, such as an active Greek system, a strong emphasis on sports, and enforcement of institutional alcohol policies (Dejong & Langford, 2002; Dowd & Weschler, 2002; Toomey & Wagenaar, 2002). This

existing research has been invaluable, and provided both a strong foundation of knowledge regarding the factors related to the “culture of drinking” on campus, and a set of guidelines to develop intervention and prevention of negative consequences (c.f., www.higheredcenter.org).

What is still missing from this research is an analysis of the way that partying becomes part of a social and personal identity for people who participate in this culture. Individual level psychological risk factors and campus based institutional arrangements are important, but how identity is constituted between the two is also important for a full understanding of the culture of drinking, its reproduction, and its meanings for the many young people who participate in it.

In the present study I use insights from contemporary social theories of identity, social practices, and social reproduction (Giddens, 1991; Wenger 1999; Eckert, 2000) to analyze data from 90 semi-structured interviews with white and Asian American heavy-drinking college students, and over 30 hours of observation at campus bars. Through analysis of these data, I show that students construct a “partying identity” through active engagement in the social practices of partying and through the on-going reflective work of self-identity projects (Giddens, 1991). This study extends existing scholarship on identity and social practices by showing that active engagement in social practices (e.g., partying) is not only constitutive of social identities (such as those of race, gender, and class) but also constitutive of standalone, practice-based, identities. It also extends existing scholarship on campus drinking by reconceptualizing partying as

not (merely) a bad act or a misbehavior, but also as a productive social practice that is constitutive of individual and group identity.

In this article I demonstrate that individual and group identity as a partier is constructed through discursive and social practices of partying, as well as through engagement in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wegner, 1999) that are largely, or initially, organized around partying. Communities of practice are made up of a group of people drawn together by a shared interest, set of principles, or behavior, and by their relationships with each other. Active engagement in communities of practice focused on partying offers students opportunities for fun, friendship, new experiences, and risk-taking. It also provides currency in the “economy of dignity” that facilitates a sense of belonging within peer culture largely organized around such a practice (Pugh, 2009 p.6). I show here that campus partying is more than a culture that exists outside of individuals and their relationships. It is also a culture that lives in individuals’ hearts and minds and is reproduced through their interactions with each other and their on-going individual and group identity construction. Thus, partying is important to the identity-project of individuals as they work to reconcile their actions with their internal image, understanding of themselves, and their place in their social worlds. This theoretical and empirical refocus on partying as an identity-constitutive social practice has important implications for campus-based alcohol prevention and intervention efforts, as well as theory development around identity and social practice.

Literature Review

The “Culture of Drinking”

In 2002 the NIAAA released an influential report detailing the problem of drinking on college campuses and declared a well-acknowledged truth that a “culture of drinking” exists on many college campuses. This perspective has a long history of support from ethnographers (c.f., Sanday, 1990; Moffatt, 1989, authors of popular fiction (Wolffe, 2004) and a multitude of scholars from public health, psychiatry, nursing, and psychology (cf., Weschler et al., 2002; Schulenberg et al., 2001; Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002; Boyd, McCabe & Morales, 2006). High rates of frequent, heavy episodic drinking (HED) on campuses have been documented for decades (Weschler et al., 2002), and the popularity of partying on campus has been captured by popular culture for equally as long. Prior even to arrival on college campuses, students have been exposed to thousands of hours of alcohol advertising on television (CAMY, 2007) and multiple forms of media and popular culture that glorify HED and its importance to the “college experience.” This advertising, in combination with popular media depictions of college, personal and familial experiences, and powerful cultural discourses, constructs an imaginary of college that includes partying and heavy drinking.

Campus Drinking Prevention and Intervention

Campus-based alcohol prevention and intervention efforts are (comparatively) well-funded, well-evaluated, and multi-faceted. They include universal-level efforts such as institutional policies of prohibition (e.g, dry dorms, sober living spaces, zero tolerance, etc), public awareness efforts such as social norms campaigns (e.g., “60% of

students at this University had 4 or fewer drinks last weekend”), and opportunities for alternative and alcohol-free late night entertainment and activities. Campus-based prevention and intervention efforts also include targeted initiatives such as workshops for first-year students, fraternities, sororities and athletes, and both individual and group treatment or rehabilitation programs.

One popular form of individual level intervention that has been shown to reduce drinking and negative consequences resulting from drinking is Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) (Baer, et al., 2001; Carey et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2001). BASICS combines individually tailored feedback regarding alcohol use with motivational interviewing (MI) techniques. MI is a harm reduction approach to behavior change that research has found to be effective in a number of areas, including substance abuse. It involves individual sessions with trained facilitators who use client-centered active listening skills to (among other things) develop discrepancies between individuals’ goals and/or values and their behaviors (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). What individuals “get” out of drinking, as well as what they identify as their own concerns are a focus of MI sessions in college student interventions such as BASICS. Surprisingly, given the literature showing the developmental and social importance of identity exploration and its relationship to risk-taking among emerging adults (Arnett, 2000), discussion of the relationship between self-identity and drinking is absent from BASICS curriculum and other MI-based interventions (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; MacMaster, Holleran & Chaffin, 2005).

College, Emerging Adulthood, and Identity

Emerging adulthood is the cultural developmental stage of many 18-25 year olds and US college students (Arnett, 2000). It is a time in between adolescence and before adulthood where individuals are concerned with developmental and social tasks of identity and relationship exploration. It is also a time characterized by instability, volatility and risk-taking where social, cultural and sub cultural influences can be very powerful. Identity and world views are (somewhat) fluid at this time and more open to new ideas than in other developmental moments.

College itself facilitates much of this identity exploration, instability, emphasis on relationships, and openness to new ideas and new identities (Winddance Twine, 1996; Karp, Holmstrong, & Gray, 1998). For many students, college is their first time away from home and/or family for any extended period of time, and their first opportunity interact in a semi-intimate manner with people from different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, cultural, and political backgrounds (Arnett, 2002). These new experiences, in combination with academic courses that often encourage critical thinking, reflection, and engagement with theoretical or philosophical questions, combine to create an experience that can be disorganizing and challenging as well as exciting and invigorating. This context is ideal for meeting new people, forming new relationships, trying out new ideas, and exploring new possibilities for self-identity. It is a time in which people engage in the work of identity-projects, thinking about who they want to be and how they want to present themselves to others. For the students interviewed for this project, this involved thinking about what college, and being a

college student, means to them; for many of them it means or comes to mean partying and a sense of belonging to a community of practice focused on partying.

Theoretical Framework: Identity and Social Practices

The relationships between identity, culture, and social practices are of fundamental interest to sociology, and perhaps particularly to the symbolic interactionism and social psychology strands of sociology (Fine and Fields, 2008) where attention is often focused on everyday interactions and taken-for-granted actions. In his influential text on modernity and the self Giddens(1991) theorizes identities as projects that individuals consciously (or almost consciously) work on to construct and identify their 'selves' in (somewhat) intentional and particular ways. Identities, for Giddens, are imbued with meaning constructed through action, and through interaction with social structures that shape (though do not determine) possibilities for action. Interrogating these everyday actions and interactions of identity construction can make the workings of culture visible. These actions and interactions can also be conceptualized as social practices, which Connell (1987) describes as the behaviors and actions that produce meaning in peoples' lives.

Theorizing a mezzo-level space between social structures and individuals, Lave & Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1999), developed the concept of a "community of practice" This concept, similar to what Fine and Fields (2008) and others have called 'micro-culture,' involves a cohesive, often small and fluid group of people who gather together around some purpose such as shared activity, beliefs, or goals (eg., playing basketball, trying to win an election, putting together an advertising campaign, etc.). Around these

“communities of practice” social relationships and social practices are iteratively developed, such that relationships form around activities, and activities are formed around relationships. Active engagement in these communities is described by Wenger as an “encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to those communities” (1999, p4). Thus, engagement in communities of practice can produce identities.

Social practices, and the meanings made through them are also important to identity for Eckert (2000). A sociolinguist and ethnographer, Eckert conceptualizes identity as “one’s meaning in the world” (p.41). Further, Eckert theorizes that “the individuals’ engagement in the world is a constant process of identity construction – one might most profitably think of identity as a process of engagement (and disengagement)” in the world (p.41-42). Thus, for Eckert, Wenger, and Giddens, active participation in the social practices of one’s communities of practices is a mechanism through which group and self- identity are co-constructed. Further, identities are constructed in relation to communities of practice, forming identity as a member of that group or community.

However, and crucially, for identity to be constructed in relation to a community of practice, that community, and or the social practices upon which it is (partially) formed, must be important to the individual. One of the many ways that culture can be seen and felt in the construction of identity is through the social practices, and related communities of practice, in which individuals “choose”, or desire, to participate. In this article, I demonstrate that broader cultural forces have constructed “partying” as an

important social practice for college students. This social practice, and participating in the related local 'culture of partying' (or community of practice) is so important to many college students that it organizes their social worlds, and constructs an individual and group "partying" identity.

Method

Setting

The present study was conducted at a large, public university in the Midwestern U.S. Nearly all of the approximately 20,000 undergraduate students at this university are residential, living either in campus dormitories or apartments within walking distance from campus. This university is well known for its ability to offer a multitude of college experiences, including prominent Division 1 sports, active fraternity and sorority life, political and social action, rigorous academics, and a great deal of heavy drinking. Bars, clubs, and restaurants serving alcohol line the streets of the campus and the surrounding areas; and signs advertising events, live music, and fundraisers are posted on light polls, billboards, and other flat surfaces all across campus and some of the surrounding neighborhoods. A survey of students at this university in 2007 found over half of all students had engaged in heavy episodic drinking (HED) at least one time in the past 30 days. Slightly over one quarter, 27% had done so frequently, meaning at least three times in the past two weeks. HED is defined in the literature as consuming 4 (for women) or 5 (for men) alcohol drinks in a sitting (Weschler, 2002 et al.).

Sample

The data for the present study come from over 100 hours of semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 90 undergraduate students who were frequent, heavy episodic drinkers. Interview data are complemented by over 30 hours of observation from 12 non-consecutive evenings at campus bars and clubs. This study is one part of a larger project on race, gender, heterosexuality and partying among white and East Asian American college men and women. As such, the interview sample is comprised of 28 white women, 23 East Asian American women, 20 white men, and 19 East Asian American men. Participants were between 18 – 23 years of age. Participants largely identified as heterosexual (94%) and none identified as primarily queer or gay. The sample was largely upper middle class, with 58% having at least one parent with a graduate degree and 33% percent with two parents with a graduate degree. Only 6 participants reported a household income of less than \$50,000 per year. Ten participants were members of fraternities and 9 participants were members of sororities.

Due to the sensitivity of the questions, particularly the gendered nature of some section, I conducted all interviews with the women, and a male, trained graduate-level research assistant conducted all the interviews with the men. Interviewees reported positive feelings about the process of being interviewed, often remarking that they enjoyed the opportunity to reflect upon an important part of their lives and their experience at college.

Interview participants were recruited through campus listservs and flyers posted on campus between May 2005 and September 2007. Participants were compensated for their time. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, with most lasting between one and one and one-half hours. Interviews were audio recorded, professionally transcribed, and double-checked for fidelity. Transcripts of interviews and field notes from observations were entered into NVIVO for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a method of open and focused coding, where inductive and deductive analyses are combined (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). At least two research assistants and I read through each transcript, and took notes on emerging themes while reading. After this initial read through of the data, I coded transcripts for the developing themes, as well as deductive themes from prior research and professional experience. The collaboration of five undergraduate research assistants (three who met all criteria for participation in this project and two who were non-drinkers) increased the reflexivity, reliability and dynamism of the study, particularly the theme development. They also provided a valuable source of member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett 1998; Boyatzis, 1998).

Throughout the of the process of data analysis, research assistants and I wrote data-driven memos (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998.) These memos began as initial memos that we wrote in the early stages of pilot interviewing and data analysis. As analysis progressed, we moved to writing thematic memos that combined our own analysis with the data. Finally, I then wrote integrative memos that combined

several themes and made connections across themes and from themes to theory and existing research. These memos formed the beginnings of this article.

The interview data that are presented in this article are representative of the data as a whole. They reflect the themes and tones of the entire sample and its variations. In some instances, I edited quotations for clarity, generally meaning that I removed many “likes” and “ums” from the data. These edits are purely for clarity and do not alter the intention of the speaker.

Results and Discussion

In this section I analyze social practices, experiences and ideas that were described by interviewees and that I observed in campus bars and clubs. In doing so, I explicate the importance of engaging in the social practice of partying to participants, and show that identities are constructed through engagement in these social practices. These identities are crucial to understanding the experience of heavy drinking on campus, and to effectively intervening in the negative consequences associated with heavy drinking.

It is difficult to empirically demonstrate identity construction. It is a process that is often very personal. It is also a process of which individuals may not be fully aware or able to articulate. Regarding the challenge of empirically studying identity construction, Eckert wrote, “While the ethnographer does not have access to identity, we do have access to some of the practices that people attend to in working out their meaning in the community. Individual identity is not constructed in a vacuum; it is co-constructed

with group identities. The process of making meaning in the world, then, can be seen in the meanings being constructed in and around communities of practice” (2000, p.42).

Following this, I first describe the importance of social practices of partying for college students and the role it plays in creating meaning in their lives. I show how these practices organize the social experience of college for the heavy drinking participants in this study, constructing both “communities of practice” and localized party cultures (or microcultures) on campus. I then show how deep immersion in these communities of practice leads to the construction of a group and self- identity of partying.

Partying is what college is all about: the fun imperative

Partying is a major feature in the cultural discourses of college. For many young people, particularly middle and upper middle-class young people, college is constructed as a time and space in which they are “supposed” to be having fun. They are “supposed” to be being young and carefree – before the responsibilities and pressures of the “real world” set in. Partying is part of the imaginary of college, and having fun is a cultural imperative for college students. While “fun” is left undefined by participants, the slippage in language between “fun”, “partying” and “heavy-drinking” suggests that, for many participants, “partying” is nearly synonymous with “fun.” This sentiment was expressed by Tim, 21 year old bi-cultural Asian American man who said, “I think it’s been stereotypically the cool thing to do or the fun thing to do or the thing you’re supposed to do in college is drink: in all the movies and everything and everything you’re told about college.” Reflecting a similar understanding of cultural messages, Kim, a 22 year old Asian American woman said “I guess it gets pounded in our heads that college

students drink.” The profound importance of partying to participants’ constructions of college, can be seen in the words of Beth, a 19 year old white woman who understood partying as important to the exception of other activities: “Um, like, before I came to college, like you just thought about being drunk, and like, I never really thought about the academic side of it, until like I got to college.” This perspective, that heavy drinking and partying is part of what college is “all about” was common across all race and gender groups interviewed for this project.

Cultural discourses about the importance of partying to college life and college culture would likely have little traction if they were not adopted, (and often adapted) by students themselves. These discourses work in an iterative manner, shaping and being shaped by participants’ experiences with partying. Partying, by these participants, was nearly universally understood as pleasure-producing and a major source of fun. When students were asked why they thought college students drink, and then why they drink, nearly every participant responded by saying something along the lines of “because it is fun” or “to have fun.” As Matthew, 20 year old Asian American man said, “I guess we all drink for the same reason, right? To have fun.”

Participants described the “fun” of partying as an embodied experience. They referenced, often expressing difficulty with finding words to describe the sensations, how their body felt tingly, fuzzy and “buzzed.” In an interesting demonstration of a lived body-mind connection, most descriptions of the physical aspect of drinking, even when prompted to describe how their bodies felt, centered on participants’ heads. Stephanie,

a 20 year old white woman said “like your head feels swingy, like everything’s a little more funny than maybe it would be, like a little dizzy (laughs).”

The expectation of entertainment, specifically, to experience something funny – in combination with the bodily experience of laughing or giggling with friends, was an important component of partying. It is also one of the most social components of partying. The “fun” of partying is due in part to the bodily feelings related to alcohol. It is also due in part to non-physical elements of active participation in a community of practice, sharing time, space, and similar social practices. As I will describe in more depth later, the social aspect of fun, including spending time with old and new friends, meeting people, and the possibility of finding someone to flirt and/or “hook-up” with when partying, were major elements of the “fun” of partying. Particularly common was an expression of happiness about partying as a site where participants bonded with their friends through shared fun. As Amy, a 20 year old white woman described “I mean it’s pretty—it can be really fun basically....often if you’re drinking there will be a point when *everyone is laughing.*”

Being in a shared social environment where people are drinking heavily and “everyone is laughing” provides students with the opportunity to feel pleasure at several levels. They feel pleasure at meeting the expectations that they (and others) have for their “college experience.” They experience physical pleasure of intoxication and being “buzzed,” and they experience great pleasure in the shared social experience, bonding with friends, meeting new friends, etc., that are associated with partying. Partying is a shared behavior, a community of practice, through which participants

construct themselves – their identities – as college students. Further, this social practice constructs them as not just any kind of college student, but college students who are fun, social, and full participants in college culture – including the culture of partying. Through the practice of partying they become college partiers, partying becomes part of their sense of themselves and how they are seen by others.

Partying organizes social life

Partying is such an important element of the college experience for many of the people interviewed for this project that it served an organizing function in their lives. Partying was a major factor in organizing their social worlds. It organized their time, their interactions with friends, their class schedules, and their evening “free” time. For these interviewees, engaging in ‘communities of practice’ of partying centrally organizes their lives.

Partying at bars and house/frat parties was socially acceptable every night of the week, though most common Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Many participants reported going out (meaning to a bar or party) 3-5 nights a week. For example, John, 19 year old white man demonstrated real commitment to the social practice of partying. He said: “I usually do Thursday, Friday, Saturday and try and throw in one other night like maybe like a Wednesday or a Monday somewhere in there. I try and drink as much as I can. Not like as much as I can but as often as I can. I think it’s fun.”

The amount of partying that took place at bars and nightclubs instead of house parties was challenging for some participants who were under 21 and lacked reliable

fake ids. In conversation with Katie, 19 year old white woman, about her favorite places to party she told me that she had a fake ID, but she did not feel confident using it. She said:

Katie: It's really horrible. I would never try to go to like [local bar/club] or anyplace like that where you know that you're just going to get in trouble.

Author: Do you feel like having a marginal ID limits your social life?

Katie: Yeah, definitely. I'm actually getting a better one soon. And for a while I didn't have any and that was really frustrating because a lot of my friends did and I'm mostly younger than a lot of my friends. So that's kind of annoying. And they're like, "Oh, yeah. We're all going to go to the bar" and I can't go

Going out to bars and clubs was included in the activities around which Katie's partying community was organized. For those under 21, a reliable fake ID was what Pugh (2009) described as a 'token' to be used in the "economy of dignity." Without a reliable fake ID, Katie was denied full participation, denied dignity, within her community of practice. The extent to which she was willing to go to gain access to full participation – purchasing her second fake ID –demonstrates how important belonging to this partying community of practice is to her, and suggests how important it is to her self-identity.

Partying not only organized the evening activities of participants. It also organized their day time social activity. Participants described spending time prior to partying talking with their friends either in person, on the phone and on Facebook, to coordinate where they were going to go on a particular evening. It is common when in classroom buildings, campus fitness centers, libraries, coffee shops, and walking around campus to overhear one student say to another student something such as "hey, are you going out tonight? We're hitting [name of bar]. See ya there?"

Talk such as this is a way to connect with fellow students. It is a form of casual conversation that takes the place of talking about the weather or the local sports team. Instead of saying “So, did you see that shot so-and-so made last night,” or “can you believe how cold it is supposed to get this weekend?!” people say “Are you going out tonight?” This type of conversation serves multiple purposes, including acknowledgment and recognition of membership in a shared community of practice. This type of speech act and the social practice of interaction around the activity of “going out” also contribute to the construction of a partying identity. Through interaction with others – often in public places – individuals construct a self-identity as a ‘partier,’ and social identity as one of the ‘partiers.’ Additionally, particularly when those conversations happen in the presence of others, they contribute to the construction and reproduction of a “culture of partying” on campus.

The omnipresence of this “culture of partying” on campus, and the importance of partying to individual students can also be seen through their privileging of activities that involved alcohol. The presence of alcohol, and an atmosphere of partying, was a requirement for many interviewees to participate in a social activity. One of the questions asked of almost every participant was how big a role partying played their social lives. I asked Soon-yi, a 22 year old Korean American woman “How much of your social life would you say involves drinking?” She responded by saying, “I’d say like 70-80% ... It’s definitely one of the central focuses during the down time for my friends and I. Yeah, I mean we usually call each other and that’s the first thing we say, “Do you want

to drink?” or, “Let’s go somewhere and party and drink.” So in terms of social life, it’s a big role – bringing people together (laughs).”

Reflecting a similar perspective, Jessica, a 21 year-old white woman said, “Generally I’d say it’s a guiding factor of whether or not we’re going to do something. Usually I’d say 75% of the time we’re only going to do something because it involves alcohol. If it doesn’t, it’s less likely we’re going to do it. Do you know what I mean? If the options involve alcohol, that’s the choice we’re going to make.” What Soon-yi and Jessica are describing here is their active engagement, their encompassing participation, in communities of practice organized around drinking and partying. They describe the iterative and dynamic relationship between social relationships and the social practice of partying. As Wenger (1999) argues, it is these processes, relationships and practices through which identity – in this case a partying identity – is constructed.

Sense of belonging and cohesiveness with friends/peers

When students begin college they are characteristically very open to making new friends and exploring new activities. They are looking for communities of practice to join. Campus partying is one of those new activities they are often interesting in exploring.

Perhaps particularly in the early days of a new school year, partying is a vehicle for meeting people and making friends. During the week before classes start, when students begin moving in to dorms, fraternities host large and very well publicized parties. Flyers for these parties can be seen around campus, including dorm halls, and invitations are posted widely on Facebook. During the interviews, participants

recounted many incidents of friendships beginning through partying. For example, Amy said, “Freshman year I feel like it’s sort of how people get to know each other. Then as you get older, it’s just sort of like a staple of parties or going to the bar becomes an excuse to go to with your friends and hang out.”

Thus friendships and partying have a co-constitutive relationship which both constructs, and is constructed by, a partying community of practice. Friendships, and the meaning attached to them, are formed (in part) through the shared experience of engagement in that community of practice (Eckert, 2000). In addition, partying, and the meaning attached to it is constructed (in part) through the experience of friendship(s). As such, partying serves an organizing function among some groups of friends. Through the practice of partying, and engagement in the community of practice of partying, they strengthen their friendships and relationships. In turn, the desire to strengthen and solidify friendships reinforces the importance of partying to their shared group identity, and thus also to their own self-identity.

Partying was a shared activity, a community of practice, through which participants bonded with existing friends, cultivated their friendships, and generally enjoyed spending time together. While the women were often more articulate and reflective of this experience, it was true for both men and women, and across race and ethnicity. A particularly clear, and gendered, example of this can be seen in the following quotation from Sarah, a 22 year old white woman:

I think when girls get drunk, there’s a lot of bonding that happens between you and your girlfriends. Like when I think of good nights out that I had a lot of fun, it wasn’t meeting new people necessarily. It was more of like me and my good friends laughing hysterically about something that was really not even that funny but at the time we thought was so funny and so I think for girls, it’s like that kind of intimate bonding with

your friends where like somebody will come out with something like some secret or something or another. Everybody will be like, "Oh, my gosh." And you like talk about it (laughs), I think girls tend to bond on that intimate level when they're drinking, whereas for guys, I think it's more of like just—it's definitely still guy bonding when they're drinking but it's more of that macho kind of guy bonding. It's not like the intimate girl bonding.

Listening to Sarah, it is apparent that her understanding of herself is shaped by the intensity with which she describes her friendships and the intimacy she shares with her friends while drinking. Her words show that the process of partying facilitates deep connections and intimacy with her friends. It provides her with a sense of connectedness, a sense that she belongs in a group of people she cares about and who care about her, a sense of meaning, and a sense that she matters in the world.

The idea that partying provides a mechanism for deep connections, intimacy and serious personal conversations was also demonstrated by Janice, a 22 year old white woman. She said, "Sometimes we talk—'cuz we're starting to talk about what we're doing next year and we'll talk about jobs, where we're getting in to school, how it will be so different not to all be together all the time. We tend to have [laughing] like real conversations when we're wasted." The intense emotional bonding experience that Sarah and Janice report while drinking and partying further constructs partying as an important component of their friendships, and their friendship-group-identity. Melissa, a 20 year old white woman described it this way:

There's a very odd camaraderie that you build with people, whether it's games or the stories that you tell when you're drinking or the fact that you like the same kind of drink. There's definitely that kind of togetherness. It definitely—well I think it has the ability to bring you into a group as opposed to pulling you out of a group.

Partying provides a sense of belonging to a group of friends, a sense of being accepted within a group. As Ron, a 20 year old Asian American man said, "it's just like a good

bonding thing with some of my friends, I guess. Just getting together and just drinking.”

Research has found that forming and maintaining peer relationships – friendships – is a primary focus in the social worlds of college students and emerging adults. Forming and exploring one’s own identity holds a similar focus among people in this age and social context of college. The combination of these activities, making and maintaining friendships, forming and exploring self-identity, and the social practice/cultural practice/behavior of frequent heavy episodic drinking suggest that their meanings are inseparably co-constructed for young people such as the participants in this study.

In the previous sections I have shown the importance of partying to these interviewees. The expectations students hold about partying, and the multitude of ways in which the social practices of partying shape activities, friendships and experiences, iteratively combine to construct identity-constitutive communities of practice. As I show in the next section, partying also operates as a mechanism to both categorize people into groups of people who party and people who do not party, and to label people as partiers and non-partiers.

Partying categorizes people

The participants in this project all identified themselves as engaging in frequent HED. They understood and constructed partying to be central to their experience of college. Partying, in fact, was so central to the lives of many participants that they described only having friends who party. They categorized people into two groups: those who party and those who do not. Through this categorization, they constructed partying as an identity.

In words that reflect a common experience of participants, Erin, a 22 year old white woman said, “This sounds weird but I don’t think I have any friends who don’t drink.” Some participants described having a group of more casual friends who they studied with, maybe had lunch or coffee with, but who they did not spend time with on evenings or weekends. For example, when Ron was asked “Do you have any friends that don’t party or don’t drink at all?” He responded:

I did. One of my best friends from freshman year. He lived down the hall from me and he didn’t drink. But now he does. But right now I don’t have any close friends who I regularly see who do not drink. I mean I know people who don’t drink and I still hang out with them but none of my immediate friends who I would hang out with once a week or more. They all drink and stuff like that.

The extent to which participants limited their social interactions to people who participate in the social practice of partying demonstrates how salient partying is to how they think about themselves and others. Interviewees imagined their lives and experience of college as being quite different from their fellow students who did not party. Specifically, they imagined their lives as being more fun and more social than non-partiers. They also assumed that they had a wider circle of friends than people who did not party. Through the practice of reflecting on their own social worlds, and imagining the social worlds of those who did not party, participants both constructed discreet groups of people (people who party and people who do not party) and distinct boundaries between the two groups. As shown in the following quotation from Sarah, the construction of partying as social, of not partying as un-social, and of the boundaries between people based on those social practices, was dependent upon interconnected actions and assumptions. When asked how she thought her life was different from people at the University who did not party, Sarah said:

I think you would know a lot less people. There's so many people that I had met when I was out, through other friends. And everybody's a little bit more social when they're drinking. That's kind of what you go out to do... meet people and have people get to know you a little bit like, "Hi, I'm a friendly person" and whatever. So I think if you're a person that doesn't party, like you'll find people that are like you. Like you'll find people that don't like to do that either and you'll probably have a great group of friends. But I think you'd have a smaller group (laughs) of friends. like just—and my friends, I mean people might not necessarily be like your greatest friends, but you'll just know less people if you don't go out – don't party. Especially now, because, most of the people that I know, you go up to the bar and that's what you do. So I think if you're the person that doesn't want to go to the bar and doesn't want to go out, you're kind of going to— people are going to be like, "Yeah, I remember that kid. But we don't really hang out with him."

Because Sarah's words demonstrate the interdependence of several ideas in a complex and (contained) relatively succinct space, they are particularly analytically useful. When asked how her life would be different from those who do not party, the first thing Sarah said was that she [sic] would know fewer people. As having a wide net of friends and acquaintances is socially valued, Sarah's statement that people who party know fewer people than she does is a way of denigrating those who do not party and privileging those who do. She goes on to explain the process by which friends are cultivated in the context of partying, suggesting that going out and partying is a way of demonstrating that one is a specific type of person who exhibits socially valued traits. It is a way of symbolizing through action rather than words that "Hi, I'm a friendly person."

Conceptually distinct from the identification of partying as a social activity and people who party as more social/friendly, is the identification of people who party and people who do not as distinct groups, distinct communities of practice, with distinct members and distinct social practices, and thus distinct social identities. Through words such as "...if you're a person that doesn't party, you'll find people that are like you" and

“most of the people that I know, you go up to the bar and that’s what you do,” as well as the ideas behind those words, Sarah constructs a “we” (people who party) and a “they” (people who do not party).

