Toward a More Complete Understanding of Reactions to Hooking Up Among College Women

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Hooking up, a relatively common behavior among young adults, refers to a casual sexual encounter, ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse, without an expectation of ongoing physical encounters or relational commitment. Reactions to hooking up have examined psychosocial outcomes as a proxy for specific reactions. The present study examined the reactions of 190 college women, with a specific focus on the effect of hooking up on their social/peer network, their sexual/romantic sense of self, and their academic performance. Results demonstrated large positive effects for sexual/romantic reactions and social/academic engagement reactions in comparison with negative personal reactions. In addition, higher ratings of anxious attachment, loneliness, and relational/intimacy sex motives were related to less positive reactions, highlighting the importance of attachment and motivations behind hookup experiences. Implications for educational practice and future research are offered.

Hooking up refers to a range of physical intimacies, from kissing to intercourse that occur infrequently or once and where the partners do not necessarily expect future physical encounters or a committed relationship (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Hooking up is common among young adults (e.g., 50% to 85%; Owen et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000), and a variety of predictors have been identified that differentiate between those who report...
hooking up and those who do not, such as alcohol use, casual sex attitudes, extroversion, loneliness, religiosity, and insecure attachment (e.g., Burdette, Ellison, Hill, & Glenn, 2009; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Gentzler & Kurns, 2004; Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011). However, less is known about young adults’ reactions to hooking up, and consequently they are the focus of the present study.

Two approaches examine reactions to hooking up. In the first, researchers have examined differences in psychological functioning (e.g., depressive symptoms, self-esteem) between young adults who have hooked up and those who have not. For example, Fielder and Carey (2010a) found that women who engaged in penetrative hookups reported more depressive symptoms as compared with women who did not. Although this approach has advantages, it does not account for selection effects (or other third variable effects); specifically young adults who decide to hook up may have other characteristics that predispose them to have better or worse mental health. Thus, hooking up may be a part of a larger constellation of risk factors for negative mental health outcomes (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2003).

The second approach assesses directly young adults’ reactions to hooking up (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Lewis, Granato, Blayney, Lostutter, & Kilmer, 2011; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). For example, Owen and colleagues (2010) categorized men and women on the basis of their emotional reactions to hooking up and found that 48.7% of women endorsed only