In the process of categorizing people into “we” and “they” or groups of people who do and don’t party, participants engage with cultural discourses about partying and about the kind of people who party. These discourses, in combination with real and/or perceived differences in behavior, construct group identities of partiers and non-partiers. The concept of we-the-partiers and they-the-people-who-don’t-party was common among interviewees. In addition to the image of non-partiers as being generally less social, interviewees also frequently assumed that people who did not party spent more time studying and/or were more committed to academics. The following quotation from Jason, a 19 year old white man shows several of these discourses and assumptions in interaction with each other. He said:

Jason: I think some people like to have a good time. Other people don’t party because they like to study more and that’s fine, too. More dorky, but fine.

Author: *Right, right. What would you say tends to make guys that don’t party more dorky in whatever sense?*

Jason: I mean it’s just they’re studying when they could be out having a good time. That’s about it. Like usually they’re not very outgoing people at all. They’re more like into their studies.

Here Jason suggests a binary between people who party and people who do not. He constructs people who party as those who are out-going and like to have a good time, and those who do not party as dorky, not out-going, and who like to study. It is as though being concerned about studying is the only conceivable reason, other than general “dorkiness” why someone would not party. His inability to imagine other reasons why one might not party show how deeply engrossed in the microculture of

partying he is, and how important partying is to how he makes sense of himself and his actions.

Assumptions about non-partiers, such as those held by Jason and Sarah, took on racialized tones at times when the stereotyped discourses of Asian Americans as “model minorities” and “nerdy” people who “study all the time” intersected with discourses of Asian Americans as people who did not party. For example, Bob, an 18 year old Asian American man, said, “everyone sees them [Asian Americans] as like the nerdy whatever types. And so you wouldn’t correlate them I guess with drinking.” The “nerdy Asian” discourse was one that several Asian American participants talked, directly or indirectly, about negotiating through and while partying. For several students of bi-racial or bi-cultural Asian/Asian-American and white backgrounds, active participation in partying, and construction of a self-identity as a partier was one way to distance themselves from the “nerdy Asian” discourse.

Challenge to the view of partying as positive – awareness of risk of the label

Interviewees often constructed non-partiers negatively, as less out-going, less fun, and more focused on the academic side of college than the social side. However, they also were aware of the possibility that the flip side of that construction could be applied to them. In the cultural context of college (and in particular the cultural context of *this* college) the practice of partying holds a normative and even esteemed position. That esteemed position, however, is precarious. Outside of the context of college, frequent, heavy alcohol and/or drug use is, with very few exceptions, socially stigmatized behavior. That social stigma is relaxed for college students, but not

completely absent. Discourses and stereotypes of partiers as less intelligent, “going nowhere” with their lives, unconcerned with school or their future, immature, not in control of themselves and their lives, dependent, sexually “promiscuous,” and generally as pathetic “losers” loomed in the recesses of black outs, vomiting, hangovers, regretted arguments, missed classes and disappointing grades. As such, their partying behavior put them in a position where they were constantly negotiating the privileged status of a partying identity (being one of the “cool kids”, social, “fun”, “attractive”) with the stigmatized identity associated with the negative discourses of substance use/abuse and partying. They walked a tightrope, balancing the positive side of their identity as people who partied while trying (some harder than others) not to fall into the realm of “too much” partying.

For the most part, partying was considered positive by participants, as long as it was “under control” and did not interfere with one’s academic success. A “my grades are still good” discourse seemed to be a benchmark participants used to explain/justify that they were in control of partying. Brad, 23 year old white man in his sophomore year described it this way:

It more matters what you have achieved academically or career-wise and if on top of that you like to party, it’s usually not frowned upon. Like people seem to look at career success or academic success as the barometer for a person in my community rather than this [partying]. So if you have your shit together and you’re doing well, then you can do what you want and people seem to neglect anything else that could be considered as bad.

In a similar vein, Andrew, a 21 year old white man explained that when people are perceived to be partying “too much,” others “...start to look down on them...question their priorities” and might begin to wonder if they had “a problem” with

drinking. The possibility that others might be concerned about his substance use behavior, specifically his occasional cocaine use, was something Anthony, 21 year old white man, both acknowledged and minimized by reassuring himself (and the interviewer) that his behavior was under control. He said:

Yeah, I think they'd probably just think that—they'd probably worry so to speak. Like they'd probably think that I was out of control and making poor decisions as far as what's too much and stuff, what's partying too hard and stuff like that and things that I think I have under control. And I think it's just a matter of exposure to some of these people who if they found out would think there was something wrong are just not as exposed to them and not as experienced about, don't know me as well as I know me.

It was rare for participants to vocalize concern that their own behavior or the behavior of others might be “a problem” or have hints of addiction. However, that concern may have been a subtext for a more common discourse about partying – the explicit claim that, although they choose to spend much/most of their social time partying, they do not “need” alcohol to have fun. Melissa described this when she, somewhat defensively, stated “My fun is not limited to drinking nor do I think I need to drink. I think it's something fun to do but I definitely wouldn't say that it's necessary.” Thus, it is not just a partying identity that individuals construct, but an identity as a particular type of partier – one who is in control, fun, and not dependent on alcohol or other drugs for having fun. Denying a “need” to drink, and thus denying a substance use problem, was central to many participants descriptions of themselves as “fun” and “in control” partiers. This was occasionally explicitly juxtaposed with a stereotyped image of a “real” alcoholic, as in the case of John, a 19 year old white man discussed earlier, who said:

Some people think that going out every night and drinking, you're an alcoholic, which is ridiculous. Alcoholics don't go to work. Alcoholics sit on the street corner and ask people for money. If you're going out and having fun and enjoying yourself and you're

not just drinking to drink, if you're drinking to have fun and have a good time about it, you're not an alcoholic. And people think that you're an alcoholic, people think that you're like a user and it's just like, "Shut up." People who know what's up don't think that. I hate people who think that you're an alcoholic because you're going out every night. It's bullshit and I'm sick of people like that and they're no fun. They're downers and I don't want to spend my time with them.

In these intensely expressive words, John accomplishes three things. First, he emphasizes fun as an instrumental component of his experience and pattern of drinking. According to his construction of partying, drinking and partying are ok as long as it is fun. It is only when you are drinking "just to drink" and not to have fun, that drinking is a problem. Additionally, his strong negative feelings toward people who do not party (and who judge his partying or him for partying) are expressed in terms that emphasize the value of fun. That he constructs a dividing line between himself, constructed as fun, and (presumably non-partying) others who are "downers" and "no fun," demonstrates the centrality of being fun to his sense of self-worth and self-identity.

Next, John positions himself as an authority on partying. In doing so he constructs himself as distinct from non-partiers, those with less knowledge about the scene who do not know "what's up." A similar theme can be seen in Anthony's discussion of people who might be concerned about his drug use when he explains that people who are concerned about drug use are simply unfamiliar with it. Finally, John creates distance between himself, who drinks frequently and heavily while attending an elite university, and "those" alcoholics who sit on the street corner asking for money. Cultural discourses associating poverty with lack of self-control, and substance abuse with both poverty and lack of self-control are reflected and reproduced by John's words.

His words construct “real” substance abuse problems as something that affects non-productive members of society, people without jobs and without access to essential material resources. This constructed image served the purpose, for John, of deflecting concern over whether he was partying “too much.”

Concern with “too much” partying, and the line that distinguished how much was “too much,” was gendered. Women who partied were subject to intense judgment over their behavior in general and their sexual behavior in particular. Deeply entrenched cultural discourses about women who drink alcohol being sexually open and available to men were commonly held, and reproduced, by students. In her discussion of pressures on women, and gendered consequences of club behavior Irene, a 20 year old Asian American woman, said

I guess like girls have kind of like different standards to keep at a club if you don't want to be seen as like loose, like easy. Like yeah, guys could just basically do whatever they want. And I guess just a couple of things, like socially guys have more leeway on how they want to behave and then girls have, like, stigmas attached to their behavior. Like, “You're behaving like a slut” or like, or like looser than guys. Like he's—guys just basically—it's like more of a good thing for a guy. But it's more like a bad thing for a girl.

Irene's words show that women who take on a partying identity are judged in sexualized and gendered ways. Brian, a 20 year old white man put this most bluntly when he said “the words “drunk” and “slut” are good friends.” The consequences and risks of a partying identity – and thus the meaning of the identity of being a partier – is gendered. Different risks, and different benefits, are attached to the label and practice of partying for men and for women. Describing this sexual double standard, Sue, a 21 year old Asian American woman said

I guess with guys, it's different because it's like if I see a guy who's really drunk or something, I wouldn't think that he's promiscuous or anything. I would think that he's a

funny guy or maybe belligerent or something like that but not promiscuous at all. Maybe he'll do something funny like go streaking or break something or whatever. That type of thing. But never promiscuous.

While at most men had to negotiate the risk of being constructed as “sloppy” or a “player” they were, as Sue said, not concerned with being labeled as promiscuous. It was only women who partied who had to negotiate the risk of being labeled “slutty” and thus culturally disrespected. This is one of the many points in which gendered inequalities are reproduced in the context of partying.

Signifying partying in the public domain

The importance of partying, and the meaning it holds for many, can be seen through its relationship to the imaginary of college – through the way it organizes social time and people in to social groups and communities of practice. It can also be seen through the role it plays in constructing and reinforcing friendships. It is an activity that facilitates a sense of belonging and the construction of both an individual and group partying identity.

The importance of partying to some people's sense of self can also be seen through the display and deployment of specific symbols in the public domain. One way to think about what acts or practices might publically signify an identity as a partier is to imagine what practices in which one would **not** engage if one was trying to keep such an identity hidden. The most obvious example of this is the telling of drinking stories. The practice of telling drinking stories is one way that people construct a partying identity and connect with community of practice. Through repetition of talking about those

behaviors, telling stories about what happened while drinking in groups of friends, and through collectively filling in the blanks in memory brought on by heavy alcohol consumption, the centrality of partying as a collective and self-identity constitutive practice is reproduced (Giles, 1999). Repeatedly discussing events that occurred while partying, and choosing to tell and re-tell those stories instead of other stories of shared experience (such as studying, working out, going out to dinner, playing sports, etc) signifies its importance, and thus its importance to group and self identity construction.

Some participants even discussed feeling more upset by not being included in the morning-after debriefing of partying than they were by missing out on the partying itself. For example, Erin, a 22 year old white woman described a time when while studying for a graduate/professional school admissions exam she had been staying in and not going out with her friends as much as normal. She said she felt that choosing to study instead of going out was the right thing for her to do, but also experienced a twinge of sadness in feeling left out of a (normally shared) activity with her friends. She said “the morning when you have to hear about it [friends partying stories from the night before] is definitely not enjoyable and you don’t want to feel like you’re missing out when people laugh about dumb stuff everyone did or whatever.”

Drinking stories, when groups of friends get together and recount a previous night of partying, often happens in public spaces. Many participants described going out to lunch or getting coffee with friends who they had gone out with the night before and talking about what they all did or remembered from the night before, and what they had seen other doing the night before. These discussions often focused on who

participants' friends were talking to or flirting with, or leaving the party with during the previous evening. These drinking stories, particularly when told in public places where they can be (or cannot help but be) overheard by others in the restaurant, coffee shop, or sidewalk. This helps to reproduce the culture of partying on campus, and to individuals' adopting those cultural discourses into their own identities.

Telling drinking stories, or engaging in discussion about partying while in public, is a one very common form of a symbolic declaration of an identity as a partier. Another very common manner in which participants symbolically declare their partying identity is through the pictures they post on Facebook. Pictures taken on cell phone or digital cameras during an evening of partying, showing people wearing "going out" clothes and holding cans of beer, shots, or mixed drinks are frequently posted on individuals' Facebook pages. This is a declaration to all of their Facebook friends, and all of their Facebook friends' friends, that they are partiers. In addition to individuals own Facebook pages, bars and clubs often have Facebook pages. These bars and clubs often post their own pictures of clientele partying, publicly visible to anyone who "friends" the bar or club (given the demographics of their clientele, bars and clubs in this area are quick to respond to any "friend request.") A record of becoming a "friend" of the bar or club is then publicly visible on an individuals' own Facebook page.

Other signs and symbols of a partying identity can be seen in the clothes some people wear publicly. They can also be seen in the accessories, body art, or decoration that someone might choose to display. For example, not washing off ink designs that are stamped on the top of one's hands as one entered a club, either to verify that a cover

charge had been paid or to signify being over or under the legal age to buy drinks, is one a visible statement of partying.

The university where this study was conducted has an effectively marketed brand, as do many large schools with successful or traditional sports cultures. T-shirts, sweatshirts and other “casual” or athletic wear, bearing the brand of this University are staples in many students’ wardrobes. Wearing a t-shirt with the school’s name with the word “Beer Pong” silkscreened on (where something like ‘basketball’ or ‘swimming’ or even ‘computer science’ would often be) is one way of publically identify oneself as a partier who enjoys playing the popular drinking game “beer pong.” Wearing t-shirts with alcohol brands on them, or names of bars or clubs in popular spring break sites or the sites themselves (particularly ones especially known partying, such as Cancun or Cabo San Lucas) also symbolically claims a partying identity. Given the inseparable connections between partying and the Greek system, wearing clothes decorated with Greek letters to signify membership in a specific fraternity or sorority is also an act of symbolically claiming an identity as a partier.

Finally, participants in this study and on this campus symbolically claimed their identity as partiers by going out with the age-old goal to “see and be seen.” Being seen partying, particularly repetitively, is one of the most decisive moves to claim an identity as a partier. As Josh, a 20 year old Asian American man, says

some people I think drink just because it’s considered—there’s just kind of like a social pressure to a little bit. And that it’s the cool thing to do: to go out and drink and party and stuff. And not necessarily even if the person doesn’t really have the desire to, it’s kind of like people will view you as having more of a social life if you do drink.

Thus, being seen out and partying is crucial to upholding an identity as a social person and a partier.

Participants' reports of what they imagine college to be, what "fun" involves, and the sense of belonging they achieve, makes clear the significance of meaning they attach to partying. The value placed on partying among participants in this study is demonstrated through the ways they describe the organization of their social lives, friendship circles, communities of practice, and group identities. Finally, the symbols that participants display and deploy in the public (and semi-public) domain, mark them as partiers. Taken together, these results show that partying is social practice through which meaning, belonging and self-identity are constituted.

Conclusions & Implications

Two sets of conclusions and implications should be drawn from this study. The first comes directly out of data analysis. The second draws on these analyses to make suggestions for substance use/abuse prevention and intervention.

Central to students' descriptions of partying, and what they value about partying, is "fun." Students describe partying as producing fun in their lives, and closely associate partying with fun. However, they leave the term "fun" undefined and unexamined. As it appears to be a great motivator for students, and an effect they intend to produce through partying, future research should focus on understanding the constitutive elements and effects of "fun". As Gary Alan Fine wrote in his article on "Justifying fun", "Play and leisure matter in the organizing of society" (1991, p.88). However, research on play and leisure, and by extension "fun" as well, have suffered

from what Fine described as “the triviality barrier”(p.88) and thus not fully explored by social science. Future research should rectify that by putting “fun” and the social practices that participants believe produce it, under the sociological microscope.

This study shows that active engagement in social practices, and the communities of practice that surround them, can construct identities in their own right. Such practices are not merely constitutive of other identities (such as those of race, region, or religion), but exist conceptually as standalone identities. Individuals hold multiple interconnected and reciprocal identities. For example, an individual may simultaneously think of himself as a student, an athlete, a swimmer, an American, a man, a Jew, a Californian, someone who is smart, etc. For the participants in this project, the practice of partying is often one of their multiple identities. These practice-based identities are also constitutive other identities, and are given meaning through interaction with multiple intersection identities. However, the heretofore lack of attention to practice-based identities as products and effects, and not merely constitutive ingredients, means that they now deserve, both theoretically and pragmatically, to be foregrounded in research and practice.

Further this research shows that partying is not simply a “bad act” that young people undertake in rash moves of rebellion, stupidity and disrespect of their elders’ values. Partying is a practice that people engage in because deeply held cultural discourses about college construct an imaginary of college that sets individuals expectations of college to include partying. For many people, partying is positively reinforced with experiences of fun, friendship, bonding, and belonging. It is a behavior, a

practice, which is important to them and to how they understand themselves and their place in the world.

Thus, successfully addressing campus drinking and the negative consequences associated with it requires conceptualizing partying as an individual and group identity. Much has been written about the “culture of drinking” on campus. This study shows that the culture of drinking does not only exist “out there.” It is also reproduced within individuals through their interactions with their discursive and social worlds, and their communities of practice. This is particularly true for young people and emerging adults in college, for whom forming relationships, taking risks, and exploring self-identity are often focal social and developmental tasks. Re-conceptualizing partying as a group and self-identity that provides meaning and a sense of belonging (as well as fun), has great potential for reinvigorating efforts to reduce the harm of heavy drinking on campus. Taking seriously the identity component of partying can improve programs’ abilities to address students’ concerns about what reducing their drinking might mean for their group and self-identities, as well as their relationships with friends and peers. Taking seriously the identity-constitutive aspect of partying and heavy-drinking has the potential to reduce students’ resistance and ambivalence to changing their drinking behaviors.

In this article I have focused on how partying is an identity constitutive social practice, showing that the social practice of partying, and active engagement in a community of practice focused on partying, constructs an identity of partier. Future research should focus more specifically on how the practice of partying is also

constitutive of other identities. For example, how does the practice of partying on campus contribute to the construction of female gendered identities? Or identities of certain social classes? Additionally, research should explore how the identity of partying intersects with, and co-constructs other identities. This article suggests points in which intersectionality (with race, social class and gender) is important. It has been the goal of this article to articulate partying as an identity, paving the way for future research to more fully theorize its intersections with other identities. Research on additional populations, cultural contexts, and institutional settings will be important in reaching this larger goal, as will projects with a more intentional focus on the relationship between practices and identities.

Future research should also explore the role of social practice -based identities in positive health promotion more broadly. Specifically, future research should explore the intersections of social identities, social practice-based identities, social practices, and cultural contexts in efforts to promote positive health behaviors and reduce health risk behaviors. I believe that more attention to the project of self-identity construction in understanding health behaviors has incredible potential. When we begin to think of social practices and health behaviors as self, group, social, and cultural identity constitutive acts as opposed to bad acts, laziness or rebellion, we may be able to design more effective and engaging prevention and intervention.

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Chapter Three

Sex and Alcohol in the Lives of Heavy-Drinking White and Asian American Emerging Adults: Complicating the Connection

Belief in the connection between alcohol and sexuality is pervasive. A wide range of biological and social science research has documented strong correlations between alcohol consumption and sexual behavior. Cross-sectional and longitudinal survey research has documented a strong correlation between adolescents and emerging adults who are heavy drinkers and who engage in sexual behavior (c.f., Cooper, 2002; Harvey & Spigner, 1995; Stueve & O'Donnell, 2005; Strunin & Hingson, 1992). Experimental research has gone a step farther, showing that increasing the amount of alcohol a subject consumes, increases his or her interest in sex, likelihood of evaluating others as sexually attractive, readiness to initiate sexual activity, and willingness to coerce women into sexual behavior, etc. (Abbey et al., 2001; Ullman 1997; Stoner & George, 1990). The connection between heavy drinking and sexual behavior is of particular concern given the evidence that sex under conditions of heavy drinking is more likely than sober sex to be unplanned, unprotected, and unwanted, leading to increased risk of multiple negative outcomes such as higher STI rates, unplanned pregnancies, regretted sex, sexual coercion/violence (Cooper, Peirce, Huselid, & Farmer, 1994; Flack et al., 2007; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens & Castillo, 1994; but

see, Weinhardt & Carey, 2000). The potential risks associated with the alcohol-sexual behavior relationship, and the general importance of studying alcohol use and sexual behavior, is perhaps pronounced among emerging adults, when developmental tasks include identity and sexual relationship exploration, experimentation, and risk-taking (Arnett, 2000).

Despite the substantial evidence of a correlation between heavy drinking and sexual behavior among emerging adults, little research has explored how race and culture might matter in this context. We also know very little about the cultural contexts in which heavy drinking and sexual behavior take place. Perhaps more specifically, we know very little about the specific cultural, racial, and gendered meanings of the connections between alcohol and sex – and how they might vary. When race or culture has been considered in research on these topics, it has almost always been a comparison between African Americans and whites. Very little research has explored the experience of Asian American emergent adults regarding alcohol consumption and/or sexual behavior at all; when it has, virtually all of it has been quantitative. Scholars of emerging adulthood have highlighted the need for inductive and qualitative work to expand the depth, richness, and complexity of our knowledge base, especially regarding sexuality, and work that centrally explores issues of race and culture (Arnett, 2005, 2006; Lefkowitz & Gillen, 2006).

This article begins to fill these gaps. In this article I use data from two qualitative sources, ethnographic observations of campus bars, and interviews with white and Asian American heavy drinking emerging adults about their experiences with partying,

to explore the following broad research question: How does race shape experiences of the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior?

To explicate the similarities and differences between white and Asian American students' experiences, I use the chronology of the event of "going out." My analysis shows that race shapes experiences of the connection between alcohol and sexual behavior in the context of racialized party cultures. Specifically, experiences with alcohol and sexual behavior – and the meanings associated with them – are shaped through important distinctions in gendered and racialized expectations, interactions, and consequences of drinking and hooking up within predominately white and predominately Asian American campus party cultures. Thus, I demonstrate that the connection between alcohol and sexual behavior is not only biological or "natural," but socially constructed by race, gender, and culture.

Literature Review

Connection between Alcohol and Sex

Evidence from multiple methods and multiple sources shows a connection between alcohol consumption and sexual behavior. In the developmental period from approximately age 18-25, young people are focused on the developmental tasks of identity exploration, autonomy, experimentation, and forming of sexual relationships (Arnett, 2000; Impett et al., 2006; Lefkowitz & Gillen, 2006). These tasks, and this time period, are characterized by high levels of uncertainty, volatility and risk-taking, making attention to the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior highly relevant.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal survey research has documented a strong correlation between adolescents and emerging adults who are heavy drinkers and who engage in sexual behavior. Experimental research has gone a step farther, showing that increasing the amount of alcohol a subject consumes, increases his or her interest in sex, likelihood of evaluating others as sexually attractive, readiness to initiate sexual activity, and willingness to coerce women into sexual behavior, etc. (c.f., Abbey et al., 1999; Stoner & George, 1989). Alcohol expectancies, particularly sex-related alcohol expectancies, are linked to how men (and women) perceive women's level of interest in sexual activity. Men who take part in placebo and other experimental design studies consistently perceive drinking women's interest in sexual activity with them as higher than non drinking women engaging in the same behaviors (George et al., 2000; Abbey et al., 1999; Corbin, Bernat, Calhoun, McNair and Seals, 2001). Furthermore, men who are told they have been drinking (whether or not they have) and that a woman co-participant has been drinking (whether or not she had) report finding a higher level of sexual aggression and coercion appropriate than either non drinking/non-experimental men paired with non drinking/non experimental did. However, we know very little about how this relationship between alcohol and sexuality might vary by race or culture.

Campus Drinking

Emerging adults, particularly college students, have high rates of alcohol consumption. For the last twenty years, Monitoring the Future (MTF) has tracked rates of heavy drinking among a national sample of college students. During that time, the two-week prevalence of binge drinking, which is defined as consuming at least four (for

women) or five (for men) drinks on one occasion in the last two weeks, has fluctuated between 38% and 45% (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2007). These are rates that are higher than the rates observed among same-age, non-college young adults. Furthermore, despite evidence of a slight decrease in binge drinking (since 2001) among non-college youth, rates among college students have remained unchanged.

According to MTF, since 1998 women's drinking (measured in 2-week prevalence of HED) has increased from 31 – 37%, and men's has decreased from 52 – 45%. These trends are not reflective of student alcohol use at This University, where drinking use is higher than the national average. At This University, more than three-quarters (77%) of women have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days, half of all women have a two-week prevalence of HED, and more than one-quarter (27%) of women engaged in Frequent HED (at least three times) in the two weeks prior to being surveyed.

Detailed information about alcohol and drug use among Asian Americans is not available from MTF. Another nation-wide survey of college student alcohol use, however, has found the rate of heavy episodic drinking among Asian Americans college students to be approximately half that of white college students, with rates of 26.2% to 50.2% in 2001 (Wechsler, et al., 2002). Research on substance use among Asian American young people is quite limited, perhaps in part due to "model minority" myths and assumptions that Asian Americans are at low risk for experiencing negative consequences. However, studies have found that, although Asian American young people have lower rates of alcohol and drug use, once they do drink or use drugs, their behavior patterns are indistinguishable from their non-Asian peers (add cites). More

research is needed to better understand alcohol and drug use among Asian American emerging adults.

Frequent heavy episodic drinking, previously described as “frequent binge drinking” is one essential component of “partying.” The concept of partying appears frequently in research on the social lives and leisure practices of adolescents and emerging adults (DeJong et al., 2006; Eisenbert & Weschler, 2003; Hagan & Foster, 2006; Larson & Sepersad, 2003; Lindsay, 2003). Partying has been given several overlapping definitions, with core ingredients being heavy drinking and intoxication in a sexualized, often heteronormative, social context (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006; Martin & Hummer, 1989; Young, Morales, McCabe, Boyd, & d’Arcy, 2005). According to Armstrong et al. (2006) and Young et al. (2005), “partying” is understood by many college students to be a normative and “typical college experience” that is part of what it means to be a college student. It might, or might not, include the use of other drugs, but always includes alcohol.

Sex on Campus

A great deal of research and popular culture commentary has focused on the change in college culture from a “dating culture” to a “hook-up culture” (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bogle, 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Institute for American Values, 2001; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Stepp, 2007; Wolfe, 2002, 2004). Hooking-up is a vague term used to describe some kind of sexual activity, ranging from kissing to intercourse, generally with people casually known to each other (friend of a friends’ friend, classmate, seen around campus, etc). Initial study of “hooking-up,” as well as more recent general study of the

social organization of sexual and social lives on college campuses, suggests that an increasing amount of sexual activity between college students is occurring in the context of “hooking-up” and a decreasing amount is occurring in the context of committed relationships (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bogle, 2008; Institute for American Values, 2001; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Young et al., 2005). Research has also found that hooking up very often occurs in the context of (during or after) heavy drinking at parties or bars (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bogle, 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Paul & Hayes, 2002).

This changing organization of college social life has significant implications for the study of college student life and sexuality among emergent adults. Currently, a great deal of research on the sexual behavior of emerging adults is conducted using quantitative survey methods of primarily white college students. We have some limited knowledge about racial differences in sexual behavior among adolescents and emerging adults via such survey methods, showing less time spent dating, and both lower rates and later initiation of sexual behavior among Asian Americans (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Feldman et al., 1999; Okazaki, 2002). However, the language used in these survey measures was not designed to reflect the experiences of Asian Americans. Nor do they provide insight into the meanings or causes of racial differences. In addition, the measures used in these studies, such as the *Sexual Experiences Survey* (Koss & Oros, 1982), ask respondents to report on experiences that that have happened with a “partner” or a “date.” As Arnett argues in his 2006 call for more qualitative and mixed-method research on emerging adulthood, the language and concepts in existing survey instruments may not be sufficient for study of changing behaviors about which we do

not have standardized knowledge. More knowledge about the social and sexual worlds of emerging adults are needed, and will be essential to developing and refining the knowledge based on alcohol and sexual behavior among emerging adults.

Culture

Culture is a contested term that has been defined by different theorists in different disciplines in a multitude of different ways. Here I draw on Swidler's conceptualization of culture as that which shapes the "tool kit" of habits, skills, ideas, discourses and styles from which people construct 'strategies of action.'" (1986, p. 273). Culture, thus, shapes the actions, beliefs, and scripts that are available to people in a particular context. In contrast to many more traditional theories of culture from sociology and anthropology which conceptualize culture as a grand system of rules and ultimate values that determine behaviors, Swidler's definition can usefully be applied to local, fluid, and temporally specific cultures such as those which surrounding emerging adults engaged in campus partying. Particularly useful in Swidler's work is her discussion of the role that culture plays in "unsettled lives" (p.278), suggesting that the effects of culture – specifically their rules and ideologies – can perhaps most clearly be seen in times of social transformation. While likely not the context she imagined, emerging adulthood is a time of unsettled lives and social transformation, both individually and culturally, suggesting that culture may be particularly important to the understanding the experiences of emerging adults. Of course, there are important differences both among people within cultures and between the smaller (sub) cultures which exist within and/or in relation to dominant cultures. In this article, I explore differences in experiences of

the relationship between sex and alcohol that are grounded in, but not exclusively determined by, the racial identity categories of two groups – Asian American and White emerging adults. My analysis shows that race shapes experiences of the connection between alcohol and sexual behavior through the mechanism of racialized party cultures. Specifically, this happens through different “strategies of action” related to expectations, interactions, and consequences of drinking and hooking up within predominately white and predominately Asian American campus party cultures.

In part due to assumptions about the primacy of biological explanations regarding the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, we know little about racial or cultural differences in that relationship. Although conventional wisdom strongly endorses a naturalized view of the relationship of alcohol and sex, some cross-cultural anthropological research has suggested that both the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, and beliefs about the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, have varied across time and culture (MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969). This scholarship, though sparse, gives a glimpse of the socially constructed nature of the relationship between alcohol and sexuality; and it paves the way for research such as the current qualitative study on the relationship between alcohol and sexuality among white and Asian American emerging adults

Method

Campus Setting

This study was conducted on the campus of a large Midwestern university. This university is, as Armstrong and her colleagues (2006) describe, a prototypical “college,”

complete with fraternities and sororities, popular Division I sports, an active “alternative culture” presence and a visible drinking culture. The campus is an almost entirely residential campus with 98% of first-year students living in dorms or other university-owned properties. In later years most students move off campus to nearby houses or apartments. It is an academically prestigious school that enjoys a popular reputation; as such, students from across the country are attracted to the school. In 2007, one-third of the undergraduate students were from out-of-state, particularly from the densely populated areas of the east coast.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, when most interviews were conducted, the majority of undergraduate students (65.9%) at this university identified their race as white. On this campus, Asian/Asian-American is the largest non-white population, at just over twelve percent of total undergraduate students. Nearly seven percent (6.7%) of students identified Black/African American, with approximately five percent (4.67%) identifying as Hispanic and the racial identity was unknown for five percent of undergraduates, according to official university administrative data. Slightly over half (50.3%) of undergraduate students are women. Sixteen percent of undergraduate men and 15% of undergraduate women join fraternities or sororities.

According to data from a 2007 random survey of students on this campus, just over half (51%) of students reported at least one episode of Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED) at least once in the past six months; frequent HED was reported by 30% of men and 27% of women. It is important to remember that the participants in this study are a

specific group of students. Not all college students drink alcohol, and the majority of them at this university do not do so heavily.

Sample

The primary source of data for this study is 90 semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with white and East Asian American undergraduates aged 18-24 who identified as Frequent Heavy Episodic Drinkers and participants in “campus party culture.” HED is defined in the literature as consuming at least four (for women) or five (for men) alcoholic drinks in a sitting (Weschler, et. al., 2002). Such behavior is defined as Frequent HED when it occurs at least three times in the past two weeks or, for the purposes of this study, fifteen times in the past six months. This addition to the typical definition of Frequent HED was made to be inclusive of students whose behavior was atypical during past the two weeks, but typically includes HED. “Partying’ was often a constitutive element of social identity for participants, much in the way that being a soccer player, biology major, or a pianist might be.

The sample is heavily heterosexual (97%), and upper-middle class (58% have at least one parent with a graduate degree). Sorority and fraternity membership is higher in this sample than in the larger population. Twenty-two percent of the entire sample, and more men (25.6%) than women (19.6%), reported a Greek affiliation.

Interview participants are divided between men and women, and between white and East Asian Americans. The racial composition of the sample was determined using the grounded theory technique of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006). As is common in projects drawing on grounded theory techniques, this project began with a first round

of interviews exploring a set of issues. These interviews explored experiences of gender, sexuality and sexual violence in the context of partying. The parameters of the rest of sample were then determined by the themes and questions emerging from preliminary analysis of those pilot data. Specifically, early analysis of cross-gender relationships, (hetero)sexual interactions, and experiences of sexualization in party scenes, suggested potentially important differences between white and Asian Americans. These emerging findings, as well as the dearth of literature on the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior among Asian Americans, led me to structure the sample specifically to address these questions. Thus, the final sample of interviewees includes 28(31.1%) white women, 23 (25.6%) East Asian American women, 20 (22.2%) white men, and 19 (21.1%) East Asian American men. Asian American is an inclusive term that encompasses people from a wide range of national and regional backgrounds. In recognition of this diversity, and the wide range of experiences across those diverse backgrounds, the present sample only includes those who self-identify as East Asian American – in practice that means almost exclusively Korean American and Chinese American (including Taiwan and Hong Kong). The sample does not include people who self-identify as South Asian or Southeast Asian.

Within this sample were several (16) men and women who identified as bi-cultural, and a smaller group (five) who identified as multi or bi-racial. Those who identified as bi-cultural are people whose racial identity is Asian American, but describe themselves as feeling as, or more, culturally comfortable in groups of all or mostly white people (or cultural spaces) as they do in groups of all or mostly Asian American people

(or cultural spaces). This complexity and fluidity of racial identity was a reality for a number of participants. For example, when asked to identify his racial background on his demographic form Tony wrote “Asian, but I hang out with white people.” While East Asian American participants described their peer groups in three ways; all/mostly Asian, racially and/or ethnically diverse, all/mostly white, the white students only described racially homogeneous friendship groups. The friendship/peer groups of white students were diverse in other ways, particularly regionally (Midwest and East Coast) and religiously (among Jewish and Christian, though largely secular, religious identities), but they were racially homogeneous. White and East Asian American students reported similar levels of religiosity, with 7 (16.67%) of East Asian American students and 9 (18.75%) of white students attending religious services at least weekly.

Interview participants were recruited via flyers posted on campus, and through emails to members of Asian American student organizations. Interviewees were offered a small monetary incentive for their time. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. I conducted all interviews with women and hired a male research assistant to interview the men. Both interviewees were white, a decision that was made after consultation with several members of the student Asian American communities who agreed that Asian American people, women in particular, would be more likely to discuss sensitive, personal, and especially sexual behavior with someone of a non-Asian racial or cultural background. Due to the sensitivity of interview topics, interviewees were gender matched. Thus, women were always interviewed by a (white) woman and men were always interviewed by a (white) male. Interviews were based on a semi-structured

interview schedule, although the specific questions asked and the order in which they were asked varied based on the flow of the conversation. All interviews covered the following topics: 1) Experiences with partying and campus party culture; 2) Heterosexuality and hooking up; 3) Racial and cultural differences in party cultures. Interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed and entered into the qualitative software program, NVIVO, for analysis.

The interview data are complimented by observations as campus bars and clubs. From March through July of 2007 I spent twelve non-consecutive evenings at three bars/clubs with culturally different core clientele. As with the majority of the interviews, observations were guided by initial analysis of pilot data. Sites for observation were determined based on data gathered from interviewees regarding bars and night clubs where I might be most likely to witness the build-up and initial stages of hooking up, a range of atmospheres (or 'scenes') and different racial groups interacting within and among race and cultural groups. The observations were intended to provide data on the context of partying, and observe atmosphere and interactions about which I would not fully be able to gather through interviewing alone. Observations were focused on the same general topics of the interview regarding, race, gender, sexuality and the interactions in the context of partying. I was accompanied by at least one other colleague during each observation session, for my own safety and comfort. I spent time at a table, usually in between the dance floor and the bar, drinking one beer and subtly jotting down notes on observations in a small notebook which fit in my purse. After leaving the bar I wrote extensive field notes on these experiences, which were also

entered into NVIVO for analysis. Interview and observational data were analyzed simultaneously and treated as one source of data for purpose of analysis.

Data Analysis

To analyze data, I used a method of open and focused coding, a method that combines inductive and deductive analysis (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). I also employed the grounded theory technique of searching for confirming and disconfirming evidence for themes (Charmaz, 2006). It is common in qualitative research, particularly that using techniques from grounded theory, for data collection and analysis to take place not in discrete intervals, but rather as an iterative process. Such was the case with this study. As described earlier, data analysis began shortly after conducting the first round of interviews for this project. Subsequent collection of interview and observation data, as well as analysis of these data, was guided by identification of early themes emerging from the data as well as a priori themes from literature and theory.

At least two research assistants and I read through each transcript, taking notes on emerging themes and descriptive passages as we read. I next coded all data for the themes that had emerged during the initial read-through by the assistants and myself, in addition to the themes from prior research. Themes emerging from the data included “hooking up is wrong,” “negative consequences for men” and “racialized sexualization.” Themes from prior research included “taking advantage of drinking women,” “judgment of drinking women’s sexuality,” and “hooking up and dating.” These themes were then systematically analyzed to explore differences in experiences and understandings of those experiences along gender, cultural, and especially racial lines. Thoughtful group

discussions and on-going collaboration of five undergraduate research assistants (three who met all criteria for participation in this project and two who were non-drinkers) increased the reflexivity, trustworthiness and dynamism of the study, particularly the theme development. They also provided a valuable source of member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett 1998; Boyatzis, 1998).

Throughout the process of data analysis, research assistants and I wrote data-driven memos (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998.) These memos began as initial memos that we wrote in the early stages of pilot interviewing and data analysis. As analysis progressed, we moved to writing thematic memos that combined our own analysis with the data. Finally, I then wrote integrative memos that combined several themes and made connections across themes and from themes to theory and existing research. These memos formed the beginnings of this article.

Given the particular focus of this article, the bulk of the data presented are from interviews, with observational data presented primarily as context. Data regarding individuals' expectations and consequences of drinking and hooking-up are not readily – or ethically – accessible through non-experimental observation. In addition, the insights and perspectives that I bring to analysis of interview data are shaped by observations. The interview data that are presented in this article are representative of the data as a whole. The quotations presented are done so because they are particularly clear or direct, but they are not extreme or unusual. They reflect the themes and tones of the entire sample. Also, I edited some of the quotations presented here for clarity, and

occasionally for brevity. This means, in practice, that I removed many “likes” and “ums” from the data. These edits do not alter the meaning of the original quotes.

Results and Discussion

Similarities and differences in how white and East Asian American emerging adults describe, understand, and make meaning about their experiences of the relationship between sex and alcohol, or more specifically sex and partying, are the focus of the results presented here. Data are organized via the chronology of a “typical” night of partying. I begin by providing an overview of the racialized campus party cultures, drawing on data from interviews and observations. I then discuss the *expectations* that white and East Asian Americans have for “going out,” including what they expect might happen while drinking, and specifically what elements of sexuality and sexual behavior they anticipate potentially participating in or witnessing. Next I present data regarding how participants talked about sexualized *interactions* – both their own and their peers – while partying. Finally, I provide data on participants’ understandings of the *consequences* that might result from participating in the sexualized aspects (hooking-up in particular) of drinking or partying. These components of partying are inter-related, as one’s expectations are shaped by previous interactions and the consequences of those interactions, interactions are shaped by expectations and anticipation of consequences, and consequences are shaped by expectations and interactions – and previous consequences. These components exist, function, and build upon each other in an iterative, dynamic relationship. Nonetheless, for the purposes of explanation and analysis, I separate them. I ultimately conclude that important racial

and cultural differences exist in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, which de-links the naturalized connection between the two.

The Scene: Campus Party Cultures

Multiple party cultures exist on this campus. Participants described, though not with these explicit words, a very racially segregated party scene. A non-exhaustive description of the multiple party cultures includes a “white” party culture, with the greatest number of participants. Partying, in this mainstream element of campus party culture, requires heavy consumption of alcohol. Other drugs may be involved, but alcohol is an essential, and organizing, component of partying. Partying incorporates many activities, including a variety of drinking games (i.e, beer pong, and quarters), dancing and talking. Partying takes place in many locations, including small parties in dorms and off-campus apartments, house parties, fraternity parties, and many of the campus bars/nightclubs. According to participants in this study, by far the majority of participants in this party scene are white. Individuals’ estimates of the racial homogeneity of the white party scene range from about 70% to 99% white, with Asian being the largest minority group who participates, and a much smaller number of African American, Latino, Native American and other racial or ethnic groups.

Asian party culture, according to participants, was even more racially segregated than the white party scene, with nearly all participants being Asian or Asian American. The activities that participants in this scene engage in are quite similar to the white scene. They gather with friends and acquaintances to socialize and drink a great deal of alcohol, play games, dance, talk with friends, and get to know new people. This takes

place in a number of settings, including dorm and apartment parties, house parties, Asian fraternity parties, and nightclubs.

There is some overlap in these scenes, and certainly there are other scenes that are part of the larger party culture on campus. Overlap occurs in two primary ways. First, some people – for example, Asian Americans who identify as bi-cultural or who have different groups of friends (predominantly Asian, predominantly white, racially and culturally mixed, etc.) may participate in both the white and Asian American party scenes. Second, there are a few clubs on campus that successfully cater to both white and Asian American crowds, including one of the sites where I did observation.

Despite the differences in party scenes, there is a great deal of similarity in the trajectory of an evening among most interviewees. Participants described a “typical” night of partying as one that began by “pre-drinking” or “pre-gaming,” a practice I have described elsewhere in detail (Luke, 2009). Participants generally stayed at parties or bar/night clubs for 2-3 hours before leaving. Several options were available to participants after leaving the party or bar. Sometimes, an after-party (party ‘scheduled’ to begin after the bars close) would be happening. Other times a group of friends would decide spontaneously to invite several people over to continue drinking and partying. Commonly, participants would stop by one of the many restaurants catering to the ‘after-bar’ crowd near campus, on their way home from the party or bar. This post party after bar time was also the ideal time for leaving one’s group of friends and going home with someone to “hook-up.” The next day, groups of friends often gathered to have breakfast or lunch, or simply hang out together, and recount the events of the night

before. This post-party de-briefing, was an important component of the experience of partying, one of the primary mechanisms of bonding and reinforcing friendships, and where the “consequences” of partying often begin to become obvious.

Expectations

Studying the patterns and practices of everyday life makes explicit the work that individuals do in constructing their environments, as well as the how they are shaped by their environments (c.f., Giddens, 1984, 1991; Kondrat, 2002). In this case, analyzing the patterns and practices that participants engage in to prepare for a night of “going out” partying makes the centrality of sexuality within partying explicit. Within the everyday practices of getting ready to go out individuals engage with cultural discourses and their own felt desires, goals, and needs. They use tools from the cultural “tool kit” (Swidler, 1986), such as the active enactment and construction of heterosexuality, and the construction of partying. Because of the theoretical significance of mentally and physically preparing oneself for an evening of partying, and because of the parameter-setting effect of expectations (i.e., their ability to define the bounds within which all intelligible action takes place), I give a significant amount of analytic attention to these expectations

Getting ready.

Partying is a (hetero)sexualized experience. The extent to which this is true, and understood to be true, can be seen in participants’ descriptions of a common party culture ritual, “getting ready.” This ritual is a process that women (and to a lesser

extent, men) engage in with their friends to get each others' opinions about what to wear, and discuss how to maximize their heterosexual attractiveness.

In their discussions of what they do to get ready for going out many of the women described dressing with the explicit intention of attracting heterosexual attention from men. Relating an experience common among the women interviewed for this study, when asked what she does to get ready Alyssa, an 18 year old white woman told me: "It depends. I have, like, my going out clothes, the sexy ones, so they're my cuter jeans. They're probably tighter, they look better. Sometimes they're my longer jeans so I can wear like my taller shoes if I want. Like, my cuter, more expensive shirts that have funny sayings on them. I guess things that get a guy's attention (laughs)."

Her words here give explicit detail about how she consciously shapes her appearance. They also identify key elements that figure in to her consideration about what she should wear, i.e., things that are tighter and "look better," likely emphasizing the contours of her body, things that make her look taller (a culturally desirable marker of sexual attractiveness), things that cost more (suggesting that there is a relationship between being more expensive and being more attractive), and shirts with sayings on them – presumably on her chest and thus possibly, as she says, 'get a guy's attention'. The image that Alyssa describes trying to achieve when getting ready is similar to what Connell (1987) conceptualizes as emphasized femininity. By describing her "going out" clothes as the sexy ones, tighter, more expensive, she shows that she is consciously constructing a sexualized appearance to present in the context of partying. This work, an example of actions described by many participants, demonstrates that women

understand party culture to be sexualized, and that their (often quite intricate and time-consuming) actions help to construct it as such.

The assumption that women would and should spend a fair amount of time and money “getting ready” and dressing to impress men was shared by many of the men interviewed for this study. When asked what they thought women did to get ready for going out, men often responded with mixed expressions of confusion about what could be taking women so long to get ready. In contrast to the experiences of women, white and East Asian American men described their own getting ready experiences as quick and unremarkable. For example, Don a 21 year old East Asian American man says, “I really don’t do that much actually. I’ve never really thought about that. I just normally just wait for everybody else and sit around. I don’t really even think about that when I’m about to go out or anything. I really don’t have anything like that. I don’t do anything like that. Maybe I take a shower?”

Men acknowledge, however, that the experience is different for women. While describing this difference Ken, a 22 year old white man, says, “They’ve [the women] got to shower before they go out, put their hair however they want it, look nice for the guys I guess... It can vary. Like some of them go out in jeans and then just—Like the tight shirts that the girls wear. Some of them flaunt what they have. It just varies, I guess.” Ken’s words demonstrate a sentiment commonly expressed by both white and East Asian American men: that some of the women they interact with are trying to emphasize their sexiness, and trying to impress the men. The men expect that women are trying to be visually pleasing to men. Importantly, and particularly among the white

men, they frame this in contrast to their own experiences of “being themselves” and not attempting to improve their appearance. While East Asian American men also described much less work getting ready than both groups of women in this sample, they did describe putting more thought into their appearance (such as changing in to ‘polo’ shirts, putting gel in their hair, or wearing nice shoes) than the white men did typically in this sample.

There are some notable and illustrative exceptions to this. When men did talk about consciously making an effort to shape their appearance in particular ways before going out, they often did so while explaining that they were single and that their behavior changes when they have a girlfriend. Jeff, a 19 year old white man says, “If I’m single, I’ll take more time. Put on a polo, cologne – Cuz’ there is always the possibility... But now that I’m in a relationship – just whatever I was wearing.” His words show that he does not imagine the possibility of hooking up, now that he is in a relationship, so he sees no purpose to taking time to “get ready” before going out.

Another profound gender difference within racialized party cultures, and one linked to preparing for the possibility of sexualized partying, was that both white and Asian American women’s discussion of the fun and excitement associated with trying to look sexy and attract men often was followed by a note of hesitancy, an awareness of the possibility of discomfort or danger. Thus, for women, sexuality and the expression of sexuality is accompanied by an acknowledgement of the possibility of exploitation or danger. The following quotation, from Deb, a 21 year old East Asian American woman, demonstrates this tension.

Deb: Like I think it's just I mean for us, we just go out and have fun...But we definitely have to learn to—it's like we have to learn to get attention but at the same time fend it off.

Author: *Sure. And what kind of attention do you think girls are looking for when they go out?*

Deb: Well, just from guys to think that they're hot or whatever... you don't want attention from the wrong guys. But I think when you go to a club, usually it pretty much is the wrong (laughs) kind. I'm not saying that all guys there are sleazy or anything. But yeah, most of them are out there to go have a one night stand."

Through analysis of the process of getting ready, it is clear that campus party cultures are sexualized; women's effort in constructing their desired appearance makes it clear that they understand partying to be (hetero)sexualized. Through their discussions with friends about the evening's activities, and their choice of clothes, etc., they both reflect and construct partying as sexualized. Male participants report spending little time "getting ready," only doing so when they are single and at increased sensitivity to the possibility of hooking up. Thus, partying is hetero-gendered as well as sexualized.

Women's descriptions of getting ready, of trying to look sexy (but not "too" sexy) and wanting to attract attention from men (but not the wrong kind of attention) were common across age, race, ethnicity, religion, and religiosity. Women of various social locations provided very similar accounts of getting together with their friends, drinking shots of hard liquor, picking out/sharing clothes, and talking about the social possibilities (heterosocial, sexual, etc) for the evening. More profound racial and ethnic differences emerged in their anticipation of the possibility of "hooking up." While "getting ready" is a more similarly experienced activity by gender, and the understanding of partying as a sexualized phenomenon is unchallenged, what a

sexualized atmosphere might mean in terms of tangible interactions were more distinguished by race than by gender.

Anticipating hooking-up.

Sexualized heterosexual interaction is an expected component of party culture among all of the participants interviewed for this study. There is no disconfirming evidence for this statement. However, important differences between white and Asian American participants emerged regarding the degree and kind of interaction anticipated. More specifically, whether hooking up is understood to be a realistic or likely outcome varies across racialized contexts of campus partying.

White participants described hooking-up and sexual encounters while partying as both very possible and common. They expected that hooking-up would be happening among the people with whom they were partying. For example, Tom, a 20 year old white man says “Everyone is hoping they’ll hook up” when they go out, and Jimmy, an 18 year old white man says “This one friend of mine, he hooks up almost every weekend.” Tom and Jimmy’s words are exemplary of the white men in this study and consistent with prominent cultural discourses about what young men are expected to be looking for when they go out, and about the connection between sexual behavior and heavy alcohol consumption.

Both the white men and women described this expectation of hooking up as gendered. White men often explained that while they or their (male) friends went out with the goal of hooking up with someone, they thought women were much less likely to do so. Women expressed similar sentiments, explaining that while they and their

female friends went out just to have a good time with their friends, the men they knew went out with the explicit intention of finding a person to hook up with.

The sexual behavior that is linked with partying is a particular type of heterosexuality – that which is the purview of those who are single (meaning they do not have a boyfriend or girlfriend). In the following quote, Josh, a 21 year old white man, describes why he believes people who are dating are not as heavily invested in party culture: “I think people who are dating generally party less because a large element, whether acknowledged or, not is the possibility of sexual encounter. I mean there’s obviously a swath of other things that go into it and are included but that is a large element of it, enough so that I think if people are dating; it tempers their desire to party a little bit.” Here Josh acknowledges the importance of sexuality to partying, as well as suggesting that it is the potential for sexual interaction *with someone new* that is the attraction of partying and sexuality within party culture. His words suggest a particular type of sexuality associated with partying. It is not that partying helps one have sex with someone they’re dating – just someone with whom they are not already sexually involved.

In contrast to the white participants, the East Asian American students did not widely expect that hooking up was a possible, likely, or common outcome of a night of partying for themselves or their acquaintances. Some, particularly those who had a large number of white friends, or who spent time in white social party spaces, did, but the majority did not. Where white men and women described hooking up (or the possibility of doing so) as an important component of partying, East Asian American students drew

distinctions between this and their own behavior. A typical sentiment is expressed here by Dan, a 21 year old East Asian American man who said, “The friends I hang out with, when we go out to parties, our aim isn’t really about hooking up with (pauses)—trying to I guess get with the other gender. We’re more just to have fun. And I mean if people do get together at a party, then I guess that just happened but I don’t think people go into it with the intention.” Jason, a 20 year old East Asian American man, expressed a similar perspective, saying “I guess within my group of friends, there’s not really most of the guys aren’t really looking to hook up with random strangers. So there is less of that issue.” Dan and Jason talk about hooking up as something that their friends, or people within the Asian American party scene, do not regularly participate in, or expect to occur.

Notably, East Asian American women were less confident about this. They did think that the men they might meet in the East Asian American party scene were hoping to hook up. This may reflect the reality that women, across race, class, culture, are socialized to be on guard for sexual danger when they are drinking or around others who are drinking. It may also reflect a difficulty interpreting flirtation. Men, even if not expecting their flirty behavior or heterosexual attention to culminate in hooking up, still engage in behavior that might lead to hooking up (flirting, touching, dancing, focusing attention); thus women’s “work” of fending off attention occurs whether or not men believe that attention might have resulted in hooking up.

This “work” of fending off attention from potentially predatory men was something described as an expected element of partying by many of the women in this

study across race and culture. Unique, however, to the East Asian American women's descriptions of their experiences was explicitly racialized language in the process of being hit on and determining whether to accept or fend off attention. For example, Margaret, a 23 year old East Asian American woman, described a situation in which she was at a bar with her (primarily white) group of friends when a young man she had never before talked with walked up to her with an intimate smile. He put his hand on her hand, and appearing unsteady in his drunkenness and leaned toward her with a cross between a leer and a smile to say, "Hey, how's it going? My ex-girlfriend is Korean."

The man in the example Margaret gave was enacting what, for many of the East Asian American women I interviewed, categorized under a general umbrella term of they call an *Asian fetish*. Women described the existence of an Asian Fetish calmly and matter-of-factly, as though it is an obvious, true, and an unquestioned phenomenon present in their lives, and their interactions with non-Asian men. The possibility that non-Asian men might be interested in them as a result of an Asian fetish as opposed to a "real" desire for them bothered some of the women I interviewed. Kim, a 21 year old Korean American woman said,

Sometimes when people look at you a little bit differently, you don't know if it's your shirt or because you're Asian. When a white guy comes up to you as an Asian female, you don't know if he's attracted to you because of you or because of your race. Or in the end, is there really a distinction? You hear popular terms like yellow fever, Asian fetish and stuff like that. Does it matter if a guy that's attracted to you has an affinity—a preference for Asian women or that he just likes you because you are one of those or because he likes you because of you?

While this uncertainty bothered Kim, other participants were less critical about what might be underlying someone's attraction to them, and were instead excited by

the possibility of mutual attraction and potential of sexual interaction. It was common for white women (and less common but not rare for East Asian American women) to openly, and positively, talk about the possibility of hooking up with someone at the end of a night. When describing what would constitute the “best, or one of the best” experiences partying, Janice said “something funny happened, that like you and your friends can remember in the morning. Or you talked to someone that you haven’t talked to in a while or you go home with a guy that you really wanted to.” Her description of a “best” night of partying, calls forth images of fun and friendship, of sharing stories and memories with friends. She also says that part of what might make a night go from average to ‘best’ is going home with the right guy, showing that hooking up is a desired and anticipated possibility for some women. This is contrasted to the experiences of East Asian American women, particularly those who spent most of their social time in Asian American party culture. They described an expectation of flirting and maybe dancing with men but not going home with or hooking up with them.

This difference may be reflective of many things. For example, the distinctive structure of gendered social interaction in Asian American and white party cultures might play a role in the different expectations about hooking up between the two groups. East Asian American women described their relationships with their same-race male friends in much different ways than the white women did. East Asian American women expected that their male friends would act similar to older brothers. They expected their male friends to watch out for them, to protect them, to buy their drinks and pay for their cabs. But they did not expect to be hit on by them. This was not true

for the white women, who thought it was possible for their male friends to hit on them, and that hooking up with a friend was not unusual.

This distinction is likely related to another trend that emerged in the data regarding expectations of hooking up. White women and men expressed that they believed hooking up in the context of partying to be one possible pathway to more serious dating relationships. For white participants, meeting someone at a bar or party and hooking up with them did not necessarily have any longer term implications (i.e., hooking up with someone once and not talking to them again was certainly a common outcome) but it also did not preclude the possibility of a longer term relationship. Many white women told me they could not imagine someplace other than partying or going out where they could find someone who might become a boyfriend. Similarly, as I discuss later, it was common for both the white men and women who were in dating relationships to describe their relationships beginning through hooking up. Even among those whose relationships began via other mechanisms (class, high school, student organization) it was common to have friends whose relationships had begun with a drunken hook up at a party, or for a past relationship to have started that way.

Participants were less likely to describe dating relationships beginning through hooking up in the context of Asian American partying/parties. The heavy-drinking East Asian American participants who were in dating relationships (meaning that they had someone who they called a boyfriend or girlfriend and with whom they expected sexual exclusivity) described their relationships as beginning in the context of church activities, or in a class, or even through friends, but not through hooking up. Additionally, East

Asian American participants, especially those who participate in only or primarily Asian party culture, describe dating relationships in a manner that suggests those relationships are more serious, as a group, than those of white students. East Asian American students described it as unlikely that they or their friends would have a series of dating partners while in college, and likely that their relationships would extend past college and likely to marriage.

This exists in stark contrast to the experience of white students who described the normalcy of entering in to and out of multiple dating relationships. Only rarely, primarily among the seniors or those who had graduated immediately prior to the interview, did white students talk about the possibility of relationships extending past college. This could reflect both a difference in cultural expectations among heavy-drinking college students regarding when serious (as in likely to lead to marriage) relationships ought to begin. Research on romantic relationships in adolescence and emerging adulthood have found cultural differences between white and Asian Americans, with the latter engaging in serial dating or non-marital relationships far less frequently (Feldman et al., 1999; Kim & Ward, 2007).

Finally, the smallness of the Asian American community, particularly the Asian American party scene, likely contributes to the differences in expectations about hooking up while drinking/partying. Participants described two types of hooking up within party culture; hooking up with a “random stranger,” or someone one has not yet met, and hooking up with a regular hook up partner –who often began as a “random stranger.” As population of the campus is primarily white, there is a much larger pool of

“random” white women, and thus potential hook up partners on this campus. Additionally, the smallness of the Asian American community and the Asian party scene, creates an intimacy or insularity that does not exist within the white party scene. Thus, it is, according to interviewees, not likely that people would hook up without it becoming public knowledge and subject to the judgment and gossip of the larger community. This becomes even more important when, as I discuss later, considering the judgment passed on women (and to a lesser extent men) who engage in hooking up within Asian American party culture.

The explanations I have provided for racial differences in expectations regarding hooking up and partying are cultural and consistent with what the literature on Asian American emerging adults describe as “traditional Asian cultural values” (Lau et al., 2009), including commitment to family and community, greater level of interdependency, and less appreciation for individualism and individual pursuit of pleasure. These “values” can alternatively be conceptualized as habits and symbols, or tools that are accessible to people and help them to understand the world and shape the world around them. Arnett’s 2003 comparison of emerging adulthood in different American ethnic groups found themes consistent with this research, suggesting that some of the differences seen in expectations of hooking up while partying can be attributed to differences in traditions and symbols within racialized party cultures on the same campus.

Interactions

I begin this section by discussing the interesting case of participants whose racial and ethnic identity is complicated – those who identify as bi-cultural, bi-racial, or as Asian Americans who hang out with or grew up with white people. These participants offer an opportunity to view one perspective of both party scenes from one type of “outsider-within” (Collins, 2000) in both scenes. They describe profound differences in their own patterns and practices of heterosexuality when they are in white (or, as they say, “regular American”) party culture compared to Asian American party culture. The manipulative and misogynistic element, where men are trying to get women drunk for the purposes of persuading them into sexual activity, is not, according to participants, present to the same degree within Asian American party culture. The Asian American party scene, bi-cultural participants report, is simply calmer and more innocent. In the following quote Brad, a 21 year old bi-cultural Asian American man who identifies as a religious Christian, describes cultural differences in the sexual subtext of drinking games and flirting between white and Asian American party scenes regarding hooking up.

Brad: ...I don't want to be biased but in an American or whatever party like other frat parties or sorority parties or whatever, I guess the main intention would be to see how far we can go after getting this girl drunk.

Int: Right. Sexually you mean.

Brad: Right, right. Whereas here it's more like, "Let's just have fun with playing games. And then if she gets too drunk, then let's kind of put her on the couch and let her sleep it off." But it's nothing—there's no actual sexual predator kind of mind.

Int: Sure, sure, okay. Interesting...Is there a flirtatious dynamic at all between the men and women?

Brad: There is. There is. Sometimes they would kind of call each other names or something like that or they would kind of intentionally gear the game towards getting this girl drunk or kind of say that or maybe a guy keeps pointing at one girl as a punishment to get her drunk or something like that.

Int: Okay. And that's a kind of flirty thing.

Brad: Exactly. But there is no actual—there is no actual for instance if I were to go to an American party and if I were to flirt with a girl, I would kind of gear all of my focus towards her and kind of flirt with her whereas in a Korean party I

wouldn't. I would kind of go with the flow and go with the whole group but at the same time kind of hint that, "Hey, I'm flirting with you."

Int: Right, right, okay. So it would be like a lot more sort of on the down low.

Brad: It's very subtle.

Brad talks about how he engages in different social practices of heterosexuality in different cultural contexts, suggesting that the difference is a cultural, and not biological or essential, racial difference. Nor is it a natural outcome of the relationship between sexuality and alcohol. Brad also describes flirting as common in both scenes, but with qualitatively different practices, meanings, and outcomes. He describes being more obvious and focused in his flirting at an "American" party, and that he would be more subtle in his actions at a Korean party. There is, he says "very, very little hooking up" in the Korean party scene. "Honestly, hardly any," he reiterates.

Brad's discussion of the differences between white American and Korean party scenes is similar to Alex's discussion of the differences between white and Asian American (specifically, Chinese American) party scenes. Like Brad, Alex is a 21 year-old, bi-racial, bi-cultural man whose racial identity was complicated and somewhat fluid. On the demographic form he filled out prior to his interview, he wrote his race as 'white.' Throughout the interview he described himself as white and used language of collective pronouns such as "us" and "we" in reference to white people. He also described himself as "half-Chinese" and said he "grew up with Chinese people." Despite phenotypically appearing to be of Asian descent, he culturally identified as white, showing that cultural differences, in addition to racial background, are influential in constructing social identity categories. For example, when describing a party he said, "Everyone there was

Chinese but they were born and raised in the States and so they had no reason to be like that culturally different than me.”

Alex’s complex racial identity allowed him access to (or required his cultural fluency in) normative hetero-gender relations in two separate cultural groups. He talked about the ways men treat women in the context of partying as one of the major distinctions between white men and Asian American men. The Asian American men he knows are, he says “completely turned off by the idea of hooking up.” He expresses a resignation or confusion regarding the lack of interest among his Asian American roommates in hooking-up “they’re both, like attractive guys who have a lot going for them who could be hooking up, I guess that’s the point of that. But they don’t really want to for some reason.” In contrast to the white men he spends time with, his roommates are “not quite as conquest-acious,” reflecting an observation similar Brad’s that men’s heterosexual behavior within Asian American party cultures is less explicit.

It is not only individual people he describes as conforming to this norm of heterosexual interaction, but parties as well. Regarding sexualized interactions and hooking up within Asian American party cultures, he says “It wasn’t quite the same rabid environment of guys wanting to hook up with girls and like that was their intent and girls wanting to dance and sometimes humoring guys. It was a lot more—not respectful—but probably reserved would be the right word. People still had fun, people still got drunk but I didn’t see any groping or anything like that that you would see at a house party or something. “

It was not only bi-cultural East Asian American men who described this qualitative difference in the sexualization between white and Asian American party scenes. Irene, a 21 year old bi-cultural East Asian American woman described a similar difference between the “normal” (read: white) party scene and the Asian American party scene on campus, particularly between the white and Asian fraternity parties. Irene acknowledges that sexual interactions, even making out, sometimes happen at Asian fraternity parties, but she describes a qualitative difference between the sexualization of those scenes with “normal” fraternity.

When I first came freshman year I went to a normal frat party and not Asian. I guess Asian it's less—it's more conservative and like if you go to a normal frat, people are touching and groping you everywhere. Like really like everything. But Asian frat's more like toned down, I guess. Like not that open. Like maybe at the most making out and it's not like almost sex. ... when I go to a white frat party, it's just like everybody is like groping and doing much more than just like dancing. Yeah, I think maybe that's different because I think the Asian thing is like more conservative in that sense.

Dancing, as the data from Alex and Irene demonstrate, is one place where differences in sexualized interactions between white and Asian American party scenes can be seen. Within white parties, dancing is often understood to be a facilitator of hooking up. Dancing allows people the opportunity to physically interact with each other and test out the others' interest in hooking up without having to verbally communicate (and thus commit to) interest in doing so. (See “communicating consent” article for further discussion of the process of communicating interest in, and consent to, hooking up.) A common description of dancing in white party scenes involved a woman dancing in a circle with female friends, and a man dancing behind her, slowly putting his hand around her waist or hips and grinding his hips into hers. This might, if

met favorably by both parties, culminate in hooking up that evening. It is this type of “groping,” according to Irene and Alex, which is not present in the Asian American party scene.

While dancing is understood to facilitate sexual interactions within white party scenes, the same does not hold true in Asian American party scene. East Asian American women often described going out clubbing or dancing with no intention of hooking up with, or even dancing with, men. When asked what a typical night of partying consisted of, Helen discussed a lengthy process of getting ready to go out, and then told me “We usually just dance just us [the girls]. Sometimes our guy friends come up [on the dance floor] when guys are, you know, inching toward us.” Marcus described the flip side of this, saying ““I’ll just say she’s my girl, step behind her and put my arm around her waist or something” if he notices men dancing toward, or just noticing, his female friends on the dance floor at a club. This suggests that dancing is not understood to be a facilitator of hooking up in Asian American party culture. It also is illustrative of the almost familial relationships between East Asian American men and women that I discussed earlier in the *expectations* subsection.

One of the major differences in the quality of the relationships between white men and women and East Asian American men and women is that East Asian American men expressed feelings of responsibility to protect their female friends from the advances of men, perhaps regardless of whether this was desired by their female friends. White men did not express such a sense of responsibility, perhaps because they did not want to get in the way of men who were trying to hook up with women, or

perhaps because they did not want to get in the way of their female friends desire for sexual interaction. This was not a concern for East Asian American men who described what felt more to me like a paternalistic relationship in which they took on the role of protector, similar to that of an older brother as opposed to a co-equal friend.

The more familial-type of relationship exhibited between the East Asian American men and women could also be influenced by the smallness of the Asian American community on campus, and thus the greater likelihood that they experience a community that feels more connected, intimate, and more like an extended family than anything like what the white students might experience. The more familial-like nature of the relationships between East Asian American men and women might also be reflective of the influences of a more communal and less individualistic eastern culture and traditions that see sexual purity among women as an important value or trait, and one that reflects upon the extended family and larger community. Scholars have written extensively of the importance of women's sexuality to national, community, and familial pride in a range of cultures, including Asian American ones (Espiritu, 2001; Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Perhaps the greater involvement of Asian American men in the sexual behavior (or lack thereof) of Asian American women is an extension of this practice, and an act of protecting or promoting the image of Asian Americans.

In sum, the substance of sexualized interactions varies dramatically across racialized cultural context. Asian American party scenes are described by participants as being more reserved, conservative, and more toned down than white party scenes. Hooking up, "grinding" or groping while dancing, and crude conversation about women,

is described as common in white party scenes. The expectation (or lack thereof) of hooking up, and the experience of hooking up varies widely across (and to some extent within) racial identities/groups and cultural contexts, which challenges the naturalized connection between alcohol and sexuality. In the next subsection I will discuss the similarities and differences in the *consequences* of hooking up in the context of partying for the participants in this study.

Consequences

According to many of the participants in this study, a major component of the fun of partying is the debrief the next day, the ritual of getting together with friends, roommates, dorm-mates, housemates, fraternity brothers, or sorority sisters to talk about what happened the night before. This is a major source of the bonding that happens between friends, and being a part of “the story” of what happened the night before can move one in to a friendship circle. It is a way to make new friends or solidify fledgling friendships. These activities, focusing on relationship-building, belonging, and sexual exploration are central developmental task of emerging adulthood. Research on the pro-social effects of dating suggest that dating provides adolescents and emerging adults with the opportunity to elevate social status, differentiate from parents, gain entrance to a group of friends, and others (see, e.g., Kelly & Hanson, 1987; McCabe, 1984). I suggest that, in the cultures of campus partying, being part of “the story” of partying, particularly of hooking-up while partying, can serve a similar role. It is in this process of debriefing, and telling of “the story,” where the immediate consequences of hooking up, be they positive, negative or neutral, can first be seen.

Data presented so far has shown that hooking up is understood by participants to be more prevalent in white party scenes than in Asian American ones. Perhaps due to this, Michael, a 20 year old East Asian American man, said he would be very surprised to hear that a friend or acquaintance had hooked up with someone. "I would be shocked" he said. Hooking-up occurred with relative less frequency within the Asian American party scene. This gave it the possibility of being more interesting, more remarkable, and thus subject to greater scrutiny than in white American party scenes.

In contrast to white party culture, men's sexual behavior was held to a high degree of critique among participants in Asian American party culture. Within the Asian American party culture on campus, hooking-up appeared to be understood, almost by definition and regardless of circumstance, as an activity in which men take advantage of women. When describing what he thought would happen if his friends found out that he hooked up with someone, Dave said "I would be, like, shunned or whatever." Jerry describes something similar, talking about how he wants to be seen within his community. "It is a small community, and people would find out, I think. And I would not want to be seen as guy who takes advantage of girls." Both of these statements reflect an understanding that members of one's community would be likely to know if one hooked up with someone, and that they (the community) would not approve of such action.

What within "American" culture is held in high esteem among men is, according to the heavy-drinking East Asian American participants, was viewed as inappropriate and not at all a source of pride. Neither the male interviewer nor I probed for reasons

why participants thought this cultural difference exists. One explanation that seems possible given the relative acceptance or acknowledgment of women's interest in hooking up within white party culture, and the absence of such acknowledgment within Asian American party culture, is a difference in cultural understandings of women's sexual agency and sexual desire. If women are not culturally understood to have sexual agency or desire, then it is not an illogical assumption that hetero-sexual behavior is almost necessarily exploitative of women. Whether or not this was the cause, men in Asian American party cultures expected intense cultural judgment if they hooked up with someone.

This was not at all the case among white men, who experienced virtually no negative cultural consequences for hooking-up, per se. The negative consequences they did experience were vastly different than the ones described by East Asian American men, and for vastly different reasons. The concern, among heavy-drinking white men, was not about whether or not one hooked up with someone, but *who* one had hooked up with. Or rather, what they looked like. The most severe negative consequence white men talked about was being made fun of by one's friends if one had hooked-up with someone deemed unattractive by one's friends. For example, Marcus, a 21 year old white man, said: "It's like, if you're going to hook up with this girl and she's not very attractive. I don't think any of us are going to hold you back or whatever but they'll hear a hard time about it tomorrow possibly. Or talk about it behind your back."

This active negative judgment was especially true if the woman one had hooked up with was "fat." John, an 18 year old white man, says, "I mean if your friend is

macking with [hitting on] some huge girl, I mean you're going to give him shit about that." And Nick, a 19 year old white man said "If other people like see you with this girl that's really not that attractive, like the fat girl or whatever, then you're going to get hell for it. You know your friends are thinking to themselves, "Oh, this is going to be a good time in the morning." Like, "I'm going to get to give this guy hell." [Laughs]

This sort of surveillance of peers' heterosexual interactions has many consequences. It serves to limit social interaction between people not pre-approved by one's friends, and reproduces social norms of beauty and attractiveness by explicitly sanctioning people who appreciate "fat" girls or those who possess physical characteristics outside of conventional standards of beauty. However, it does not serve a function of judging the act of hooking up. Hooking up itself was considered normal and esteemed by the white men interviewed in this study.

White men and women also described hooking up as a culturally appropriate activity for white women to engage in, to a certain degree. As with drinking, hooking up was considered attractive among white women, or at least very acceptable, as long as it was "under control" and didn't happen too often. As Marta, a 21 year old white woman, described "it's a balance. It's fun to hook up sometimes. As long as it's not every weekend or whatever, it's cool."

However, as women who participated in campus party culture, they were conscious of being vulnerable to the stereotype that they are "slutty." The very fact that they were visibly partying, triggered stereotyped thinking that drinking women are always interested in sexual activity. As Marcus said, "The fact that they [women] party

gives off the fact that they are more promiscuous. Like, true or not, it's just that perception." As I have argued elsewhere, women were at risk of being judged and labeled as "slutty" not only from men, but also from women (Luke, 2009). That a double standard exists between what is deemed culturally acceptable behavior for men and women was widely acknowledged, uncritically accepted, and thus reproduced by participants in this study.

Despite the precarious balance between an acceptable and unacceptable amount of hooking up, it was viewed as one of the common pathways to serious, sexually exclusive, relationships among the heavy drinking white women (and men) of this study. A trajectory described by many was a pattern beginning with hooking up, then deciding if they wanted to hook up again, then having "the talk" about whether they wanted an exclusive relationship after some period of hooking up. Karla, a 21 year old white woman explained this saying, "My boyfriend and I got together after hooking up. Actually it took a while, we hooked up kinda regularly for a while... but that's how my friend and her boyfriend started too."

Hooking up was not conceived of as a possible pathway to dating among the East Asian American students interviewed for this project. In fact, it was judged so negatively that it might seriously damage a woman's reputation and prevent her from being in relationships in the future. When asked what men thought of dating a woman who had hooked up, Minh said:

Minh: If she had been hooking up with another guy it would still always be in the back of the guy's mind. Always.

Int: As a serious negative or just something?

Minh: As a something I guess in the middle ground. Something that might always bother. So whenever they'd go to a social event or a party, he would always kind of look out for her

and kind of say, "Okay. You have to not drink as much because we don't want anything to happen to you." Because his public image is very important. Some people might say something behind his back. Some people might just say, "It could happen."

Int: Okay. So if a girl had a history of hooking up with two or three different guys—

Minh: She would almost be shunned from the whole group.

Int : Okay. Um. So, she could do it once and that's okay, if you're fine and we'll sort of forget about that maybe, but if you did it multiple times she would not be able to have a boyfriend.

Minh: I guess people will still kind of have that in mind. It is still a pretty big deal. Even though she says it's—I'm just saying it's okay just because it wouldn't be as bad as if it were that she doesn't remember whatever happened and if she tests positive the next day or something like that. That's an extreme case. But it would always be in the back of my mind and the back of people's mind and whenever they see her across the street and say, "Hey, what's up?" And then they would always say, "Right. She did that."

Int: That everyone would be very conscious in people's minds.

Minh: Yeah, yeah, exactly. So she would have that public image totally shattered for the next couple years that she's around.

Minh describes incredibly powerful social sanctions that women who hook up might experience. These are sanctions that are not present to at all the same extent within white party culture. Whereas hooking up is one way men and women might begin dating in white party culture, hooking up may be one way to prevent dating at all within Asian American party culture.

As I have shown in this subsection, there are both similarities and profound differences in the consequences of hooking up between Asian American and white party cultures. The risk/opportunity of becoming part of "the story," part of the gossip and shared knowledge among one's group of friends by hooking up is similar in both party cultures. An insidious and persistent double standard exists in both white and Asian American cultures. Judgment of women who engage in publically recognizable sexual behavior is pervasive in both communities. However it is quantitatively and qualitatively harsher in East Asian American communities where a single instance of hooking up, if publicly known, can have serious and long-lasting social consequences. There is less

judgment of men who hook up in Asian American, and especially white, party culture. Although there is risk of being judged negatively or labeled as someone who takes advantage of women among East Asian American men. With rare exception, (e.g., one participant who was concerned that a woman he really liked might find out that he had hooked up – had sex – with a “random” woman and be offended by, as he called it, “the ‘shameless promiscuity’ of it all”) the only apparent risk of hooking up to white men is the risk of being judged for having the “wrong” taste according to one’s friends. Additionally, hooking up can be a path to relationships for white men and women, but not so for East Asian American men and women.

Conclusions and Implications

Through analysis of qualitative data from interviews with heavy-drinking, white and East Asian American emerging adults, this article demonstrates that there are meaningful differences in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior in different racialized cultural contexts. Specifically, there are important differences – and similarities - in expectations about hooking up, heterosexual interactions that might lead to hooking up, and consequences as a result of hooking up in the context of partying between white and Asian American party cultures. The experiences of several bi-cultural and multi/bi-racial participants show that differences in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior among white and Asian American party cultures are better described as cultural differences than racial differences. These results extend and complicate the literature on alcohol and human sexuality, and specifically the literature on alcohol and sexual behavior among emerging adults. They begin to de-

naturalize the well-documented connection between alcohol and sexual behavior, particularly among emerging adults and suggest the importance of race and cultural contexts to understanding this relationship.

White participants describe hooking up, or the possibility of potentially hooking up, as a central, organizing feature of partying. In general, East Asian Americans on this campus do not imagine hooking up as a likely possibility in the context of partying. They do, however, expect heightened sexualization of their interactions with each other, and (particularly the women) report constructing their appearance to project an image of sexiness. White women interviewed on this campus described similar intentional presentation of self-as-sexy. However, in contrast to women in Asian American party cultures, they also described the possibility of hooking-up with someone while partying. Heterosexual interactions in the context of partying present similar differences by race and culture. Here highly sexualized dancing (groping) and flirting with an expectation of hooking-up are described as normal within white party cultures. The same behavior is described as rare, even looked down upon, with Asian American party scenes. Finally, according to participants, hooking-up while partying often results in qualitatively different consequences within Asian American and white party cultures. Hooking-up in the context of partying has virtually no negative consequence for white men, and is deemed appropriate under some circumstances (i.e, under control and not occurring “too often”) for white women. In contrast, hooking-up puts men in Asian American party culture at risk of acquiring a negative reputation, and women within that culture at risk of being socially ostracized. Within white party scenes, hooking up is one of

several normal pathways to beginning a committed, sexually exclusive dating relationship. Within Asian and Asian American party culture, prior hooking-up behavior might preclude one (particularly a woman) from the possibility of *ever* having such a relationship.

As the results of this study show, there are profound cultural differences in the relationship between partying and hooking up among white and Asian American party cultures at this university. Gender, however, is also important to consider. There are important similarities in experiences of the relationship between alcohol and sex within gender and across race. Both white and East Asian American women are subject to more sexual attention, exploitation, and judgment than men. These gendered experiences are racialized and culturally influenced. Hooking up is seen as much more acceptable for women in white party scenes than Asian American ones on this campus. Their experiences of the sexualization of party culture, (e.g., the manner in which they are approached sexually, the ways their behavior is policed by their male friends, and the cultural judgment of their alcohol consumption and sexual behavior) are also racialized. Thus, there are important racial and cultural differences in the relationship between sex and alcohol on this campus, and the meanings of those differences are gendered.

The results of this study have implications for future research. While the results of this study identify fascinating distinctions in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior among the party cultures of white and East Asian American emerging adults, the study was not designed explicitly to explore that relationship. Questioning

respondents more specifically about racial and cultural differences, and their understandings of those differences, would expand our understanding of these issues. Further, this sample consists of individuals who responded to a flyer or email at one university in the U.S, and who were interested in being interviewed. The highly residential nature of this university and the fact that very few students live with, or even near, their families of origin may have a tremendous impact on the results of this study. Other specifics of this university, such as the reputation and self-perception of rigorous academic expectations, the location of a college town, and the boundedness of the campus community, contribute to the data collected and analysis provided. Future research would benefit from exploring these issues with a broader sample of white and Asian American college students on a range of campuses in a range of regions. It would also be interesting to explore these issues with other subgroups, and with non-drinkers and/or casual drinkers as well as heavy-drinkers. Future research would also benefit from the use of multiple methods, ranging from experimental studies to survey research to ethnography, to gather data on this relationship. As very little is known about sexuality among Asian American emerging adults, or about racial differences in the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior, this is a potentially fruitful line of research.

Finally, for those concerned with practical application of research, this study offers considerations for prevention and intervention of negative consequences associated with heavy drinking. The results of this study show that cultural conditions affect the impact of (or at least the relationship between) alcohol on sexual behavior.

Further, these data show that individuals' behaviors can change from one cultural space to another – even under conditions of heavy drinking. And if individuals can make thoughtful decisions about how to act while drinking, interventions can be designed to reduce negative consequences of heavy drinking by targeting proximal causes of those consequences of drinking without relying exclusively on abstinence-only strategies. Initial research on interventions such as these has been promising (Dal Cin, et al., 2006). Future intervention studies should explore the potential effectiveness of (party) culturally-specific cues to promote positive behavior while drinking.

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Chapter Four

Young People's Views on the "Gray Areas" of Sex while Drinking: Implications for Sexual Violence Prevention

Consent is often conceptualized as the factor which differentiates sexual assault from "normal" sexual activity. Despite its importance, sexual consent is rarely defined in scholarship or practice and it is under-theorized in the recent literature on sexual violence (Beres, 2007; Cahill, 2001; Cowling & Reynolds, 2004; Humphreys & Harold, 2007; but see Gavey, 2005, Pateman 1980; Walby, 1990). Further, little empirical scholarship exists on how consent to, or even interest in, having sex is communicated. Even less scholarly attention has been given to theorizing or empirically investigating sexual consent in the context of heavy drinking, despite the prevalence of both heavy drinking and sexual activity among college students, and the correlation between heavy drinking and sexual violence.

Campus-based sexual violence prevention programs have most often dealt with the issues of alcohol, and sexual violence by challenging the stereotype that drunk women are sexually available. They do so through emphasizing the dual messages that alcohol intoxication precludes one from being able to consent to sex, and that no one deserves to be punished for becoming intoxicated by being sexually assaulted (c.f., www.uhs.uga.edu/consent; www.uwpave.rso.wisc.edu; www.consentissexy.org). That

we have a lack of knowledge about the many possible processes of sexual consent while drinking calls in to question whether the message that intoxication precludes peoples' ability to consent to sex is consistent with the lived experiences of sexual violence prevention programs' target audience. Through analysis of in-depth, qualitative interviews with 90 heavy drinking white and East Asian American college men and women about their experiences with alcohol and sexuality, the research presented here begins to fill both of these gaps in scholarship.

Literature Review

Framework of Gendered Inequality

Sexual interactions and sexual relationships are important locations to see the operations of power, perhaps particularly gendered power. Material and symbolic stratification by gender as well as race, class, color, multiple other social identity dimensions, and their intersections structure contemporary societies. Those stratifications and related inequalities are reproduced through social practices and discourses at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Butler, 1999; Connell, 1987, 1995; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Risman, 2004). Across the world, men earn substantially more money, maintain substantially more wealth, and hold a substantially greater number of positions of social, business, and political leadership than women (c.f., IWPR, 2009; Andersen & Collins, 2004). Masculinity, though given different meanings in different cultural contexts, is materially and symbolically privileged over femininity. This imbalance of power and privilege is reproduced through institutions and policies. It is also reproduced through social interaction and on-going

socialization (Lorber, 1994; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Risman, 2004). Through interactions with each other, their families, their schools, their communities, their political institutions, and the media they consume, boys and girls from a wide range of cultural backgrounds grow up thinking differently about their bodies, their space, their relationships, and the appropriate ways to both conceptualize and communicate their wants and needs.

Recent research on sexuality and sexual socialization shows that adolescents are quite knowledgeable about sexuality, but that their knowledge and experience is highly gendered (Martin, 1996; Pascoe, 2007; Ward, 1995). Boys and girls receive different messages about sexuality from their parents, peers, and schools with girls receiving more messages about danger and shame, and boys receiving more messages about pleasure and fun (Jaccard and Dittus, 1991; Fine & McClelland, 2006; Omar, McElderry, and Zakharia, 2003; Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, and Flood 1998; Regnerus 2005). These messages shape the way young people understand their own sexuality and interpret others' actions (Walker, 1997). Research on adolescent sexuality has also shown that boys and girls of all studied racial and ethnic groups strongly endorse "double standards" discourses, and demonstrate a high degree of adherence to traditional sexual and gendered norms that denigrate women and girls for sexual desire and behavior while praising men and boys for the same actions or desires (Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin & Ward, 2008; Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, and Flood, 1998; Walker, 1997; Ward & Wyatt, 1995).

Similar differences in expectations exist regarding the type of communication deemed culturally appropriate for (and between) girls/women and boys/men. Women and girls are expected to be gentle, patient, and perhaps most importantly, polite in their interactions with others, and they are evaluated negatively for communication that is perceived to be aggressive, thoughtless or impolite while men and boys are lauded for their clear, direct and assertive communication. It is from within this context of imbalanced power, gendered expectations and double standards (Ridegway and Correll, 2004) that boys and girls enter college and a partying culture where they must negotiate alcohol, sexuality, and consent.

Alcohol and Sexual Violence

Alcohol related sexual violence on campus is a major problem, with far-reaching negative consequences. Approximately half of all college women experience some type of sexual assault, ranging from inappropriate sexual touching to forcible rape (Koss et al, 1987; Schwartz & DeKeserdy, 1997; Buddy & Testa, 2005), and alcohol is involved in approximately 30-74% of all sexual assaults in both community and college samples (Harrington & Leitenbert, 1994; Abbey, 2002; Ullman et al., 2002). The pervasiveness of alcohol and heavy drinking on college campuses, where, on average, 50% of college students binge-drink and 30% of them do so frequently (Weschler et al, 2002; UMSARC, 2007), the importance of alcohol to campus social life, and the real and perceived frequency of sexual activity, all contribute to college students being a group at high risk for experiencing alcohol related sexual violence perpetration and victimization.

Research suggests that alcohol affects the likelihood of sexual violence and/or aggression through multiple pathways, at several key points and through several different mechanisms. These include cultural discourses or stereotypes about drinking men and women, sex-related alcohol expectancies, cognitive deficits, alcohol myopia, classical and learned disinhibition, deviancy disavowal, and sensori-motor skill impairment (Abbey, 2002; Abbey et al, 2002; Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton & McAuslan, 2001; Bennett & Williams, 2003; Derman & Coope, 1994; Testa, 2004; Ullman, 2002, 2003; Zhang, Welte & Wieczorek 2002). Three of these mechanisms, alcohol expectancies, cultural discourses or stereotypes about drinking men and women, and alcohol myopia, are particularly theoretically relevant for the current study.

Powerful cultural discourses, or stereotypes, about drinking men and women interact with discourses about race and class and sexuality to shape how people imagine sex in the context of drinking might happen, and how they might interpret both their own and others actions while drinking. Thus, exploring them is important to both a better understanding of the processes and contexts of sex while drinking, and to sexual violence prevention. Cultural discourses about drinking women suggest (and encourage people to think) that women who drink are more sexually open, available and generally more “promiscuous” than women who do not drink. They also suggest that drinking alcohol places a woman on the “bad” side of the “good girl/bad girl” discourse, and thus is both to blame for, and deserving of, whatever happens to her when drinking – including sexual assault. Cultural discourses about drinking men suggest (and encourage people to think) that when men drink they experience nearly uncontrollable heightened

sexual arousal, and that they are not responsible for controlling their behavior. These discourses or stereotypes shape expectations of both men and women and provide an excellent excuse for men's sexually aggressive or violent behavior.

Sex-related alcohol expectancies are grounded in these cultural discourses, or stereotypes. Alcohol expectancies are the beliefs that individuals hold regarding what will happen to one after consuming alcohol. Specifically, sex related alcohol expectancies involve beliefs that alcohol makes one more sexually appealing, more interested in sexual activity, more likely to engage in sexual activity, and more likely to take sexual risks (Derman & Cooper, 1994a, 1994b). These expectancies are highly related to how men interpret women's interest in sexual activity under conditions of heavy drinking. Research has found that men over-estimate drinking women's interest in sexual activity with them, and that men who are told they have been drinking (whether or not they have) and that a woman co-participant has been drinking (whether or not she had) report finding a higher level of sexual aggression and coercion appropriate than those in the non-drinking and non-experimental conditions (Abbey et al, 1999; Corbin, Bernat, Calhoun, McNair and Seals, 2001, George et al, 2000). Thus, sex-related alcohol expectancies may be important contributors to miscommunication and misperception of cues regarding sexual interest and ultimately to sexual violence (Wilson, Calhoun, McNair, 2002).

Alcohol myopia is also relevant to sexual communication, miscommunication and sexual violence. According to alcohol myopia theory (Steele & Josephs, 1990) alcohol consumption causes "short-sighted information processing" (p.922) by

restricting both the amount of information one is able to pay attention to and one's ability to fully understand or process the information to which they are able to pay attention. Thus, for someone interested in sexual activity and/or sexual coercion, drinking might lead them to focus on the elements of communication with another that cued interest in sex and ignoring those that might suggest lack of interest. It might also prevent them from being (able to be) concerned about the longer-term consequences of their actions. In other words, alcohol consumption may lead people to focus only on the cues, feelings and messages that support what they want to do or hear, or accomplish their immediate goal (such as having sex) (Wilson, Calhoun & McNair, 2002). The potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation under these conditions, particularly when combined with the gendered power and other social status differentials among individuals, cannot be understated.

To say that miscommunication and misinterpretation might play a causal role in sexual violence is not to say that men and women are equally responsible for communication or miscommunication. Nor is it to say that miscommunication, or misperception of cues is an appropriate justification or excuse for sexual violence. Rather, miscommunication and misperception of sexual interest/refusal cues is one of the most important sites in which power and privilege operate. Men's cultural position of power and privilege over women, combined with general cultural support for the belief that drinking women want sex, gives men the power to choose to ignore or minimize the cues of sexual interest or disinterest that women send. Similarly, women's cultural position of subordination, cultural discourses of gender-power inequalities, and

cultural expectations regarding gender performance construct circumstances that encourage women to kindly, indirectly, and gently rebuff sexual advances instead of assertively – or perhaps offensively – explicitly rejecting them. A different gender-power arrangement might result in quite different “misperception” of sexual interest and activity. Thus, power is fundamental to how men and women (mis)communicate and (mis)interpret each other’s sexual interest and consent.

Sexual Consent

Sexual consent is of central concern to practitioners and scholars of sexual violence and its prevention. As such, feminist practitioners, feminist theorists and legal scholars have long grappled with issues of consent. Some feminist theorists have argued that given the gendered imbalance of power, including our legal traditions (such as those regarding marital rape), women do not have access to freely give or deny consent to sexual activity (MacKinnon, 1987; see Cahill). Others argued that viewing women as unable to consent to sexual activity denied an essential element of their humanity, constructing sexuality as wholly negative and women as victims with no sexual agency (Roiphe, 1993; see Lamb et al, 1999; Cahill, 2001). Still others have argued that consent is a more complicated process (Gavey 2005; Walby, 1990) and that feminist focus should not explicitly be on consent but rather on mutuality, care, desire, and respect (c.f., Carmody, 2004).

Empirical research on consent to sexual activity is quite limited. Most sexual violence scholars (and lay people) appear to assume that consent is largely what differentiates sexual activity from sexual violence. However, scholars rarely define what

they mean by consent before using it in their work, leaving it undefined in measures and analysis. No consistent definition of what consent means exists in the field (Cowling & Reynolds, 2004). The little work that has been done on the process and communication of sexual consent has generally found agreement that consent is something freely given while not under the influence of “too much” alcohol or drug use, and often communicated non-verbally (Muehlenhard, 1995; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2004; Humphreys & Harold, 2007). However, research has not explicitly focused on consent or non-consent while drinking. We do not know how people communicate consent or non-consent while drinking. Nor do we know if they think consent while drinking is possible.

Important in a discussion of sexual consent is a discussion of the processes of heterosexual sexual interaction and how we know what we know about these processes. We have a great deal of survey data on sexual assault and sexual behavior among college students. However, the nature of survey methodology precludes learning about behaviors, processes, or patterns about which we do not already know. The measures that scholars most often use to study sexual behaviors are largely based on a traditional heterosexual script which assumes a high degree of dyadic and relationship-based sexual interaction. As research shows patterns of heterosexual interaction, “hooking-up” among college students to be increasingly casual and taking place in more fluid relationships (c.f. Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Bogle, 2008; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000), these standard measures may require modification before they are able to accurately reflect contemporary sexual behaviors. Changing patterns and processes

of sexual behavior call for qualitative research on what sexual behaviors young people are practicing, how those behaviors progress, and what people think and feel about them. The current study begins to fill this gap and expands existing research by exploring these issues through analysis of qualitative interviews with men and women who are heavy drinkers and active in campus party cultures.

Feminist Activism and Campus Efforts to Prevent Sexual Violence

Concern about sexual violence has been central to feminist movements since at least the early 1970s. One of the many significant arenas of the feminist anti-sexual violence movements has focused on sexual violence on campus. Attention to campus sexual violence, in combination with activism/organizing around a very high-profile campus rape case led Congress to pass legislation in 1990 mandating colleges to publically report information about sexual violence on their campuses, including existing prevention and/or education programs (Clery Act, U.S. Public Law 101-542, Title II). Further, via the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), Congress has made funds available to programs to reduce violent crimes against women on campus since the mid 1990s. By the late 1990s, the majority of campuses provided sexual violence prevention programming of some kind (Breitenbecher 2000; Potter, Krider, and McMahon 2000). Most of these focused on reducing “rape-supportive attitudes” and educating about laws and risks of sexual violence, with evaluation showing mixed results (Carmody and Carrington 2000; Söchting, Fairbrother, and Koch 2004).

Given the well-documented link between alcohol and sexual assault, campus based sexual violence prevention programs spend a great deal of time talking about the

dangers of drinking for women, and the inappropriateness of expecting drinking should lead to sexual activity. Prevention programs generally provide some combination of three messages about alcohol: 1) alcohol use increases the risk of sexual assault; 2) no one deserves to be punished with sexual assault for “too much” alcohol consumption. ; and 3)(the most relevant to this study), alcohol intoxication precludes one’s ability to consent to sex (See “Consent is Sexy” campaign). This message has likely been emphasized in part because of the pervasive cultural discourses and well-documented beliefs that a) alcohol consumption signals women’s interest in sex and willingness to engage in sexual activity, and b) that when men drink heavily they cannot control their sexual behavior. There is a long and pernicious history of alcohol consumption being used as an excuse and justification for sexual assault. However, the extent to which these messages resonate with, or are relevant to, people’s actual lived experience is unknown.

Consideration of these issues led to the following research questions that are at the heart of this study: (1) How do heterosexual encounters in the context of heavy drinking happen? (2) How do participants understand their experiences with consent to heterosexual sexual activity while drinking? And specifically, *do participants believe alcohol use prevents the ability to consent to sexual activity?*

Data and Method

Setting

This study took place on the campus of a large, Midwestern university with an active athletic program, rigorous academics, and an almost entirely residential student

body. As with many U.S. colleges with similar profiles, heavy drinking is omnipresent. In 2007, a survey of randomly selected sample of students at this university found just over half of all students had consumed four (for women) or five (for men) alcoholic beverages in a sitting at least one time in the 30 days prior to being surveyed, meeting the clinical definition of heavy episodic drinking (UMSARC, 2008). Just over half of those, or 27% of the entire random sample of university students, reported frequent heavy episodic drinking, meaning at least three times in the two weeks prior to being surveyed. This means, of course, that nearly half of all students did not drink heavily in the 30 days prior to survey, and almost three-quarters of all students did not frequently binge drink. Despite that, a culture of drinking and partying is pervasive on campus.

Sample

The bulk of the data presented here are from over 100 hours of semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 90 college students who self-identified as frequent heavy episodic drinkers. Interview data are complimented by field notes based on observations from 12 non-consecutive evenings at campus bars and night-clubs. These data are from a larger project on partying, sexuality, inequality and identity among heavy drinking white and Asian American (specifically East Asian American) emerging adults. Thus, the sample consists of 28 white women, 23 East Asian American, 20 white men, and 19 East Asian American men, aged 18-24. The sample was largely upper middle class, with 58% of participants having at least one parent with a graduate degree. Thirty-three percent of participants had two parents with graduate degrees.

Most participants identified as straight or heterosexual, and none identified as primarily queer or gay.

Due to the gendered and sexually sensitive nature of the interview topics, I conducted all the interviews with the women and a trained research assistant conducted the interviews with the men. Participants reported that being interviewed by a same-gender interviewee facilitated their open and in-depth conversation about the interview topics, particularly those regarding sexual activity and assault. Women often reported that it would have been awkward to talk with a man about hooking up and sexual assault. Men reported that they would have been less explicit and provided less detail on the questions about sexuality if they had been interviewed by a woman. Many noted that they would have been worried about offending a female interviewer if they spoke too bluntly about their actual beliefs or experiences with sex while drinking. Interviewees were recruited via flyers posted around campus and emails sent through campus listservs between May 2005 and September 2007. Participants were compensated for their time. Interviews lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours. They were recorded, professionally transcribed, and checked for fidelity by myself and/or a research assistant. Field notes from observations were also transcribed. Both interview transcripts and field notes were entered into the qualitative software program NVIVO for analysis.

Data Analysis

I used a method of Open and Focused Coding to analyze these data (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). This method combines both inductive and deductive analysis.

My first step in analysis was to read through all the transcripts, taking notes on emerging themes while I did. On a second reading I coded data for existing themes from the literature and my personal and professional experience, at the same time beginning to code for themes emerging from the data. I then went back and coded the data for all of the themes – using both inductive and deductive strategies. Throughout this process I wrote theoretical memos based on ideas and themes emerging from analysis, followed by integrative memos which combined themes from the data with existing theoretical and empirical scholarship. These memos formed the beginnings of articles such as this one. The collaboration of undergraduate and graduate level research assistants (several of whom met all criteria for study participants) at all levels of theme development, coding, and analysis, as well as member-checking and peer debriefing enhanced the rigor and trustworthiness of the study (Padgett, 2008.)

The excerpted data I provide below are exemplars of major themes that emerged and are found throughout the data. The quotes I present may be particularly clear or succinct, but they are not atypical or extreme unless specifically noted as such.

Results & Analysis

The data presented here describe participants' experiences and understandings of the processes of heterosexual interaction and sexual consent in the context of heavy drinking. To place the process of sexual consent in context, I begin by detailing the early stages of heterosexual interaction while drinking or hooking-up. Next I describe the importance of racialized expectancies to interpreting sexual consent, and demonstrate that cultural discourses of racialized sexuality have the potential of tangible effects.

Following that, I discuss the processes of communicating interest in – and consent to – sex among the heavy-drinking men and women interviewed for this study. What participants describe as “gray areas” in sexual consent, where sexual interest and/or consent is (or reasonably might be) ambiguous is the focus of the final section of results. Through analysis of these data, I emphasize the complexity of sexual consent, its gendered construction, and its implication in the reproduction of (hetero)gendered inequalities. I conclude by emphasizing the challenges and opportunities that this complexity poses for feminist theorizing and sexual violence prevention.

Early stages of “hooking up”

One of the most interesting, and disturbing, findings from research on sexual violence is that the early stages of a great deal of consensual heterosexual sexual activity are virtually indistinguishable from some of what later becomes unwanted or forced sex (cf., Gavey, 2005). This makes paying attention to early stages of sex very important in the study of sexual violence and its prevention. In this section I present descriptive data that explicates processes through which heterosexual sexual activity under conditions of heavy drinking begins. I emphasize the many opportunities for miscommunication or misunderstanding to occur, and for “gray areas” to arise, in these early stages of hooking-up.

Participants describe the early stages of heterosexual interaction, or hooking-up, while drinking as happening in surprisingly consistent ways, given the sample’s diversity along multiple dimensions of identity and experience. The early stages of hooking up

generally involved some combination of following components, sometimes in a different order: dancing; extended conversation; touching; and leaving together.

One common pathway to hooking up, according to both interview and observation data involves the last three components. To illustrate what this looks like in practice, I use the composite characters of Melissa, Alice, Katie, and John. This heterosexual interaction begins with a group of friends, Melissa, Alice, and Katie, walking in to a bar. When Katie sees a group of people she knows, Melissa, Alice and Katie all walk over to talk to the people Katie knew. Katie then introduces Alice to John, one of the men in the group of people she knew. John and Alice start talking. Soon John goes to the bar to buy drinks for himself and Alice (or someone in the group buys drinks for everyone), ensuring that all parties continue drinking. Throughout the evening John and Alice continue talking with each other. After some time, they begin to separate themselves from their respective groups of friends, talking more directly and intentionally to each other than to the others in their groups. After a little while some touching occurs. Alice puts her hand on John's arm, or he puts his arm around her and she does not push it away, or their legs brush against each other under a table and neither one of them moves so as to ensure continued touching. After a while longer John might say something along the lines of "hey, do you want to get out of here?" or the bar might be closing and John would stand up and say to the group "we've got some beer over at our house, do you all want to come over?" and then lean in to Alice and say with a smile, "come on – it'll be fun."

Dancing is another pathway to hooking up. Dancing is common in the larger, campus parties and all the fraternity parties described by interviewees. It is also common in bars and clubs near campus. Hip hop is the primary form of music played, and dancing involves a great deal of grinding. One scene I frequently observed at the bars and clubs was a group of 3-6 women dancing in a circle. One man would come up behind one of the women, put his arm around her waist, press his hips in to her hips, and begin dancing (or more accurately, grinding) with her. Women would then either jump away and move to a different part of their circle, or continue dancing with him. This was often after a glance and a nod at a friend across the circle who was better able to see the man behind her, or after turning her head around to look at him. I observed this, or a version of this, quite often. Both the women and men described dancing as a common way that hooking-up began. After dancing for a while, the two might slowly move to a different – more isolated – part of the dance floor to continue dancing. They might also move off the dance floor to talk, get more to drink, and eventually leave together.

Matt, a 19 year old white man, described a similar scenario when asked to describe the process of a typical hook up that either he or a friend engaged in, saying: “It usually starts on the dance floor like two random people dancing together. Things can get kind of sexual... hands on the inner thigh. Like maybe some kissing going on. Then in my fraternity... there’s somewhere accessible kind of where you can go.”²

² Although not the focus of this article, Matt’s words hint at how intentional some fraternities are in structuring their parties and houses to encourage and facilitate hooking-up.

I've described these early stages of "hooking up" primarily to contextualize the behavior explicated in the rest of the article. There is a great deal of non-verbal communication about sexual interest, which leaves a high level of risk for miscommunication or misunderstanding. Individuals hold assumptions that others share their own cultural scripts of heterosexual interaction (Gagnon & Simon, 1973/2005). This assumption, in combination with cultural norms discouraging explicit discussion of sexual interest, facilitates the (often inaccurate) belief that they can successfully interpret non-verbal communication about interest in sex.

Racialized expectancies

Assumptions about shared sexual scripts are not the only problematic set of assumptions regarding sexual behavior that are in operation while partying. Cultural discourses about race and sexuality, specifically racialized understandings of sexuality, shape people's assumptions about each other's interest in sex. It is both theoretically and empirically valuable to explore the salience of race to general stereotypes about drinking women and to sex-related alcohol expectancies. While more extreme than some, John, a 19 year old white man, shows that internalized cultural discourses of race, class, and gender have the potential to affect how individuals' actions and attempts at communication would be read by others. He said:

- John: "[A local university] is a little bit crazier. I mean not to be racist. I mean they've got a lot of black girls and kind of a little bit more wild. Yeah, I mean black girls are a little more promiscuous.
- Int: *They're more promiscuous?*
- John: Yeah. And like usually black girls would have sex probably every night with a different person and it's just a little bit different. Like you don't really expect that and I'm not really interested in black girls. Like I wouldn't—I probably wouldn't hook up with one but usually they're just a little bit more horny, like they're a little bit more interested in

getting down and a little bit freakier. Yeah. I know black kids. Like they tell me. I mean at [a nearby public university] it's the same thing. I mean black girls are crazy, crazy, crazy.

Alcohol myopia theory, in combination with sex-related alcohol expectancy theory, suggests that racialized ideas, such as those expressed by John, may have tangible effects. Alcohol myopia theory holds that alcohol consumption “helps” the brain to focus only on stimuli that are consistent with one’s goals. In other words, drinking allows one to hear what one wants to hear, and ignore what one does not want to hear. In combination with sex-related alcohol expectancies (expecting that drinking leads to sex) alcohol myopia theory suggests that holding racialized beliefs about sexuality, in this case Black women’s sexuality, might increase the probability of Black women’s actions being interpreted as suggesting more interested in sex than they might actually intend. This is one possible example of a potential miscommunication about sexual interest that is rooted in racial and gender power imbalances and could lead to sexual violence.

Sexualized stereotypes around Asian and Asian American women are also prevalent among interviewees. As I have discussed elsewhere, expectations about hooking up while partying vary among different racial and cultural contexts. Specifically, within Asian American party scenes, the expectation of hooking up is much lower than it is in White party scenes where hooking up is quite normal and common. This finding, in combination with cultural discourses that Asian American women are more reserved about sexual behavior, likely contributes to the ideas that Art, a 20 year old white man, expresses here: “My perception is that a lot of Asian girls aren’t as, I guess promiscuous

so it's harder [to find someone to hook up with]." In this case Art is describing Asian American women as less sexually interested or active than white women, a belief that might likely impact how Art would interpret behaviors of Asian and Asian American women. Where John might misinterpret a Black woman's cues as signaling more interest in sexual interaction than she intended, Art might misinterpret an Asian American woman's cues as signaling less interest in sexual interaction than she intended. This set of racialized expectancies might make miscommunication per se no less likely, but potentially might make exploitation less likely.

Communicating sexual interest and sexual consent

In spite of some participants' expressed belief that people of different racial and cultural backgrounds often held differing levels of interest in sexual activity, they assumed a shared sexual script about sex and consent with their partners in sexual activity regardless of race. Both male and female participants reported believing that friendliness or flirtation signaled interest in potential sexual activity. According to Greg, a 20 year old East Asian American man, if he smiled at a woman and she smiled back, or if he flirted with a woman and she flirted back, he believed she was open to the possibility of sexual activity. Once a sexual interaction began, generally by kissing, consent to continued sexual activity was assumed unless one person did or said something to explicitly stop it. The uncertain musings of Nicole, a 21 year old East Asian American woman, about how one might communicate interest or lack of interest in sexual activity illustrates this point. She said, "I guess maybe kissing doesn't really mean that you would have sex with a guy. I guess when you get to maybe intimate touching

and things like that where you're taking off your clothes and like you're on a bed kind of scenario, then like I guess the guy probably thinks you want to have sex. So if you're going to say no, you should probably say no before that?" Nicole's words are reflective of multiple cultural discourses, including a pervasive rape myth (Burt, 1980) that once sexual interaction has progressed to a certain point it is rude, or wrong, or unreasonable to believe it could or would stop. However, her words are also reflective of what appears to be a common heterosexual script of assuming sexual consent. Throughout the interviews, participants described consent as passive. It is the default state. Only non-consent would have to be made explicit. Reflective of this passivity of consent, Adam, a 22 year old white man said, "You can just tell if a girl is in to it."

Men commonly assumed that non-consent to hooking up would be verbalized. They talked about assuming that someone they were hooking up with would tell them if they didn't want to keep going or didn't like what was happening. When asked how they could identify lack of consent they often said "she'd say no." David, a 20 year old white man who said "When somebody says "No", it's pretty clear that they don't want it" is a good example of this. Kevin, a 19 year old East Asian American man combines David's perspective with the idea that consent can be assumed until lack of consent is made explicit. He said: "You get as much as you can – go until she stops you."

A few men expressed an exceptional variation of this. "No," they said, was most often verbally expressed and easy to understand. However, some men described not feeling comfortable with the simple absence of "no," and uncertain of how to determine an active interest in sex, or an active "yes." For example, Ed, a 19 year old white man,

said “It’s easy to tell she doesn’t want to but it’s harder to tell if she does.” To deal with that situation, and with hopes of not “feeling dumb” or being offensive, he said he would normally “... kind of try to let her take control of it. Because I kind of feel that would be like consent. Like she’s going for it, you know?”

Ed was in a minority among the men interviewed for this study. Most men did not express concern about ensuring sex partners were actively interested in sex, and appeared to feel comfortable with passive absence of verbal refusal as a symbol of consent. Women tended to think consent was a bit more complicated – often saying that body language, in addition to verbal expression, was a big cue about both interest in sexual activity, and consent to it. Assumptions on the part of men that women are consenting to sex unless explicitly stating otherwise, and women’s beliefs that consent is more complicated, leave a clear space for the possibility of misinterpreting consent to sexual activity.

Physical cues were also major ways that participants talked about sexual interest or consent being conveyed. As was discussed earlier, touching – sometimes in obviously sexual ways and sometimes not – is often viewed (particularly by women) as a physical sign of sexual interest and/or consent to sexual activity. Jason’s example of reciprocity or being met halfway is one example of this. He, a 20 year old white man, said “I guess I would just look for body cues like if she’s really close to you, then just kind of lean in and see if she—like if you lean in most of the way and she leans the rest of the way, then it’s good.”

Another important category of physical cue, raised by every subgroup of participants was the practice of 'moving a hand away.' Josh, a 21 year old white man said "I guess you could take other than a verbalization, you could take a physical cue for no. Someone puts their hand somewhere and then the other one brushes it away or something like that. I mean that's obviously a physical cue like, 'This is an unwanted advance.'"

It is noteworthy that although Josh describes moving a hand away as an obvious physical cue of an unwanted advance, many women talked about moving someone's hand away multiple times and the "obvious cue" being ignored. Jamie, a 22 year old white woman said "I just feel like when guys drink...I think they just kind of get horny when they're drunk and they want to hook up and I think when a girl says no or if I mean maybe she says something that they didn't want to hear or—I don't know—something like that is how it [sexual assault] happens." What Jamie describes here is a perfect empirical example of alcohol myopia and power. Alcohol myopia holds that the brain focuses on the cues that support what he or she really wants (sex) and ignores the cues about anything else that might interfere with getting what he/she really wants to have, such as someone saying "no" to sexual activity.

As Jamie's words show, miscommunication and misunderstanding are not neutral acts, but rather are very often enactments of racialized and gendered power gendered inequality. The processes of heterosexual socialization and on-going gender/power construction encourage men and women to engage in gendered interaction styles of emphasized femininity and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987.)

Enacting emphasized femininity leads women to avoid offending or hurting men's feelings by communicating their lack of interest in sex passively. Hegemonic masculinity encourages men to prioritize heterosexual "scoring" over concern for women's desire, and diminish both concerns about, and understandings of, women's interest in sexual activity. Thus, sexual (mis)communication and (mis)interpretation can be conceptualized as a process by which gender is performed (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Fenstermaker & West, 1995) and gendered inequalities are enacted and reproduced.

Alcohol myopia theory, interacting with power and with sex-related alcohol expectancies, might also inform the situation described here by Seth, a 20 year old white man, in which a man ignored an explicit "no." In this circumstance Seth appears to be calling upon a cultural discourse about alcohol as an explanation for bad behavior, and specifically for sexual violence. When asked how he thinks unwanted sex happens on campus, he said:

Seth: Excess of alcohol [laughs]. When maybe some person is trying to convey the other person that they don't want this and maybe they're not saying no or something but kind of giving some other hint or suggestion that the other person maybe isn't noticing because they're too intoxicated or they just get so into it that they may just keep going. And there's always somebody blacks out and they just don't know what they're doing. That's [laughs]—

Int: *How is that related to partying in your mind, do you think?*

Seth: Well, the excess of alcohol which cause you to kind of—well, I had one friend who blacked out and essentially raped his girlfriend, which they wound up breaking up over because he had had way too much to drink at a party.

Int: *He raped his girlfriend?*

Seth: Yeah, she definitely made it clear that she said no and she considered reporting to the police and stuff because he just got so excessively drunk and just would not stop. And she was at his house so she couldn't really leave and it was really late and stuff. So... that actually caused him to pretty much just stop drinking.

While Seth does recognize this as a problematic situation, and does not engage in victim-blaming or deploy other common (and sexist) discourses, he does place blame for the rape on alcohol. The practice of blaming alcohol, and not actors, for sexual and

domestic violence is troubling. Though troubling, this practice is quite common, and has been the target of major organizing within anti-violence-against-women movements, including successful efforts to change legal statutes dealing with sexual violence. Further, the circumstance described by Seth is interesting in part because it describes consent – or rather lack of consent – to sexual activity while drinking among people in an existing sexual relationship. Research suggests that the degree to which consent is assumed increases with the length and seriousness of a relationship, and that the perceived need to ask for or clarify consent decreases with the length and seriousness of a relationship (Humphreys & Harold, 2007). How alcohol affects sexual communication and consent within the context of an existing sexual or romantic relationship is a question that deserves more attention.

Finally, another pattern of sexual communication, interest and consent was men being wary of engaging in sexual activity with women who were “too drunk.” Men described this as primarily taking place in one of three ways. Some men talked about women who were too drunk as being unattractive, or “too slutty” to hook up with. Others talked about trying to politely rebuff advances from women they perceived to be very drunk because they did not want her to not remember what happened or what she did and later claim that she had been raped. However, most of them were more like Chris, a 21 year old East Asian American man who appeared to genuinely believe it would be wrong or did not want to participate in something that a woman might regret later. He said: “If she’s obviously really, really drunk then even if she was all over me I’d say no. She’s not in her right mind then.”

These issues around communicating consent, that consent is assumed but rarely verbalized, that non-consent would be verbalized, and that physical cues are common – show that there is enormous opportunity for sexual interest and intention to be misperceived or miscommunicated. This would be true under the best of circumstances. However, when considering the often substantial differences in power and status (via age, gender, social standing on campus, etc) and that these encounters are taking place while both parties have been drinking heavily, it seems even more serious; and the importance of taking seriously the “gray areas” of consent becomes clearer.

Gray Areas

While more men than women talked about consent being assumed unless non-consent was verbalized or made otherwise explicit, more women than men openly talked about the “gray areas” of sexual consent and sexual interactions. “Gray areas” of sexual consent can best be described as times of uncertainty – either at the moment or in retrospect by at least one person involved in the sexual interaction. A gray area occurs when it may not be completely clear to both people that both people are (or are not) interested in sexual activity.

The heavy drinking students in this study described three related but distinct types of “gray areas.” Two of these types of “gray areas” engage with the discourse promoted by many sexual violence prevention programs that being drunk prevents someone from being able to consent to sexual activity. The first type of gray area described by participants is the difficulty of determining “how drunk is too drunk.” They believe that there is a point when women are too drunk to consent to sexual activity

(usually being passed out or vomiting). However, when those obvious cues are absent, it is hard to tell how drunk is too drunk. The second type of “gray area” was described as a situation of unclear or conflicting signals. This type of “gray area” might arise when a very drunk woman appeared to be very interested and involved in sexual activity – making reading both physical and verbal cues very challenging. [Finally, and important to the participants in this project, is a “gray area” in the attribution of responsibility. It is a commonly held idea that both parties are involved in a sexual interaction – and in many cases both should be held, (perhaps not equally) responsible for what happens. While the assumptions behind the last “gray area” may involve victim-blaming, they may also be reflective of participants’ desire to claim and accurately represent sexual agency and intentional sexual action - even while drunk.

Participants in this study were all frequent, heavy drinkers and participants in a sexualized campus party culture. Therefore, as these data show, engaging in sexual activity while drunk, or witnessing others do so, was a frequent experience for them. Given this, participants were frequently faced with the dilemma of determining “how drunk is too drunk” to be able to freely consent to participating in sexual activity. As Amy, a 20 year old Asian American woman, suggests such a determination was often far from clear: “...if the girl’s passed out unconscious ‘cuz she’s so drunk that definitely would be wrong to take advantage of her. Or if she’s completely sober then it wouldn’t be wrong... But I think there is a gray area in between when is it—when is she too drunk to really give consent and then when is she really giving consent.” Amy’s words express the idea that it could be, and perhaps often is, hard to tell how drunk is too drunk. Amy

does not say that if a woman is drunk she is unable to give consent. Instead she recognizes that there is a point, however difficult it is to define, when being too drunk – somewhere before being passed out unconscious - means that she is no longer able to consent to sex and that engaging in sexual activity with her would be “taking advantage” of her.

Similar to the ambiguity around whether or not one is “too drunk” is concern about the legitimacy of taking consent given by very drunk women at face value. At some level of intoxication, it is difficult to determine whether or not one is intentionally consenting to sexual activity. This also makes it difficult to attribute blame if and when unwanted sexual activity occurs. When asked about what they thought about unwanted sex , then sexual assault, participants often spoke about who was, or should be, to blame for it. On this topic, Laura, a 21 year old East Asian American woman, began with a statement quite similar to Amy’s. If a man forces himself on a woman who is drunk and unconscious then that is obviously rape, she said. Then the scenario she describes gets more complicated. She says: “But if she’s drunk she could be saying, “Yeah, I want to do it.” And things like that so it is hard for a guy to be like, “Oh, oh, wait. She’s saying yes, but really I know she’s saying no.” Like it’s hard for a guy to be in the position to be like, “Okay, well, she’s drunk even though she’s saying yes, I should not listen to that.”

Laura’s words raise important points. Should a woman under the influence of alcohol be understood to be saying ‘no’ when she says ‘yes’? Does drinking automatically relinquish a woman’s right to consent to sex? Is it appropriate or

empowering or respectful to remove a woman's self-determination because she becomes intoxicated? What about men? Are men who have been drinking also incapable of fully consenting to sexual activity? If so, and he does engage in sexual activity, was he sexually assaulted? The unquestioned acceptance of a traditional heterosexual script, where a man approaches a woman and instigates conversation that he hopes will lead to sexual activity that the woman could then reject or consent to, shows the wide-spread acceptance of hetero-gendered assumptions about sexual activity and consent. Men are conceptualized by participants, and in larger cultural discourses, as being always already interested in seeking out sexual activity, while women are positioned in a passive, gate-keeping role in opposition to men's sexual interest. Turning the gendered subject around on the issue of seeker versus granter of consent, makes clear the extent to which ideas about consent are gendered. It is almost culturally unrecognizable as a possibility that a sober woman who had sex with an intoxicated man might be accused of sexually assaulting, or 'taking advantage' of him. This provides further support for the importance of focusing empirical, analytical, and theoretical attention on complicating notions of consent. Perhaps through the process of interrogating meanings, feelings, and experiences of consent, we will come to more accurate, appropriate, and useful consensus definition of consent – even when drinking heavily.

Related to a gray area of consent is a gray area of blame. How to attribute blame for sexual assault or coercion was a major concern among participants. Or perhaps more accurately, discomfort with placing exclusive blame for sexual assault on men

(particularly in the context of heavy drinking) was common among participants. One form that this concern took place can be seen in Dan, a 20 year old white man's, discussion of the fate of athletes, people who are at the peak of the social status hierarchy of campus life and often considered "campus celebrities." He said:

I mean rape is tricky. My friends and I were actually having a conversation the other night about the concept of consent and how a lot of the athletes now are just like getting totally fucked because of this concept of consent. Like at the time, the woman may have consented but it may not have been explicit and it may have been implied. It may not have even been implied; it may have just been interpreted.

Dan, a man whose words throughout the interview indicated politically progressive and even pro-feminist stances, goes through a great deal of mental and linguistic work to construct athletes as not-blameworthy in situations such as those he describes. His words suggest the working of power in some heterosexual interactions, where the desires of a woman involved are so irrelevant that a non-explicit, implied or even just "interpreted" action can be culturally understood as passing for consent. The operations of gender and power are further visible through the location of Dan's concern. He is more concerned with the consequences male athletes might experience if the blame for sexual assault was misattributed to them than he is with the consequences women might experience as a result of nonconsensual sexual activity. This is evidence of gendered inequality, and one mechanism through which gendered power imbalances are reproduced.

Another form that students' discomfort with blaming men for sexual violence took was the view that blame should often be shared. They did not believe that blame should be removed from the shoulders of men, but that it should be shared between those involved. This perspective, though not completely free of victim-blaming, is also

an acknowledgment of women's sexual agency and/or desire. For it to be possible for women to communicate sexual interest, or express sexual agency, it must also be *possible* for them to miscommunicate their sexual interest. If it is never possible for women to be (even partially) responsible for sexual miscommunication, it would then not be possible for them to be responsible for sexual communication or to express sexual agency. This tension has been at the heart of much public (feminist and anti/non-feminist) debate about sexual assault, coercion, and consent (Cahill, 2001; Cowling & Reynolds, 2004; Gavey, 2005; Lamb et al, 1999). This tension is also centrally important for how young men and women, who have come of age during a time of women's increased alcohol consumption and so-called "post-feminist" or "third wave" conceptualizations of women's sexual empowerment, understand issues of sex and consent while drinking.

The existence of these "gray areas" of communicating interest, communicating consent, and attributing blame, demonstrates the complexities related to sexual activity during heavy drinking. They reflect the reality that both men and women firmly believe that consensual and intentional sexual activity can, and does, take place when they are drinking heavily. However, this data also clearly documents that agency is not the only thing happening during sexual activity when people are drinking. As I discuss in the next section, coercion often accompanies sexual activity while drinking.

Consensual, Agentic, and Perhaps also Coercive

As the data presented so far have shown, participants believe that sexual coercion and exploitation occur within the party scenes of which they are a part. They

also believe that alcohol use does not (necessarily) prevent women from consenting to sexual activity. In fact, it was not uncommon for participants (both women and men) to describe alcohol use and partying as a pathway to being able to express their sexuality and seek out sexual interaction. Maggie, a 22 year old East Asian American woman, spoke directly about intentional sexual activity in the context of drinking. She explained that as opposed to alcohol precluding the possibility of consensual sexual activity, for her it facilitated sexual activity that she wanted to occur. “If there’s a guy you really like and he’s making you a little bit nervous, having that extra drink might make you relax just a little bit... you’re drinking to help it [the hook up].” Drinking with the goal of being more comfortable or less anxious talking to people with whom they might want to hook-up was a common experience for women, as well as the men, interviewed in this study. They described drinking to intentionally lower their inhibitions and facilitate (possibly, but not necessarily, sexual) interactions with the “opposite sex.”

Participants experienced the role that alcohol played in facilitating sexual activity as complicated. Some, like Maggie, expressed that drinking alcohol helped them to feel more comfortable expressing or exploring their sexual agency and desire. However, some participants also talked about drinking as something that might contribute to them either making sexual choices they wish they had not made, or to being “taken advantage of” sexually. For many, alcohol did all of those things, often at the same time.

For example, Lynn, a 21 year old white woman, says:

I guess it’s just like times that I’ve hooked up with people when I probably wouldn’t have if I hadn’t been as drunk and so like it’s not really taking advantage because I agreed. But it sort of is taking advantage... I think it is like a cheating way for guys to hook up with girls. Girls are so picky, and they’re not as picky when they’re really drunk. Beer goggles (laughs). Guys look more attractive. But just also everything that

you might see wrong with them when you're sober, you just don't care about. I guess just you want some and so (laughs) like whatever.

In this rich quote, Lynn illustrates many of the themes that run through this data.

She believes that alcohol has played a causal role in her sexual experiences and her willingness to be more expansive in her sexual-partner choices. She also implicitly constructs men as sexual initiators, if not aggressors, for whom alcohol consumption offers a “cheating way [sic] to hook up with girls.” Lynn constructs women, as opposed to men, as generally more restrictive, or picky, in their sexual object choice. These gendered constructions of men as active agents in sexual interactions and women as gatekeepers are reflective, and reproductive, of cultural discourses about gender and power. In a challenge to gender normative power arrangements, Lynn also reports both having and taking action on sexual desire while drinking. Most importantly, for the purposes of this text, is that Lynn experienced many of these experiences *at the same time*. For Lynn, and other participants in this study, sexual agency and sexual exploitation exist simultaneously – even under conditions of heavy drinking.

Conclusions and Implications for Prevention

In this study I have demonstrated three important points. The first is that many of the heavy-drinking men and women who were interviewed for this study believe themselves to be capable of consenting to sexual activity, even in the context of heavy drinking. They do not believe that drinking necessarily prevents them from being able to consent to having sex. The second is that the processes (particularly the early stages) of heterosexual interaction while drinking create multiple opportunities for miscommunication and/or misinterpretation of sexual interest and consent. These lead

to what participants call “gray areas” of sexual interest and consent, and which are dependent on the first point – that heavy drinking women (and men) often have the capacity to consent to sex. Finally, sexual agency and exploitation are commonly, and often simultaneously, experienced by participants in the context of heavy drinking.

The results of this study show that prevention programs’ major messages about alcohol and sexual violence do not reflect the lived experiences with heterosexual encounters while drinking among one of set of their target audience. Contrary to existing prevention messages, data from this study demonstrate that many young people understand themselves to be capable of intentionally and consensually participating in sexual activity while drinking heavily. They also recognize that sexual exploitation, and even sexual coercion, is common under conditions of heavy drinking. These simultaneous truths suggest that sexual violence prevention programs might benefit from revisiting their messages around sex, alcohol and consent. Not doing so runs the risk of losing credibility with a target audience. By emphasizing messages that are so discordant with women and men’s experiences of heterosexual activity, heavy drinking women and men may tune out all other messages prevention programs provide (including those about how to access resources should they or someone they care about experience sexual violence). Reconfiguring these messages to acknowledge the complexities of sex while drinking may encourage some men and women, who might have been turned off by less nuanced messages, to become involved in sexual violence prevention

This study offers two specific recommendations for sexual violence prevention programming. First, programs should engage with the complexities of alcohol and sexuality in peoples' lives, as well as the simultaneously-occurring contradictions around sexual agency and exploitation. To do this, prevention programs should incorporate open dialogues around sex, communication, consent and alcohol into their core programming efforts. These dialogues could form the basis of improved programming that better reflects the lived experience of those at high risk of sexual violence victimization and perpetration. Open dialogues could generate new ideas for intervention. Some campus and community-based prevention programs are beginning to do this via interactive theater programs which actors act out a party scene which results in sexual violence, then stay in character throughout a conversation with the audience. Their 'take home' message from this program is that people do not deserve to be punished for their drunkenness with sexual violence. This is an important message. And while it does not yet explicitly open a space to talk through deeply entrenched ideas about the connections between alcohol, sexuality, and sexual violence, it could be a starting point for a longer program that involved open small group dialogues about sex, consent, communication and alcohol. Opening up a conversation is the first step to building more successful programs and policies. Its intentional openness and inclusiveness also has potential for reaching a larger group of people, and thus building a broader base of support for sexual violence prevention and healthy sexual behavior.

Ideas coming out of these open dialogues could then be further explored in focus groups. Several possible prevention messages could be presented to different

groups of students for their reactions. This could result in more appropriate, more empowering, and more effective messages about sexual violence prevention and healthy sexuality.

Additionally, prevention programs should work to encourage what I am terming “ethical behavior while drinking.” Harm reduction approaches such as Mothers against Drunk Driving (MADD) have been incredibly successful in their attempts to reduce rates of drunk driving. Their work has been supported by massive public awareness campaigns and crucial legal changes (as have efforts to reduce rates of sexual violence). While these institutional and structural changes have been important to effectiveness, a fundamental assumption of MADD is that people can, and do, choose to behave better and to make better decisions – even under conditions of heavy drinking. People can, and do, decide that they are too drunk to drive. Many lives have been saved by coordinated efforts involving this strategic message. Some research (c.f., Dal Cin et al, 2006) has shown similar behavior-change results in increasing safer sex behaviors among intoxicated adolescents, when cued (via bracelets) to remember what they had learned about safer sex communication and negotiation. A next step in sexual violence prevention intervention research might be to adapt (and test) this model to cue students to remember what they had learned about interpreting and communicating sexual interest and consent while drinking.

Limitations and future research

The present study offers analysis based on 90 qualitative interviews with heavy-drinking white and East Asian American college students at one University in the

Midwestern United States. This method provided rich depth and detail to a topic that is most often addressed through survey research. While qualitative methods have the disadvantage of not being generalizable, this method allowed me to gather, and analyze, data on participants' thoughts and experiences that would have been more difficult to capture in a survey. These results will be important to further development and analysis of survey research, as well as for contextualizing current survey data. Future survey research should include items designed to develop a typology of early stages of heterosexual interaction, and to determine the point of intoxication at which it becomes impossible to consent to sex.

Finally, the sample, although large and diverse for a qualitative interview study, has its limitations. It is intentionally a sample exclusively of frequent heavy episodic binge drinkers who are white or East Asian American, participants in "party culture," and undergraduates at one specific University. This research would be improved with a broader sample, including non-college students, people who live in a range of regions, and who are of a wider range of ethnic, racial, and sexual minorities.

Future research should also explore these issues with people who drink occasionally, but are not frequent heavy episodic drinkers. They likely have different experiences and skill sets for navigating the embodied experience of heavy drinking and the culture surrounding partying and heavy drinking that would be important to investigate. Exploring processes of sexual consent while drinking in different cultural contexts, particularly ones in which partying is both less common and less socially acceptable than it is on college campuses would also be valuable. Additionally, future

research should explore the effects of alcohol on sexual consent among people in existing sexual or “dating” relationships. This research focused on heterosexual interactions among people who were not involved in “dating” relationships with each other. Results suggest that consent is likely even more assumed and more non-verbal, and that the possibility of sexual refusal may be farther from the minds of those involved in sexual interaction with dating partners. Finally, future scholarship should conduct intervention research to design and evaluate innovative programs that engage with the complexity of alcohol and consent as individuals experience them, and work to prevent alcohol related sexual violence and coercion.

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Chapter Five

Sexual Violence Prevention and Technologies of Gender Among Heavy-Drinking College Women

Sexual violence has been a central concern of U.S. feminism since the movement's reinvigoration in the 1960s. Among the targets of this concern is sexual violence toward women on college campuses. Sexual violence on campus remains a particularly serious problem despite decades of academic and activist attention (Banyard et al. 2005; Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney 2006). Feminists explore a wide range of causal explanations for sexual violence (including biological differences between men and women, individual attitudes, psychopathology, organizational structure, and patriarchy) as well as a variety of strategies for prevention and intervention (such as penal reform, organizational change, policy innovation, development of rape crisis centers, installation of street lights, and critique of traditional gender norms).

In this article, I propose that feminist engagement with theories of technologies of power can expand understanding of the constructions of gender and the mechanisms of sexual violence on campus. These theoretical insights, if combined with empirical analysis, may contribute to development of effective and comprehensive sexual violence prevention.

Informed by feminism and feminist theory, social scientists have analyzed fraternities, athletic teams, and other all-male organizations, theorizing that masculinity, as it operates among men, is a primary cause of male sexual violence against women (see, e.g., Martin and Hummer 1989; Sanday 1990; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997). Influenced by Michel Foucault (1979) and poststructuralism (Marcus 1992; McCaughey 1997; Gavey 2005) some feminist scholars focus their analytical lenses on the cultural discourses and patterns of interaction that create the possibility for sexual violence. These influences, they argue, encourage women to enter into gendered-subject positions of passivity and asexuality. These same factors influence men to enter into gendered-subject positions of sexual aggression.

This fruitful scholarship concentrates on the operations of normative masculinity in interactions among men, examining the regulatory and disciplining effects in such interactions. It also considers masculinity's normative operations and the aforementioned effects in interactions between men and women. However, research does not sufficiently explore women's interactions with each other. This article adds to the literatures on sexual violence and its prevention by applying feminist engagement with Foucault to interrogate normative gender as it operates among women. The approach also differs from that found in much feminist writing on sexual violence because the current effort is not primarily focused on giving voice to women's experiences of sexual violence. Instead, it applies a critical feminist lens to the operations of femininity among women at high risk of experiencing sexual violence. The study's data stem from qualitative interviews with an ethnically diverse group of 31

heavy-drinking college women. Interviewees were asked about their gendered experiences as participants in campus party cultures. Through an analysis of these data, I show that such a theoretical and empirical refocus has great import for efforts to develop sexual violence prevention programs.

Sexual Violence and Partying on Campus: Prevalence and Prevention

There is some debate over the accuracy of estimates for incidence and prevalence of sexual violence among college women. This is due in part to the methodological challenges of collecting data on behavior that is sensitive, culturally loaded, and often stigmatized. Most research estimates that 12-15 percent of college women experience completed, forcible, penile-vaginal rape; 25-30 percent experience attempted rape, and approximately 50 percent experience a range of physical sexual harassment or mild forms of sexual assault (Koss et al. 1987;; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997; Schwartz and Leggett 1999; Fischer et al. 2000; Abbey et al. 2001; Banyard et al. 2005; Buddie and Testa 2005). These prevalence rates identify college women as a group that is at high risk for sexual assault, which they experience at substantially higher rates than the general population. Some research suggests that their risk of experiencing sexual violence is as much as three times higher than that among than similarly situated non college-student women (Sorenson et al. 1987).

Sophisticated, multimethod social science research concludes that structural and organizational factors, particularly the organizational structure of fraternities, help to explain the persistence of sexual violence on college campuses. Peggy Sanday (1990) and Patricia Yancey Martin and Robert Hummer (1989) document the rape culture that

exists, and is perpetuated within, campus fraternities. They explicate the many interactions and policies that facilitate male rape of women by creating circumstances of opportunity and encouragement. In their comparative study of different types of fraternities and campus bars, A. Ayers Boswell and Joan Spade (1996) expand upon the work of Sanday (1990) and Martin and Hummer (1989) to show that the organizational structures and norms (e.g., the number and gender ratio of people allowed in parties and bars, the loudness of music or other sound, and the amount and type of dancing) in certain bars and fraternity parties produce circumstances differentially conducive to male sexual assault of women.

Taking a different direction in the analysis of the causal elements of campus sexual assault, Martin Schwartz and Walter DeKeserdy (1997) focus on the facilitating role of all-male campus organizations. They convincingly argue that all-male campus organizations, such as athletic teams and fraternities, provide “male peer support” (1997, 1) for sexual violence through their institutional practices and procedures. These features actively construct and reproduce particular forms of aggressive, dominant masculinity. Such forms, they assert, normalize and encourage male sexual assault of women (1997). Finally, Elizabeth Armstrong and her colleagues (2006) demonstrate that the interplay between social and organizational factors is essential to the persistence of sexual violence on campus. They examine housing policies that prohibit alcohol and encourage student homogeneity in dorms, Greek system practices that heavily recruit first-year women to attend alcohol-laden fraternity parties, and college student social practices that privilege the pleasure-producing experience of party culture. They find

that the interconnections among these factors contribute to the high rates of campus sexual violence. The work of these scholars demonstrates the importance of social, structural, and organizational features in understanding and preventing sexual violence on campus.

The prevalence of heavy episodic drinking is an additional and intricately related factor that is frequently theorized to play a causal role in college women's high risk of sexual violence (Martin and Hummer 1989; Boswell and Spade 1996; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997; Ullman, Karabatos, and Koss 1999; Corbin et al. 2001; Abbey 2002; Armstrong et al. 2006). Research consistently finds that alcohol use by the perpetrator, victim, or both, occurs in approximately half (30-79 percent) of all sexual assaults, including those on college campuses (Harrington and Leitenberg 1994; Abbey 2002, Brecklin and Ullman 2002). Although research suggests that the relationship between alcohol use and sexual violence is bidirectional (Testa and Parks 1996; Testa and Livingston 2000), women who are heavy episodic drinkers are likely to be at particularly great risk for experiencing sexual assault.

The persistent finding of a strong correlation between alcohol use and sexual violence suggests that it is useful to explore why many college women participate in party drinking. Sociological literature shows that many college women who identify themselves as frequent, heavy, episodic drinkers and participants in campus party cultures experience partying as a social and sexualized setting in which they can feel sexy, hook up with people they find sexually attractive (or at least enjoy the possibility of doing so), bond with their friends, meet new people, and have fun (Moffatt 1989;

Luke 2006; Demant 2007; Demant and Ostergaard 2007; Järvinen and Gundelach 2007; Bogle 2008).³ In addition, social science research on campus peer culture, alcohol use, and sexual violence finds partying, a term which the literature defines as heavy episodic drinking in a sexualized (or heterosexualized) social context, to be normative among college students (Martin and Hummer 1989; Young et al. 2005; Armstrong et al. 2006). It is also found to be increasingly common among college women (Wechsler et al. 2002). This research shows that many college students consider partying to be a prototypical college experience. It allows them to demonstrate their newfound independence from parents, serves as a major source of entertainment in college, and is part of what it means to be a college student. For many college students, the positive, pleasure-producing aspects of partying seem both more salient and more compelling than the risks, such as sexual violence, that are often associated with party culture. In addition, the risks of sexual violence may seem quite removed from the pleasurable aspects of partying, as most party experiences do not include sexual assault.

By the late 1980s, many colleges and universities across the United States publicly recognized the problem of sexual violence and attempted to address it by implementing sexual violence prevention programs. This recognition and the surrounding changes resulted in large part from community- and campus-based feminist activism that drew attention to the social, structural and political causes of personal issues such as sexual violence (Bohmer and Parrot 1993). In the early and mid 1990s,

³ As it is used in this article, the term “hook up” and its derivations are vague. They describe some kind of sexual activity, ranging from kissing to intercourse, generally occurring between people casually known to each other.

campus-based prevention programs flourished. This is likely in part due to the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990, commonly referred to as the Clery Act (U.S. Public Law 101-542, Title II). This federal legislation mandated all colleges and universities receiving Title IV funding, or federal financial aid monies, to develop and publicly disseminate information about campus safety, including sexual assault programming. In addition, Congress provided funding for such programs through the Violence Against Women Act's (VAWA; U.S. Public Law 106-386) Grants to Reduce Violent Crimes against Women on Campus (16.525) program, (now the Grants to Reduce Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking on Campus Program) (Heppner et al. 1995; Lonsway and Kothari 2000; U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).⁴ By the end of the 1990s, some variety of sexual violence prevention or education programming could be found on the vast majority of college and university campuses in the United States (Breitenbecher 2000; Potter et al. 2000; Choate 2003; Gidycz et al. 2006). This programming is generally provided by campus-based health service centers or organizations that explicitly identify as feminist. It often involves broad student participation (Morrison et al. 2004). Structure and programming of these organizations vary, but almost all programs offer at least a 1-2 hour presentation for students and campus groups.

The bulk of evaluated campus-based sexual violence prevention programs are short, mixed-gender workshops that involve educating participants about the prevalence of sexual violence, identifying risky behaviors (such as heavy episodic

⁴ Authorization: Title VIII, Part E, of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, Public Law 105-244, as amended by the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, Public Law 106-386, codified at 20 USC 115.2

drinking), and challenging traditional sex role stereotypes and rape-supportive attitudes (Burt 1980; Breitenbecher 2000; Söchting, Fairbrother, and Koch 2004). These presentations focus on individual-level strategies for prevention and do not suggest organizational, structural, or societal change as mechanisms for preventing sexual violence. Some results from posttests conducted 2-3 months after the program show that the programs are effective in decreasing rape-supportive attitudes among both men and women. Many of these effects disappear however, in post test conducted between 9 months and 1 year after the program (Breitenbecher 2000; Carmody and Carrington 2000; Söchting et al. 2004). In addition, although rape-supportive attitudes are correlated with likelihood of sexual violence perpetration and victimization, evidence does not show a link between a decrease in rape-supportive attitudes and a decrease in sexual aggression or victimization (Breitenbecher 2000; Carmody and Carrington 2000; Söchting et al. 2004). These prevention programs are targeted at both men and women. This targeting suggests an assumption in the programs that a critique or reduction of rape-supportive attitudes will not only reduce male perpetration of sexual violence, but will also provide women with strategies to reduce their risk of experiencing such violence.

Frustration with the continued high rates of sexual violence, and feelings of helplessness in face of the risk of such violence, leads many to seek out ways to empower women (as the most likely potential victims of sexual violence) to be actively prevent sexual violence. Grounded in this spirit of women's empowerment, some prevention programs focus on providing women with self-defense training (Ullman et al.

1999). These programs suggest that some women find value in identifying ways to do something in the fight against sexual violence, and some women may experience empowerment through participation in prevention efforts. Research also suggest that self-defense programs, like other sexual violence prevention programming that focuses on individual-level interventions, are not yet effective (See Ullman et al. 1999 for a comprehensive review.) This lack of effectiveness should not be surprising, as effective prevention efforts must overcome the powerful influences of social forces and cultural norm to change attitudes.

The persistence of sexual violence on campus thus suggests the need for a different analytical frame and focus in prevention efforts. The current article argues that feminists' engagement with Foucault's work on power and sexuality may help to reconceptualize rape-supportive attitudes. From this perspective, such attitudes are not merely thoughts that individuals have. Rather, they are entrenched disciplinary discourses of power that operate at structural and cultural levels. These discourses of power, which Foucault describes as technologies, are internalized, becoming part of individuals' identities and subjectivities. Deploying these internalized technologies of gender in their interactions with others is one mechanism by which individuals reproduce gender, power, and cultural discourses of sexual violence.

Technologies of Gender: Melding Feminist and Foucauldian Theories of Power

In his seminal text, *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault describes a concept of disciplinary power. He argues that this power that exists not (only) as an independent, external, and destructive force, but also as a productive and constitutive (if regulatory)

one. It produces not only control, but also beliefs, desires, and social practices that give meaning to individuals' lives. He employs the metaphor of "technology of power" (1979, 23) to describe the multitude of mechanisms and locations (knowledges, social practices, discourses, etc.) through which power operates.

Feminists in the humanities and social sciences take up this metaphor to specifically theorize the constructions and operations of gender. Perhaps most influentially, feminist film critic Teresa de Lauretis uses the technology metaphor to explore "the techniques and discursive strategies by which gender is constructed" (1987, 28, n.17). As a film critic, de Lauretis's scholarship focuses on these processes, or technologies, in the context of presenting and representation of gender in cinema. She is particularly interested in how these technologies facilitate and produce the spaces and movements between biological sex and social, or cultural, gender.

Feminist social scientists such as Karin Martin, in her work on childbirth (2003), and Nicola Gavey and her colleagues in their work on heterosexual coercion (1992, 2005) and the coital imperative (McPhillips et al. 2001; Gavey 2005) extend this metaphor to focus specifically on the internalized technologies of gender. These scholars use Foucault's concept of technologies as a tool to make sense of the processes by which women embrace, take ownership of, and reproduce gender in cultural norms, ideas, practices, and structures. In describing this process, Martin theorizes that "internalized technologies of gender are those aspects of the gender system that are in us, that become us" (2003, 56). She uses technologies of gender as a theoretical lens, describing how women's experiences of childbirth are disciplined and produced by

internalized cultural norms of gender, such as being nice and taking care of others, even while they experience the intense physical pain of childbirth. Gavey and her colleagues use the metaphor of internalized technology of gender to talk about the coital imperative among heterosexual women. Under this imperative, women describe feeling that sexual encounters are incomplete and unsatisfying without physical intercourse, even when they have no physical sexual desire for intercourse (Gavey 2005; McPhillips et al, 2001). Gavey (1992) also employs the technologies metaphor to explore “technologies of heterosexual coercion” (1992, 97), which she argues can be conceptualized as all of the structures, forces, histories, material realities, social practices, knowledge, and strategies that make heterosexual coercion possible and probable.

These scholars use the metaphor of technologies to describe how gender is both constitutive of, and constituted by, such social practices as childbirth and heterosexual interactions. This article employs the concept of internalized technologies of gender, a metaphor inspired by feminist scholarship and Foucault, to explore the constructions and reproductions of gender in the sexualized social practice of campus partying. Specifically, I use this metaphor to understand the interactions reported by the heavy-drinking college women I interviewed. Interviews focus on the ways in which women negotiate the risk of sexual violence on campus. The metaphor is also used to examine the iterative mechanisms through which, in the process of their interactions with other women, the interview participants construct and reproduce gender, power and cultural meanings of sexual violence. According to theory, gender, power, and cultural

understandings of sexual violence are reproduced in part through individuals internalizing technologies of gender and deploying them in interactions with each other. Thus, individuals could produce and reproduce gender, power, and understandings of sexual violence differently. They are not merely vessels through which discourse is carried and transmitted. They are agentic social actors who, though shaped by powerful cultural discourses, actively participate in constructing the meaning of the world around them.

From this theoretical grounding, I developed the current study's research questions. (1) How do college women who are heavy episodic drinkers understand, negotiate, and strategize about the risk of sexual violence within campus party cultures? (2) How might those understandings, negotiations, and strategies be mechanisms through which cultural discourses about gender, power, and sexual violence are reproduced and transformed? (3) What strategies for preventing sexual violence can be drawn from those processes and understandings?

Method

Participants

The data for this study are drawn from 31 in-depth, semistructured interviews that I conducted with 18-24 year old women. Interview participants were undergraduate students at a large, prestigious, public university in the Midwest. All identified themselves as both frequent heavy-episodic drinkers and participants in campus party culture. "Frequent heavy episodic drinking" was defined, in accordance with the literature, as having at least four drinks in one sitting at least three times in the

two weeks prior to survey (Wechsler et al, 2002). Because some students' behavior may have been atypical in the two week period before the interviews, I expanded the criteria to include those who report consuming four drinks in one sitting at least 15 times in the last 6 months. These data are part of a larger project that examines the co-constructions of gender, sexual violence, and partying among privileged young adults. One aspect of that project is to study how women who identify themselves as participants in party cultures experience and describe partying. Because of this, the term "partying" was not specifically defined in interviews. All interviews took place on the university campus between May and July 2005. Participants were recruited by flyers posted on the campus. These flyers briefly described the study and its' eligibility criteria. They also indicated that qualified participants would receive \$25 dollars in compensation for their time.

The sample has greater racial and ethnic diversity than the university's general student population. Eighteen (58 percent) women identified themselves as white or Caucasian, 11 (35.5 percent) as Asian or Asian American, and 2 (6.5 percent) as Black or African American. The undergraduate student population is 75 percent white, and 25 percent African American, Asian or Asian American, Latino and other race. Only two participants indicate that their families' annual household income is less than \$50,000, and only six report annual household incomes of less than \$75,000. They all identify as heterosexual. Only four (13 percent) are members of Panhellenic sororities. (See table 1 for demographics.) This is an important aspect of the sample, as much of the literature

on campus sexual violence focuses on members of social fraternities and sororities (see, e.g., Martin and Hummer 1989; Sanday 1990; Boswell and Spade 1996).

Data Collection

All interviews were conducted by me and followed the outline of an interview schedule. Interviews included questions about experiences with partying, campus party culture, social relationships, risks of party culture, and sexual violence. Each interview covered all of these topics, but not every question was asked of every interviewee. Interviewees were often asked questions that emerged from the flow of the interview. Some questions were asked of all interviewees. Two sets of interview questions are particularly important for this study. The first is a single question: “Many people say that women who drink/party are at greater risk of being raped or sexually assaulted. What do you think about that?” The second set of questions immediately followed the discussion on the topic of the first question. “Do you think there are ways partying could be made safer for women? What might that involve?”

The duration of interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. Twenty-eight of the 31 interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis. Three of the interviewees requested that I not record their interviews. Extensive field notes were taken on these three interviews.

Data Analysis

In this study, I am primarily concerned with the processes and mechanisms through which individuals construct and reproduce the meanings, cultural norms, and discourses associated with sexual violence, gender, and power. As such, I adopt a critical

approach that is grounded in feminist and poststructuralist theory, analyzing interviewees' reports of their actions and interactions. I focus on excavating themes and common tropes from interview data. I also focus on the expressions of the internalized technologies of gender. The speakers themselves may be not be entirely aware of these expressions.

This method of qualitative data analysis differs from interpretive and phenomenological techniques that are often employed to analyze narratives of domestic and sexual violence. Those methods often emphasize giving voice to the speaker, validating experience, and bringing the private into the realm of the public. The speaker's narrative is accepted at face value, and the speaker is privileged as an authority (See, e.g., Dobash and Dobash 1979; Ferraro and Johnson 1983; NiCarthy 1987). Because those methods focus primarily on interpreting individual experiences, they do not allow for critical analysis of the ways in which individuals' constructions of experiences reproduce the cultural meanings and discourses under study here (Scott 1991). Although the current study's approach may be somewhat controversial, my goal in using it is to offer expanded understandings of the complexities of individuals' experiences in navigating the risk of sexual violence and to identify new possibilities for prevention.

To analyze data, I use a method of open and focused coding. This method combines inductive and deductive analysis (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. 1995). I began by reading transcripts and field notes from all interviews, taking notes on emerging themes while reading. On a second read-through I began thematic coding. I used NVIVO

software to code an initial set of themes that emerged in the interview data. I also include themes identified in academic and activist literature. Using these themes as a starting point, I continued to search for themes that were emerging from the data. The process thus was iterative and dynamic. Examples of deductive themes include believing oneself to be safe from sexual assault when with friends, reducing risk of sexual danger by consciously limiting how much alcohol one consumes, and walking home from parties or bars in groups. Examples of inductive themes include women harshly judging other women's behavior while partying, and women believing they were the only ones responsible for protecting themselves from experiencing sexual assault. I used these themes to construct thematic memos that combine my analysis with data. I then compiled integrative memos that combined several themes, and I began to make connections across them. These integrative memos formed the beginnings of the current article. Two undergraduate research assistants (who met all criteria for participation in the study) increased the reflexivity and dynamism of the study. They also provided a valuable source of member-checking (Padgett 1998). I collaborated with them to identify themes, code data, and write initial thematic memos.

Institutional Context: Setting the Stage of Campus Party Culture

According to interviews and other sources of data, partying is a normative, much-anticipated, and well-acknowledged feature of undergraduate student social life at this university. It is the primary social activity and a major source of joy for many students. Over half of students at this university report heavy episodic drinking in the 30 days prior to being surveyed, with more than half of those reporting that they engage in

frequent heavy episodic drinking.⁵ Officials in the university's residential life and health departments report that, prior to arrival on campus, many students connect through existing social networks or such Internet-networking sites as Facebook. They make plans for how and when they will party when they arrive on campus (personal communication, university health educator, March 28, 2008).

As with many large public universities, the university has a Greek system that is an influential component of party culture. Approximately 15 percent of undergraduate students are members of fraternities or sororities; however, many non fraternity members (particularly first-year women) regularly attend fraternity parties. Thus, fraternities have influence beyond their membership numbers.

Participants in this project describe campus party culture as consisting of three primary venues: fraternity parties, house parties, and bars. They also report participating in pre-partying, or pre-gaming.⁶ Before going out to parties or bars, groups of up to approximately 20 students gather to socialize together and consume enough alcohol that they will feel buzzed or drunk regardless of the availability and accessibility of alcohol at the party or bar. Despite policies that prohibit alcohol in dorms, these events often take place in dorm rooms. As a result, students are often intoxicated before they arrive at parties or bars.

Fraternities advertise their parties heavily via flyers in first-year women's and co-ed dorms. Flyers are also posted around campus, and parties are announced on

⁵ All descriptive data about the University is from publicly accessible Web sites or other University sources.

⁶ Pre-gaming is a term used interchangeably with pre-partying and is unrelated to a sporting event.

Facebook. Thus, by design, fraternity party attendance is high among first-year women. Participants explain that fraternities carefully limit the number of men admitted to their parties, particularly men without friends in the fraternity and those who do not arrive as part of a group consisting mostly of women. Participants describe this context as one in which it is vastly easier for women than men to gain admittance and, once admitted, to obtain alcohol. Beer and jungle juice, a combination of fruit juices and hard liquor, are readily available for young women at these parties. The alcohol is often far less accessible for the young men who accompany them.

According to interviewees, house parties are generally, though not universally, smaller than fraternity parties. House parties are also often advertised over Facebook, but generally among preexisting, if loose, friendship networks. In contrast to fraternity parties, they are less often openly advertised via flyers. As a consequence, house parties are initially less accessible to students who arrive on campus without already-established social networks of friends and acquaintances who have off-campus houses in which to host parties. House parties often hold over 100 guests, and alcohol is as easily accessible (and more accessible for men) at house parties as it is at fraternity parties.

Bars are another common site of campus partying. Despite laws prohibiting alcohol consumption by those under 21, many campus bars admit people at age 18, though they theoretically only serve alcohol to those 21 and over. In addition to several restaurants that serve alcohol, 10 bars are present on or near the University campus. The bars vary in both atmosphere and reputation for the strictness with which ID are

checked, according to participants. Participants describe a common trajectory of partying. Bars tend to be popular among undergraduate students who have reached age 21. Fraternity parties tend to be popular with first year students, and their popularity wanes among returning students, although it persists among some sorority women and fraternity men throughout their college years. House parties are popular among students' in their sophomore and junior years, bars become popular in students' junior and senior years. Some women report that fraternity parties decline in popularity because, after their initial excitement with participation in college life and campus party culture wears off, they do not feel comfortable or safe amid the heavy sexual pressure often present at such parties.

The pursuit of sexual activity, even if only through flirtation, is a major feature of party culture on this and other campuses. Research on campus culture and college student life identifies the change from a culture of dating to a culture of "hooking-up" (Bogle 2008, 2) in which sexual activity increasingly occurs outside of the context of committed relationships (Institute for American Values 2001; Flack et al. 2007; Paul and Hayes 2002; Bogle 2008). Research finds that hooking up very often occurs in the context of heavy drinking at parties or bars (Paul and Hayes 2002; Armstrong et al. 2006; Flack et al. 2007; Bogle 2008), and many sexual assaults begin with what both parties describe as consensual heterosexual hooking up (Gavey 2005).

In addition to a well-established party culture, this campus also has a well-established and active organization that is devoted to sexual violence prevention and intervention. Its programs rely on a high level of student involvement. Funded through

the university and a range of external grants, the organization offers workshops at campus orientation and during the week before classes begin in the fall. It has an active peer-education program that provides trainings, workshops, crisis intervention, and advocacy services. It also runs a men's activism campaign. Although the organization's goal is to address broad social and structural factors in sexual violence, in practice it often advocates individual-level prevention strategies. These strategies include not walking home alone, trusting one's instincts, partying with friends, watching what and how much one drinks, and using the buddy system to watch out for others.

Results and Discussion

Through analysis of the data in this study, I identify many internalized technologies of gender that the interviewed students deploy through their interactions with other women. These internalized technologies combine to produce a number of strategies, some deliberate and others non-deliberate, that participants use to negotiate the risk of sexual violence within campus party cultures. Although participants identify many different strategies, I focus here on the ones that primarily involve women's interactions with each other. I identify common themes in participants' responses and use these themes to place each strategy into one of three loose categories. The first category includes protective strategies that involved judging other women, distancing oneself from other women, denigrating women by defining and describing them as slutty⁷, and blaming victims. I describe strategies in this category as "othering," a

⁷ The terms slutty, slutiness, and slut are used often by the participants in this study. Although a precise definition is illusive, they are terms intended to denigrate women by assigning them a sexually stigmatized label. Historically these terms have been used to describe women of low character who have

practice that is detailed in the literature (Burns 1999; Schwalbe et al. 2000; Krumer-Nevo 2002) as a crucial component of the reproduction of inequality. Strategies of othering are mechanisms used to create us- versus-them divisions in qualities or actions of some are deemed to be undesirable. For example, some interviewees report using such mechanisms to distance themselves from those they perceive to be inviting undue risk of sexual violence. Participants seldom acknowledge the social mechanisms of othering as tactics deployed to negotiate, or feel safe from, the risk of sexual violence. Nonetheless, these mechanisms appear to be internalized technologies of gender that manifest in behaviors intended to produce such effects.

The second category comprises strategies that I label “an individual problem.” The name reflects the highly popular and individualistic belief, expressed by interviewees, that preventing sexual violence is the sole responsibility of the individual women at risk for sexual victimization. Preventative strategies grouped together in this category involve carrying pepper spray when partying, monitoring drinks (i.e., to avoid consumption of doctored beverages) and how much one drinks, and regulating what one wears when one goes out. These practices are informed by cultural discourses about gendered norms, actions, and behaviors. Such discourses cast women in the role of sexual gate-keeper, encouraging them to place the risk of harm above freedom of desire, movement, and action. The discourses are so deeply entrenched that they have

sex with different men in a relatively short period of time without a necessary or strong emotional attachment to the men involved. These terms are applied more broadly today, but reflect a similar sentiment.

become internalized technologies of gender that many women adopt and espouse as their own beliefs.

In the final category I describe strategies of “watching out for each other.” Powerful cultural discourses, or internalized technologies, interact with each other to produce this very common strategy for negotiating the risk of sexual violence. In this case, the technologies are discourses of gender and risk. They draw on myths about stranger danger, safety among friends and acquaintances, and the importance of caring for friends. Preventative strategies in this category involve partying with groups of friends, agreeing to leave parties or bars only with friends, helping friends extricate themselves from the uncomfortable conversations with certain men, and in general, using what many describe as “the buddy system.” Such strategies may be viewed by analysts as involving technologies of gender. The strategies are commonly used deployments of strategic knowledge that can usefully be conceptualized as technologies of gender as they contribute to the cultural conditions and environments that support the existence of sexual violence. They support what Gavey (2005, 3) refers to as the “cultural scaffolding of rape.” The gendered strategies of prevention are not without flaw; participants report that their ability to watch out for each other is often thwarted by heavy drinking or the pursuit of alternative sexual or social agendas. The strategies have discipline effects as watching out for each other requires some surveillance of others’ behaviors and desires. It also reinforces rigidly gendered norms for feminine behavior and, if used effectively, would prevent much consensual sexual activity as well as sexual violence. As articulated by the study’s participants, these technologies of

gender have powerful disciplinary effects on the practitioner's bodies, actions and identities. The effects are felt individually as well as through women's interactions with other women involved in the same or a similar party culture.

"Othering"

For the participants in this study, othering is an important effect of the internalized technologies of gender. A prerequisite of othering is the internalization of technologies of gender regarding cultural norms of femininity. Through these norms, certain performances and practices of femininity are denigrated. Participants in this study engage in what Michael Schwelbe and colleagues describe as "defensive othering among subordinates" (2000, 425). In this case, women who participate in party culture, are members of a group that is subject to gendered, negative, judgments from larger society about their intelligence, their sexuality, and their ability to take care of themselves and others (see, e.g., Burt 1980; Sandmaier 1980; Stompler 1994; Armstrong et al. 2006; Lyons and Willott 2008). They engage in defensive othering of similarly situated women to deflect stigma they might experience as members of this group. This type of othering allows women to recognize the dangers present in party cultures and to distance themselves from those dangers. The constructed distance makes it possible for women who participate in party culture to do so while feeling that they are safe from two of the most dangerous aspects of it: the stigma of sluttiness, and vulnerability to sexual assault. As I will demonstrate in the following section, defensive othering also perpetuates hierarchies of femininity, as women's deployment of this internalized technology of gender in their interactions with each other contributes to the

construction of certain performances and practices of femininity as privileged over others.

Interview participants deploy othering as a disciplining practice toward other women. The practice most often requires two steps. The first step involves evaluating another female participant in party culture by two interrelated criteria: (a) how successfully she performed or accomplished normative femininity and (b) how well her actions matched or failed to match what the interviewee identified as strategies of safe partying. In the second step, the individual defines herself or her actions in opposition to the failures identified in the other woman.

The manifestation of these internalized technologies of gender, judgment toward other women and willingness to engage in practices of othering, is startlingly common across the interviews with participants. The following quotations demonstrate how two interviewees, Laura and Kim, create distinctions of inequality between different groups of women, and then express their disdain for women involved in Greek life. Laura, a 22 year-old white woman acknowledged: "I have different feelings for different groups of women, and I think that I have a hard time feeling very respectful of women, and this is totally just a stereotype of mine, but, it seems particularly in the Greek system, the stereotypical girl doesn't wear a lot of clothes when she goes out, and she goes to the certain bars in this area that I sorta look down on." Laura's comments suggest that she has less difficulty feeling respect for some groups of women (perhaps, although she does not explicitly say this, groups to which she and her friends belong) she than for others.

Kim, a 22 year-old Asian woman, is more explicit than Laura about the distinctions of inequality she draws between groups of women. She says:

Kim: Like with my friends, I hang out with mostly Asian kids and I think you don't really see the Asian girls get totally drunk or anything like that. So I think it's a different view. It's mostly, like, the sorority girls who don't have, like, the best reputation about going out and partying. And I think they make up most of the party scene, too. There's like a huge population of sorority girls on this campus. So just wherever you go, you're going to run into them —but not all of them are — just, like, a vast majority.

Author: Okay. Anything else about perceptions of women who drink or women who party?

Kim: No, that's about it. Just kind of like that sluttiness, especially of the sorority girls.

Kim begins her comments by establishing that her friendship network is primarily made up of Asian women and then distinguishes Asian women from such other women as “sorority girls.” Thus, she constructs a status distinction between the group of women to which she (as an Asian woman) belongs, and other women who do not have “the best reputation about going out and partying.”

Such judgments of other women can be understood as effects of an internalized technology of gender that constructs within women (in this case within Laura and Kim) a rigid sense of what is or is not appropriate behavior for women. Wearing minimal clothing, going to the wrong types of bars (i.e., those known to be popular among fraternities and sororities) and having a questionable “reputation about going out and partying” are characterized as behaviors that fall outside of the bounds of culturally defined appropriate behavior for women. These behaviors are thus subject to judgment even by women, including Laura and Kim, who identify themselves as heavy-episodic drinkers and active participants in campus party culture. Thus, the study's participants judge other women for behaviors that are the same, or very similar, to ones in which

they themselves engage. This is a powerful effect of internalized technologies of gender.

The judgment of other women, sluttiness, and sorority membership, as well as vulnerability are themes evident in the following exchange, in which a 21 year-old white woman, Jen, responds to a question posed to each interview participant: *“What do you think, in general, of women who party?”*

Jen: If they don’t have control over themselves and they’re irresponsible about it, I mean with anybody, but I kind of disrespect it more with women because they’re more vulnerable.

Author: Can you say more about that?

Jen: I know a lot of girls dress very provocatively, like, with the miniskirt and the low-cut tops and they look like they’re out for more than just drinking. And some girls maybe just want to look good. But I think because of that, they’re more vulnerable if they’ve been drinking.... Other women, like a lot of my friends, they don’t dress the way sorority girls do. Like, I probably dress more provocatively just because it’s how I dress. Not necessarily to be like, “Hey, let’s hook up.” I mean, I’m not like that. My shirt may be more low-cut, but it won’t be, like, sexy [laughs]. So I guess it’s more respectable.

Author: So it’s more respectable to not dress sexy?

Jen: I guess I respect them because they don’t make themselves have—don’t put themselves in a vulnerable position should they just drink too much. But I don’t disrespect girls who dress provocatively if they are responsible.

Author: What would “being responsible” mean?

Jen: Limiting how much you drink, being conscious of how much you drink, knowing who’s getting your drinks and having a friend or someone you trust do it.

Author: And just to kind of clarify, when you say people are more vulnerable, what are they more vulnerable to?

Jen: Having sex....

Author: Okay. Sort of along the same lines, do you think that there’s any stigma associated with women partying?

Jen: Not really. There’s stigma—they classify it as like “the sorostitute” [laughs] or “sororowhore” stigma where if you’re wearing a miniskirt or a really tiny shirt or something like that, even if you’re not in a sorority, people will automatically assume you are because they think you’re out to just get some or just get too drunk to where you can’t take care of yourself. And I know a lot of my friends just, if you’re in a sorority, they just don’t really respect you.

Jen’s comments provide an informative account of the perceived relationships among women who party (particularly sorority women), sluttiness, sexuality, and vulnerability, revealing perceived connections between the elements of campus party

culture that create the context of danger for women. Her words also illustrate the way some women who party (and thus are vulnerable to the same stereotypes being applied to the sorority women) distance themselves from the “sororowhore” image and other those who fit that description.

Jen frames her initial response to my question in a critical tone. She does not conjure up images of fun, attractive women bonding with close friends, being social, or relieving stress. Instead, she constructs some women who party as irresponsible and as unable or unwilling to control themselves. Although she says she disrespects this lack of control in anyone, she holds a particular place of disrespect for *women* who lack control. She attributes this to the notion that women “are more vulnerable.” Her disrespect of behavior that she perceives to increase vulnerability in women can be seen mid-way in the juxtaposition of women who are “responsible” (a trait she respects and one that is constitutive of a category to which she and many of her friends belong) in contrast to those who are not (for whom she admits a lack of respect). Jen states that women who dress provocatively put themselves in danger because they might drink too much and end up “having sex.” She constructs herself as an exception to this by explaining that she dresses provocatively because, she says, “it's just how I dress.” She explains that her manner of dress is not to be understood as a sign of her interest in sexual activity. Further, Jen constructs much of women’s interest in sexual activity as dangerous and, in many contexts, something to be denigrated.

Jen’s remarks demonstrate how she internalizes the contradictory cultural norms of hegemonic femininity. These norms encourage women to successfully perform

sexiness while having no sexual desire or agency of their own. Jen's comments conflate the concepts of sexiness and vulnerability, demonstrating another particular internalized technology of gender: the interrelated discourses of femininity in which sexuality and sexual violence are perceived as interconnected such that sexual violence is seen as a logical outcome of women's intentional sexual expression. It takes a complicated deployment of othering for Jen to construct a situation in which she feels that her behavior removes her from risk and another woman's (quite similar) behavior increases her vulnerability.

Another way in which the interview participants distance themselves from perceived risk can be seen in the following quotation from my interview with Melissa, a 19-year-old white woman and heavy episodic drinker. She calls upon cultural discourses of rape and what she deems the proper behavior of rape victims. She then deploys the technology of victim-blaming, a heavily gendered discourse in which victims are held responsible for the crimes perpetrated against them. Melissa describes the process that she and her friends went through after learning that a friend had been raped.

Melissa: And then we had another friend who like got raped in our hall last year by a guy in our hall. And it was like technically a rape on all levels, but she didn't report it and then she ended up sleeping with him again, and we were like, "rape victims don't sleep with their rapist." And she was like, "I just wanted to know what it was like." But, she's not our friend anymore.

Author: Is it kinda related to that? Why she's not your friend anymore?

Melissa: Yeah, like I lived with her this year, and like, it was miserable. She was really different. She's on a lot of medications, anti-depressants. And she's on Zoloft, she has anxiety. Etc. Like the list goes on. So I mean that could play a part in it, especially if she feels like she has low self-esteem and such.

Author: Right. Um. After those, like after those things happened, do you feel like you changed how you partied?

Melissa: Um, no not me personally. Because, I'm very independent and I like know what's going on around me, so, I wouldn't put myself in that situation.

Melissa engages in both blaming the victim and othering. She expresses her judgment of a friend who was raped and responded to the rape in a manner inconsistent with the cultural discourses that Melissa internalized and deploys. In not reporting the rape and sleeping with the perpetrator afterwards, Melissa's friend raised questions about the cultural intelligibility of her status as a rape victim. The actions also appear to contribute to Melissa's expressed lack of empathy for her friend's victimization and subsequent (likely not unrelated) mental health challenges.

Melissa further others her friend by stating that the rape did not change how Melissa parties, explaining "I like to know what's going on around me," and "wouldn't put myself in that situation." Through this, she frames herself in contrast to the friend who was raped. Melissa thus implicitly blames her friend both for putting herself in a situation where she was vulnerable to rape, and for being raped. This is problematic for many reasons. Research demonstrates that sexual assault victims who receive negative feedback from their friends and families report significantly higher rates of trauma symptoms, such as those consistent with Melissa's description of her friend's experiences with depression and anxiety, than those who receive neutral or positive feedback from friends and family (Schwartz and Leggett 1999). Further, trauma symptoms and mental health concerns such as these are highly correlated with sexual revictimization (see, e.g., Sorensen et al. 1987; Fischer et al. 2000; Testa and Livingston 2000).

The comments by Jen and Melissa reveal some of the most insidious effects of internalized technologies of gender. They also demonstrate the importance of conceptualizing words and actions through this theoretical framework. Such examples of othering and blaming the victim, make it is possible to see how these powerful cultural discourses, these forms of judgment and social control, produce social actors' ideas, thoughts, and beliefs, rendering those actors as subjects. These disciplinary discourses allow Jen and Melissa to be seen not (or not only) as "mean girls" (Dellasega 2005,7; see also Simmons 2003) enacting relational aggression (Crick and Grotpeter 1995) toward their female peers, nor as passive recipients of a gendered system of social control, but rather as active participants in reproducing and redefining gender. The possibility that a new version of gender relations can be developed is suggested by the fact that participants are active in constructing their current meanings.

An Individual Problem

Of those interviewed, only one woman identifies institutional, social, or structural causes for sexual violence. So too, she was the only one to recognize institutional, social or structural strategies for preventing sexual violence. When I asked participants whether partying could be made safer for women, stated that women are responsible for keeping themselves safe. For example, Jessica, a 22-year-old Korean American woman says, "Girls just need to be careful and watch themselves." Clarissa, a 20-year-old white woman, similarly states: "I really feel like safety is in the hands of the individual. I don't know how much other people can do to help the situation or girls in general. I think girls just have to realize what can happen."

These responses show how internalized technologies of gender can be deployed in women's interactions with other women. The technologies displayed here construct women as sexual gatekeepers who are always (the only ones) responsible for their own safety. These internalized technologies are important not for what they do as for what they fail to do. Women report viewing prevention of sexual violence in the context of partying as their own responsibility. They do not view it as the responsibility of society or the university. Nor do they view it as a collective problem among women. It is an effect of internalized technologies of gender, among the many other mechanisms that reproduce gender, power, and gendered inequalities, that women cannot realistically expect any institution or social structure (including the university) to keep them safe from sexual violence and thus see no alternative to doing so for themselves.

This belief that preventing or avoiding sexual violence is their own responsibility led participants to provide many examples of the strategies deployed to negotiate the risk of sexual violence while partying. These strategies provide evidence of internalized technologies of gender that restrict and discipline women's actions while partying. Women thus are held responsible for maintaining hypervigilance, even during periods of heavy drinking. Included in these internalized technologies are the discourses of normative femininity that regulate what women should wear, where they should go, how they should act, and with whom they should interact if they wish to avoid sexual violence. These technologies produce interpretations of risk that informs behavior such as that described by Aditi, a 24-year-old South-Asian woman. She states: There's safety issues too. Like I know a lot of times, I've walked home by myself from a bar. It's just

been a case where I wanted to leave and maybe I was a little bit drunk or something like that, which is not always the wisest thing, but, you know, I always carry pepper spray with me.”

Aditi expresses two important themes. She suggests that the danger from sexual assault comes from out there on the street and that she can reasonably expect to protect herself in this dangerous setting (in this case by carrying pepper spray). Unfortunately, individualized strategies such as carrying pepper spray have not been shown to be effective in preventing rape or sexual aggression (Ullman 1997).

Participants also report that they negotiate the risk of sexual violence in party culture by monitoring how much they drink, watching their drinks to avoid being drugged, and regulating what they wear to certain parties or bars. In the following quotation, a 20 year-old white woman named Cassie draws a causal link between appearing slutty and the risk of sexual assault. She describes a conscious strategy to protect herself by dressing to make herself less sexy. This reflects a belief that appearing sexy (such as by wearing a low-cut shirt) or being judged as slutty puts her at risk for unwanted sexual attention.

I don't think guys have to worry so much about how they look either. They don't have to like strategize what they're going to wear, to think, "What is this going to get if I wear a low cut shirt? Is someone going to grab me? Is someone going to say something?" I mean they have it all around easier. [Pauses]. One time I was going to a party and I was like..."Well I'm going to wear a big huge sweatshirt and jeans and a hat and I'm going to be so unattractive and no guys are going to try to talk to me." Opposite was true. This guy kept trying to kiss me in front of his friends and I didn't want to so he picked me up in the air. And like the thing that surprises me, too, is like I am a big girl and I think that that is also a reason why I have not ever tried to lose weight is because it makes me feel like I have some arena of protection or something.

As Cassie's comments demonstrate, women discipline their own actions and behaviors through the internalized technologies of gender that they deploy to negotiate the risk of sexual violence within party cultures. Her comments also show that these technologies are practiced at the level of the body. Cassie talks about being big, about not losing weight, as an attempt to avoid unwanted sexual experiences or attention. This shows that she has internalized a normative discourse about sexual violence; this discourse casts sexual attraction as a cause of sexual victimization, and thus “unattractive” women might have protection from sexual violence. Cassie’s words are also interesting because they reflect substantial awareness and self-reflection, indicating that these internalized technologies are deeply entrenched. Her words are also reflective of a kind of resignation, as she describes the failure of her attempts to minimize her vulnerability to unwanted sexual attention.

The first two categories of technologies discussed in this study, othering and an individual problem, show the powerful presence of individualism in technologies of gender. The individualism in these technologies prevents the women in this study from seeing sexual violence (particularly assault by a nonstranger) as something their communities or colleges should have responsibility for preventing. Othering, which involves attempting to distance themselves from both victims of sexual violence and the risk of sexual violence, as well as the emphasis on individuals themselves as responsible for preventing sexual violence, discourages women from conceptualizing sexual violence as a collective problem. This is among the most pernicious effects of internalized

technologies of gender and one reason why sexual violence prevention has proved to be so challenging.

Complicated Technology: Watching out for each other

Nearly every interview participant talks about watching out for each other as a strategy by which to negotiate the risk of sexual assault in party cultures. This strategy often takes one of two forms. In the first strategy, women watch the people to whom their friends talk at the party or bar, and monitor the duration of conversations. This is seen as a safety precaution that would help to keep friends from getting into what one participant describes as “a bad situation” with a an unfamiliar man. As Erin said, “I have really good friends that would stop you or stop each other from talking to some sketchy guy in the corner.” Very often, the women I interviewed report elaborate systems of communication with their roommates and friends. These systems enable them to signal the need for assistance in extricating themselves from a conversation at a party or bar. These signals included eye signals, minor head gestures, waves, and the very common grabbing of a friend’s hand and pulling while saying, “Come to the bathroom with me!”

The second form that watching out for each other involves is intervening if a friend appears to be leaving a party or bar with someone deemed inappropriate. This could include exboyfriends, partners in previous hook-ups, or strangers (often identified by participants as the worst possibility). Participants sometimes describe this strategy as the buddy system; people who go to the party together leave the party together. Participants acknowledge, however that exceptions are sometimes made if a woman meets someone she deems appropriate. Monica, a 19 year old black woman describes

this phenomenon, including the hierarchy of appropriate men with whom a friend might leave a party or bar:

Monica: We always had, like, a buddy system. We always made sure that we were like leaving with each other or knew who we were leaving with if it wasn't who we came with. Like if it was another friend or something.

Author: *Like what would happen if one of your friends like wanted to go home with somebody?*

Monica: Like that we didn't know?

Author: *Or, say both.*

Monica: Well, if it's someone we did know, we'd probably be OK with it, and let everyone else know like so and so's going with this person. But if we knew that that person was probably a bad idea, and they would regret it, we'd probably say something to them, like; "are you sure you know what you're doing?" Um. If it was a complete stranger, we would definitely not let it happen.

Monica's words demonstrate that the practice of watching out for friends involves the active surveillance of women's sexual choices. Watching out for each other is thus not only about negotiating risk, it is also about making women's choices and desires subject to the regulation of friends. It is the deployment of internalized technologies of gender in women's interactions with each other. In this case, the deployed technologies stem from cultural norms regarding what sexual behavior is not appropriate for women (going home from a party or bar with a stranger or someone deemed inappropriate. Further, it also serves as fodder for good stories (or gossip) in the debriefing of the previous night's activities. Interviewees report that these debriefings with friends are common.

In this article, watching out for each other is analyzed as a preventive strategy in which the effects of friendship and of belonging to a group limit the

range of individual options. Both Monica and Erin suggest that friends who watch out for each other are in a position to determine with whom friends should talk, spend time, and go home. This strategy of avoiding risk may prevent women from developing friendships or flirtations with people unknown to their existing friends. This could be an important factor in the reproduction of racial and ethnic status hierarchies as friendship networks are notoriously racially and ethnically segregated (Hartup 1996; Quillan and Campbell 2003; Hamm, Brown and Heck, 2005). Unclear from these interviews is whether and the extent to which watching out for each other redirects class and race anxiety into vigilance against sexual violence, or vice versa. Prevailing biases may influence which individuals the participants identify as sexually threatening or off-limits. Such a tendency is suggested by the findings of Patti Guiffre and Christine Williams (1994) who consider the influence of such bias on sexual harassment in restaurants.

Although the focus in this article has been on technologies of gender as problematic mechanisms through which discourses and other social practices of power have disciplined and regulated women's lives, technologies of gender are productive as well. I asked a 22 year-old Asian American woman named Maya whether she and her friends talk about "being taken advantage of" (her language) when partying. She describes the buddy system as she and her friends practice it:

I mean, I think girls know, and like, usually if I go out with a group of girls, we'll almost be like, "Well, if you're in a situation like this, you know I'm going to" —

like we'll talk about it. Or "I've got your back if you need me." Or "just make some sort of signal at me if you don't feel comfortable, and I'll come and get some way to get you out of the situation." And just to know if we're gone too long, make sure you call up and say you're okay. Yeah. I mean, I guess it's definitely something as far as we always have some sort of buddy system or like a backup plan I guess — in case.

Maya describes situations in which women help and act as allies to each other. Such actions, deployed in women's relationships with each other may reflect an internalized technology of relational gender in which women are expected to care for those close to them. Maya's characterization of the strategy lacks the regulatory and disciplinary feel that surfaces in the comments of other participants. This suggests that h strategy is complex. Simultaneous and internally contradictory features function both as strengths and weakness.

At some level, watching out for each other reflects the participants' understanding that sexual violence is more than an individual problem. The participants demonstrate, at least implicitly, a collective sense of responsibility for each other, and prevention of sexual violence is understood to be (at least in part) the responsibility of the group of women who are watching out for each other. This space, produced through the deployment of shifting technologies of gender, allows for the possibility that college women may exercise agency, reconfiguring sexual violence as a collective problem. Furthermore, the strategy was mentioned by nearly every interviewee. This suggests that it is a common experience. Thus, building on this sense collective responsibility may enable women to imagine both the possibilities and challenges of constructing alliances with other women.

Conclusions and Implications for Prevention

The internalized technologies of gender that women deploy in their interaction with each other are problematic in many ways. Through the development of these technologies and their engagement with the strategies interviewees participate in reproducing the very gendered inequalities, structural features, and cultural forces that support sexual violence. Othering creates and perpetuates divisions and distrust among women. This distance increases the trauma of sexual violence (Schwartz and Leggett 1999). It also exacerbates the tendency to condemn some women as undeserving of respect regarding sexuality. By othering, women also construct barriers that prevent them from seeing other women as potential allies. Such barriers also prevent women from joining together to identify social and cultural causes of sexual violence or strategies to prevent it. The tendency to individualize responsibility for sexual violence prevention leads some women to participate in minimally effective or ineffective prevention strategies, such as carrying pepper spray when they walk home. Finally, watching out for each other is likely to be unsuccessful when women are drinking heavily or pursuing own agendas, whether sexual or social. The strategy also imposes regulation on women's sexuality and sexual choices. It demonstrates, however, that women understand the risk of sexual violence as a shared problem within some spaces and behaviors. In the context of existing campus-based sexual violence prevention programs, deconstructing the practice of watching out for each other, and building critically upon some of its foundational features, could encourage the development of a more complicated view of sexual violence. These efforts may also provide a venue in which small groups of women can find common cause and build alliances with each

other. This type of change strategy, similar to consciousness-raising, has a long and productive history within feminist movements (see, e.g., Marx Ferec and Hess 2000; Freedman 2002).

Through the interrogation of normative femininity as it operates among women, this study provides a new way to conceptualize constructions of gender and sexual violence, offering new possibilities for sexual violence prevention. In this article I show that traditional sex-role stereotypes and rape-supportive attitudes can be usefully reconceptualized as productive and disciplinary cultural discourses of power. For the participants in this study, these discourses function as internalized technologies of gender that partially reflect who they understand themselves to be. These discourses are part of their gendered identities, disciplining individual women from within themselves and helping to reproduce normative femininity (including related meanings about sexual violence) through women's interactions with each other. Thus, prevention programs that aim to alter individual attitudes, without addressing the power, complexity, and deep cultural entrenchment of the discourses behind these attitudes, are insufficient for preventing sexual violence. In addition, these prevention programs often neglect the elements of partying that are constitutive of women's gendered identity and produce pleasure. Such neglect further impedes the ability of campus-based programs to effectively prevent sexual violence.

Interrogating technologies of gender as they operate among women suggests several possibilities for innovation in sexual violence prevention. Sexual violence prevention programs on college campuses could incorporate activities that encourage

women to recognize the ways in which the discourses and technologies of gender impede women from finding common cause with each other. They might also help women to see their own roles in reproducing those discourses and technologies. One way to do this could be to use narratives about women's partying experiences to deconstruct normative femininity. Narratives might be developed from the sort of data upon which this article is based and might touch upon such discourses as: part of what it means to be feminine is to be catty; women are solely responsible for preventing sexual violence; and women's sexual desire is shameful. Program efforts might also build upon strengths that participants identify in discussions of prevention strategies. These processes of deconstructing internalized technologies of gender and exposing the mechanisms of social construction behind what appear to be naturally occurring phenomena (normative femininity) can create space for new possibilities. For example, they may enable participants to transform constructions of sexual violence and the cultural scaffolding that supports them.

Another possibility would be for prevention programs to organize and facilitate ongoing, small-group meetings in which college women comprehensively discuss the social practice of watching out for each other as a collective strategy for sexual violence prevention. Such meetings could help women to consciously identify sexual violence as more than an individual problem, and to see other women as sources of help and support for addressing this problem. They might also lead women to question both the role of universities in the continued high rates of sexual violence and the individualistic (rather than social or structural) approach to sexual violence prevention. These

prevention strategies have great potential. Recognizing the structural and sociocultural forces that support sexual violence, as well as the roles that individual women play in supporting these forces (e.g., by victim-blaming and othering) can be important. Such recognition can provide agency, empowerment, and collective effort for change.

Examining sexual violence prevention strategies through the theoretical lens of internalized technologies of gender offers a complex understanding of women's behavior, heteronormative femininity, and gendered subjectivities, revealing both the regulatory and productive aspects of these internalized technologies. Such a use of this lens has important theoretical implications for future scholarship on the construction and reproduction of gender and sexuality, as well as for improved sexual violence prevention.

Several limitations of this study should be taken into consideration. The data for this study were drawn from a small purposive sample at one university in the Midwestern United States. Thus, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other contexts. In addition, participants were asked only about their experiences with party culture, and not about sexual violence, or gender relations more broadly. Data gathered from non-drinkers, women who do not participate in party culture, and women of different racial and ethnic identity, or sexual orientation might yield different results.

This study could be expanded in at least three ways. Future efforts might attempt to interrogate the internalized technologies of class, race, and ethnicity as well as the interaction of them with gender and sexuality. Research also might explore internalized technologies of gender among men. Finally, future efforts might build upon

this study by exploring the technologies of gender deployed in other spheres and social practices. This exploration could expand our understanding of gender and sexuality. Further research in these areas would undoubtedly complicate, and hopefully improve, understandings of the complex relationships among gender, race, sexuality, sexual violence, and sexual violence prevention.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics (*N* = 31)

Characteristic	N
Age:	
19	5
20	8
21	8
22	8
23	1
24	1
Race:	
Asian or Asian American	11
Black or African-American	2
White	18
Religion:	
Agnostic	1
Catholic	3
Christian	8
Jewish	6
Hindu	2
None or NA	11
First began drinking:	
10 th grade or age 16	15
Late high school	6
1 st year in college	10
Pan-Hellenic sorority:	
Yes	4
No	27
Household income:	
\$25,000–\$49,999	2
\$50,000–\$74,999	4
\$75,000–\$99,999	2
\$100,000–\$149,000	7
\$150,000–\$199,999	4
\$200,000–\$299,999	5
\$300,000+	3
Not sure	4
Mother's education:	
High school	3
Some college or associate's degree	2
Bachelor's degree	16
Graduate or professional degree	10
Father's education:	
High school	2
Some college or associate's degree	2
Bachelor's degree	8
Graduate or professional degree	17
NA	2

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Chapter Six Conclusions and Implications

The goal of this dissertation has been to explore the social practices and intersections of gender, race, identity, heavy drinking and heterosexuality (including sexual violence or coercion) in the context of campus partying. Individually, each of these topics has received a great deal of scholarly and applied attention. However, neither academics nor practitioners have fully engaged with either the simultaneous occurrence of these phenomena, nor the meanings that are co-constructed through their interactions with each other. This dissertation addresses these gaps by applying a feminist sociological lens to analysis of qualitative data on the experiences of heavy-drinking white and Asian American students that occur at these intersections. By bringing insights from these disparate fields into conversation with each other over experiences that occur at their intersections, this dissertation contributes to both scholarship and professional practice regarding gender, race, alcohol use, and heterosexuality and sexual violence or coercion.

The four empirical chapters in this dissertation each explore and foreground a different combination of these intersections. In chapter two I focus analysis on the importance of partying to the participants in this study. I find that partying is an

organizing force in their social lives that provides a source of fun and friendship, of meaning and belonging, and of both individual and group identity. The description and discussion of partying that I provide in this chapter provides context for the remainder of the dissertation.

In chapter three I explore racial, cultural, and gender variations in students' experience of the relationship between alcohol use and heterosexuality. I find that the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior is both racialized and gendered. Hooking-up is perceived by students to be far less common in Asian American party cultures than in white party cultures, despite reports of similar levels of alcohol consumption. Additionally, women and men report different experiences of their expectations, interactions and consequences of heterosexual interaction while partying. These results point to the socially constructed nature of the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior.

The relationship between heterosexual behavior and heavy-drinking is also central to chapter four. In this chapter I examine students' understandings of the processes of heterosexual interaction, including communication of sexual interest and consent, while drinking heavily. Results show that gender matters in this context, as men's and women's expectations about how sexual interest and consent are communicated differ. These gender differences, as well as difficulty in perceiving the extent of intoxication, is part of what leads to the existence of multiple "gray areas" and opportunities for miscommunication of sexual interest and consent, as well as gray areas in who should be attributed with blame for sexual assault. Results also show that,

contrary to a primary message from much campus-based sexual violence prevention, heavy-drinking men and women believe that they can, and do, consent to sex while they are drinking heavily. However, they also believe that heavy drinking is one major pathway to sexual assault or, as they would say, being “taken advantage of” sexually. This empirical analysis of the complexities and “gray areas” of sexual communication and consent while drinking extend existing feminist and sociological theorizing on sexual violence, sexual agency, and sexual exploitation.

The operations of gender, specifically femininity, in how women negotiate the risk of sexual violence while partying are the focus of the final data chapter. Using theoretical insights inspired by Foucault’s theory of technologies of power to analyze data from a subsample of women only, I show that women deploy technologies of gender in their interactions with other heavy-drinking women to feel safe from the risk of sexual violence. These included conceptualizing sexual violence prevention as the sole responsibility of women, watching out for each other while drinking, and “othering” other women by labeling them as “slutty.” This final strategy served the purpose of distancing participants from women who participated in the same partying and heavy drinking that participants themselves did, but who participants believed put themselves at risk through their “out of control” drinking and “general slutiness.”

Implications and Considerations for Social Work Practice

Several themes run through these results. They can be seen most clearly through synthesis of findings across the empirical chapters, and deserve analytical attention not

possible in structure of those chapters. In the following pages I discuss these themes, as well as the considerations they offer for research and practice.

Among the most robust findings of this dissertation and one that is important for all four empirical chapters, is that **partying is an important and productive social practice**. Partying, among the heavy-drinking white and Asian American men and women I interviewed, was a defining practice of their social lives. Partying organized who students knew, who their friends were, what they talked about, and how they spent their time.

In addition to serving this organizing function, partying is important to students because of what they gain from it. Through active engagement in the social practice of partying, and the community of practice organized around it (Egert, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) participants had fun. When asked why they drank, and why they believed other college students drank and partied, absolutely every single participant replied that they drink and party because it is fun. Fun, this research suggests, is a highly motivating force for people. Although academic and social workers alike have a long history of doing so (cf. Fine, 1991) there is little value to social work in pathologizing fun per se, nor in playing the role of, for lack of a better term, the “fun police.” The **importance of fun in peoples’ lives is a reality that social work should consider**, and perhaps put a greater emphasis on across the field. Further, although fun was clearly an important element of partying for students, how students define fun and what individual and cultural meanings they construct and operate from, are under-

explored. Social work practitioners might serve their clients well by actively listening for what fun means in the lives of clients and their communities.

The pleasure of partying, for students, resulted from a number of sources. For example, students reported feeling an imperative to party and drink heavily in college that was shaped by popular media images and cultural discourses about the centrality of partying to the college experience. As such, part of the pleasure produced through partying was a result of meeting expectations they had for themselves, for what they thought college students should be doing, and generally for their experience of college. It is widely acknowledged among participants in this project, and the larger culture, that partying is sexualized. For many participants, going out and **partying offers a socially sanctioned space where it is acceptable to express sexuality**, to construct a sexualized appearance, to interact with others in a flirtatious and sexualized manner, and to seek out sexual activity.

Generalized “fun” and sexuality were both regularly mentioned by students as something they gained through partying, and reason why they enjoyed partying. Another very common reason that students gave for parting was that it offered them the opportunity to meet people, to make friends, and to spend time, or “bond” with their existing friends. It offered them a space and a mechanism for making, maintaining, and strengthening relationships with friends and peers. Partying provides students with **a sense of cohesiveness with friends and peers, a sense of community, and a sense of belonging**. As such, partying is a practice through which participants come to understand themselves and others.

Partying produces identity and belonging. It provides a space for social and sexual interaction, for fun, and for making, maintaining, and strengthening relationships with friends and peers. While the participants in this study are all heavy drinkers and their experiences should not be over-generalized, the value of these elements, identity, belonging, fun, friendship, cannot be overstated. They are highly important to participants' lives. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the social context of college where they are away from home and previous norms, and the developmental stage of emerging adulthood where risk taking, identity exploration, sexuality, and peer relationships are crucial issues. While certainly partying is not the only vehicle or mechanism that produces fun, belonging, peer relationships, and identity, it is one that is both culturally normative and readily available for college students who are seeking out such experiences and outcomes.

In their discussion of motivational interviewing as an intervention with college students who have problems with alcohol, Baer and Peterson write "Many adolescents and young adults may come to the attention of a health care provider because of substance use but have personal goals, and even concerns, about *quite different issues* (e.g., peer relations or sexuality), (2002:329, emphasis mine). The results of this dissertation show that peer relations and sexuality are not "quite different issues" from substance use. In fact, peer relations and sexuality are central to the experience of substance use for the adolescents and young adults who participated in this study. Thus, **considering the intersections of substance use, peer relationships, and sexuality, may be very important for effective social work practice, prevention or intervention with**

these issues. For example, if, as this research suggests, the primary purpose of partying for many students is not drinking per se, but rather the opportunity for exploring/solidifying peer relationships and sexuality, then social work might **consider developing alternative activities for students that could provide access to peer relationships and sexuality without requiring risky drinking.** This might be particularly successful if these alternative activities incorporated physical activity that might engage the sensation-seeking interests (perhaps through something like rock climbing, or group-level physical competitions such as those on “Survivor” or other “extreme” reality television shows) and took place late on weekend nights.

In the process of producing fun, belonging, peer relationships and identity, **partying also produces – or reproduces – existing power relations and conceptions of race, gender and sexuality.** For example, one of the mechanisms through which peer relationships are strengthened is bonding over enacting heterosexuality. For both men and women this takes the form of talking with friends about who they might see and/or hook-up with while partying. It also takes the form of participating in drinking stories the morning after partying, when friends recount what happened the previous evening and routinely discuss which people they saw talking to each other, going home together, etc. Being “part of the story” that sounds a group’s experience of partying is both one way to solidify belonging in a friendship group, and one way to reproduce normative power relations and identities of gender and sexuality.

Another mechanism through which existing power relations around gender and sexuality are reproduced is through men’s sexual exploitation or coercion of women

who have been drinking heavily. Many participants, including women, described partying as a site where they could express sexual agency. However, they also described it as a site where heterosexual exploitation or being sexually “taken advantage” of was likely. This is but one of many instances through this dissertation where **simultaneous contradictions** such as this can be seen. It can also be seen in the contradictions more broadly around partying, as partying is at once both productive (as described above) and potentially destructive, as the heavy drinking of partying can be harmful to one’s own physical and mental health, to ones ‘ relationships with others, and to one’s own personal and academic or professional goals. **The existence of these simultaneous contradictions is something that may be important for social work practice to recognize and incorporate at many levels of intervention.**

Conceptually similar to the simultaneous contradictions that are at work in the space where sexuality and alcohol overlap are what participants described as the “gray areas” around sexual consent, and around responsibility for sexual coercion or violence. Participants in this study described uncertainty that sexual communication while drinking was always clear, or always heard. Power and privilege were important to these understandings, as men and women reported different understandings of how sexual interest and consent were communicated. However, both men and women described circumstances in which they believed sexual interest and consent were not clear, such as when it was difficult to determine the intoxication level of an individual expressing sexual interest. **Social work in sensitive and politically charged areas such as sexual health and sexual violence should be open to expressions and understandings of “gray**

areas” and willing to engage with the practical and ideological ambiguity they might raise.

Finally, the results of this dissertation suggest the **value of increasing social work attention to emerging adults, and more specifically to college students.** Likely due to the relative privilege of college students, professional and ethical commitments to the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, and limited resources at every stage, social work has remained relatively unconcerned with issues concerning college students. However, as the results of this and much other research shows, college students do not live in a protected bubble in which they are isolated from harm or struggle. Many of them might benefit from the increased attention of social work.

Additionally, I suggest that the **efforts of macro level social work to enact progressive social change might benefit from increased engagement with college students.** Traditionally in the college students in the U.S. have been very active in social movements. This potential still exists, and in some cases has been mobilized. The activist energies of college students, even those who are heavy drinkers and participants in party culture, are a resource with which community organizers and advocates should consider re-engaging on a broad scale.

Implications and Considerations for Social Work Education

The results of this dissertation offer important considerations for social work education, particularly in the areas of power and privilege and of sexuality. This dissertation studied frequent heavy episodic drinking, a social practice that is often highly stigmatized and illegal. However, the socio-economic privilege of participants, as

well as the cultural context of college, largely insulated participants from the stigma and shame often associated with heavy substance use. That individuals who experience a fair measure of privilege are then protected from cultural judgments about their behavior (such as heavy drinking) is an important lesson for social work students.

Research on partying, such as that of this dissertation, provides social work students (and others) with rich narratives for exploring the interworkings of power and privilege at many levels. While issues of power are not foreign to the social work curriculum, they often focus on the forms of oppression that clients experience and that perpetuate social injustice. Work such as that of this dissertation add to that by also analyzing how privilege operates in an everyday context such as campus partying. Thus, studying the results of this dissertation, and work like it, could provide social work students with an opportunity to see the socially constructed nature of the cultural discourses around substance abuse, and an expanded understanding of power and privilege. These would be valuable additions to the social work curriculum.

Additionally, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of sexuality in the peer culture of emerging adults and individuals' lives. There is good reason to believe that sexuality is also important for individuals, families, and communities at other stages of life as well. Social work education would be strengthened by paying greater attention to the multiple experiences of human sexuality. In recent years social work has begun to recognize the importance of LGBT identity and oppression. This is very important, but it does not detract from the continued absence of discussion about human sexuality as an embodied, powerful, sexual experience. Sexuality is important in people's lives. The

social work curriculum should both acknowledge that and teach students how to incorporate it into their practice with individuals and communities.

Limitation and Implications for future research

The design of this qualitative study has many strengths, as well as some limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample includes both men and women – something which remains surprisingly uncommon in studies of sexuality and sexual violence. The sample also includes a sizeable number of Asian American men and women, a group whose experiences with alcohol use, sexual behavior, and sexual violence have been underexplored. The entire sample was drawn of undergraduate students at the University of Michigan who self-identified as heavy episodic drinkers. The sample is unique in these ways. It is unique in other ways of which I am unaware. The results of this study have important contributions to make, but it would be inappropriate to make global recommendations for prevention and intervention based solely on them. For example, the sample upon which this study draws is entirely composed of frequent episodic drinkers. The experiences and perspectives they describe may or may not be similar to those of non-frequent drinkers or of college students more broadly. Thus, the results of this analysis offer knowledge to be considered for application to sexual violence and substance abuse prevention and intervention that is most useful when combined with knowledge about the particular cultural contexts in question.

Future research could build upon the results of this dissertation in many ways. This project was largely exploratory. While I did approach the study with some specific questions in mind, and some ideas of what I might find based on previous research and professional experience, many of the results I presented here grew out of inductive themes that emerged from the data. As such, participants were not necessarily or specifically asked about some of the most interesting results of empirical articles which form the basis of this dissertation. For example, future research should consider more specific exploration of how race and culture matter to students' experiences of partying, and how partying matters to students experiences of race and culture. The results presented here on the racialized meanings of the relationship between heavy drinking and hooking up only begin to scratch the surface of what might be a fruitful line of research and pathway to greater understanding of the social constructions and meanings of race and culture.

The importance of identity and the project of self-identity construction is another theme that emerged through analysis of data in this study without an intentional and deliberate focus on it during data collection. The construction of partying as an identity deserves more purposeful and deliberate study. If I had been intentionally exploring issues of identity construction, and the relationship of social practices such as partying to identity construction, I would have asked additional questions intended to more specifically explicate identity processes. Future research would benefit from exploring the relationships between social practices and identity

construction more purposefully, and from investigation of these issues with different populations and non-campus contexts.

The processes and projects of self-identity construction in general deserve fuller exploration. It would be interesting for future research to explore the role of self-identity work in relation to other social practices under investigation in this dissertation, such as sexual activity and patterns of communication regarding sexual interest and consent. Are certain types of heterosexual interactions, certain styles of communicating sexual interest, or refusing sexual consent also identity-constitutive social practices? If so, how might that be relevant for prevention and intervention? This too, is a line of research with a great deal of potential for theory development and practical application. Another important theme of this dissertation is the productive component of partying. Partying, as I have repeatedly shown, is important to the participants in this project. This is true in part because of what students “get” out of partying. The results of this research have suggested some things that students gain from participation in partying (for example, fun, pleasure at meeting expectations about what college students “should” be doing, a space to express sexuality, a place to find sexual interaction, a mechanism for solidifying and maintaining friendships.) However, as of yet we have an incomplete understanding of what it is that partying produces for students, what it is that they “get” out of partying. We have a sense of what we do know, but we do not know what we do not know about what students understand themselves to gain from partying. Future research would benefit from greater exploration of the productive value of partying for students. Further, future research would benefit from comparing

what college students understand themselves to gain from partying, and what other groups of heavy-drinking people who participate in partying understand themselves to gain from partying. For example, what do high school student gain from heavy drinking and partying? What about restaurant workers, investment bankers, or stay-at-home parents? .A more complete understanding of what frequent heavy drinkers gain from drinking might be very useful in designing more effective, and harm reductive, substance abuse prevention and intervention.

Further exploration of these issues would allow for further theorizing about a topic heretofore vastly underexplored by social work and social science – Fun. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, “fun” was identified by participants as a major reason why they participated in partying, and as one of the greatest benefits of partying. And yet we have devoted little serious scholarly attention to the practice and product of “fun.” Empirical exploration of how individuals understand “fun”, what they mean by fun, what they do for fun, and what they think having fun provides them, is sorely needed. A more comprehensive understanding of the constitutive elements of fun, particularly if they could be disentangled from risky and/or illegal behavior, could be very useful in substance abuse prevention and intervention. Further, it would be interesting to explore how and if, as this research suggests, the social practices that produce fun may be important mechanisms for the reproduction of gender, race, sexuality, power, and privilege.

Another related and important theme, perhaps *the* most important one, is the relationship between the social practices of partying and heavy drinking and

heterosexual activity. The results of this dissertation have described some aspects of the relationship between heavy drinking/partying and heterosexual activity. In the following pages I offer, in some detail, two specific possibilities for future research to expand these results.

Possible future project: Exploring the separation of the fields

One specific possibility for future research would be to explore why sexual health, sexual violence and substance abuse programs do not work together or offer programs addressing the intersections of these issues. The results of the current research show the value and importance of understanding sexual violence, sexual behavior, and substance use through their intersections with each other. These issues are experienced together in people's lives. Yet they are not often addressed together in prevention and intervention. Why not? Future research should explore why programs (specifically the people who run, fund, and staff programs) that address these issues do not work together, or do not work on the issues together. What structural barriers exist to this? What material barriers? What ideological barriers? The results of the current project have suggested the importance of identity to individual and group experiences of heavy drinking and partying. Results have suggested that participants engage in specific social practices (such as heavy drinking) and specific boundary drawing (such as limiting social circles to friends and acquaintances who are also heavy drinkers, e.g, "I don't know anyone who doesn't drink.") in part because these are identity-constitutive acts. Does this process also occur at the program level? Do programs also engage in certain social practices (such as rejecting the possibility of consensual sex while drinking heavily) and

certain boundary drawing (such as one between *their* program that focuses on victim recovery from sexual assault and *those* “other” programs that focus on victims’ substance abuse concerns) in part because these practices are constitutive of the program identity? If so, what might calling attention to those identity-projects do to programs, and to the work in which they might be willing to engage?

Future research could explore existing barriers to sexual health, sexual violence, and substance abuse programs working together through a multi-method design. This might include one-on-one interviews with program staff, administrators and funders, surveys, one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, and comprehensive organizational analysis of all three types of programs. The issues encouraging and impeding development of coordinated efforts to address the intersections sexual violence, sexual health, and substance use are likely dependent on both general and contextually specific factors. Therefore, a multiple case study design, in which researchers would work with programs to collect data in several locations (all of which housed three distinct programs, one targeted to sexual health, one targeted to sexual violence, and another targeted to substance abuse) might be ideal.

From a practical perspective, the results from such a study might provide information that could help programs work together to more effectively address sexual health, sexual violence, substance abuse, and their intersections. Results could also expand understandings of the construction and reproduction of organizational identity, and more specifically of social movement organization (Hyde, 2000; Zald & Ash, 1965) identity. Finally, results would likely contribute to the scholarship on the interconnected

social constructions of race, gender, sexuality and identity by further explicating their operations and co-constructions with work on sexual health, sexual violence and substance abuse, and at the organizational (in addition to individual) level.

Possible future project: Coordinated intervention research

Another possible research project that expands on this dissertation would be an intervention research study to test the effectiveness of a harm reduction intervention using motivational interviewing to explicitly focus on heavy drinking and sexual behavior/sexual violence among college students. Motivational interviewing has been shown to be highly effective in reducing high-risk drinking among college students (c.f., Baer, Kivlaahan, Blume, McKnight & Marlatt, 2001). It would be interesting to explore its potential for addressing concerns about sexual risk-taking in the same context.

For purposes of investigation, the intervention would involve participants meeting with a trained facilitator for two, one-two hour sessions approximately two weeks apart, and receiving personalized feed-back regarding patterns of alcohol use and sexual behavior at the second session. One goal of this study would be to explore whether addressing sexual behavior/sexual violence simultaneously with heavy drinking is effective in reducing those behaviors and the negative consequences associated with them. Ideally, this intervention project would compare the effect of receiving the enhance alcohol and sexual violence intervention to both the effect of an alcohol-only intervention (such as BASICS, described in chapter two) and the effect of receiving no intervention.

In addition to exploring these questions about intervention effectiveness, this project could also explore several questions about the process of the intervention – including how social identities and inequalities might be constructed, reproduced and/or transformed with it. I would also be interested in exploring what happens in the process of the intervention, as well as what be working about it, and how it might work differently for different people based on a range of identity dimensions and social locations. Exploring all of these questions would require multiple methods of data collection, including pre and post-testing for at least one year after the intervention, qualitative interviews assessing both experiences with and effectiveness of the intervention approximately two months post-intervention, and taping all intervention sessions for analysis of content and process. The results of this proposed research project would be likely be useful in designing future coordinated substance abuse and sexual violence prevention and intervention, and targeting such efforts most appropriately. As with the earlier proposed research project, results from this proposed project might increase, and complicate, our understandings of the co-constructions and intersections of heavy drinking, gender, race, heterosexuality, and sexual violence.

Final Thoughts

The results of this dissertation, the implications it offers for social work education and practice, and the suggestions it makes for future research are complicated and messy. The topics under investigation here are complicated and messy on their own. Their multiple intersections with each other only add to the messiness and complexities. Perhaps the most valuable implication of this dissertation is that

messiness and complexities are unavoidable. Engagement with them is respectful of the complicated and messy nature of our social world and individuals' experiences in the world, and it is crucial for rigorous scholarship and effective practice.

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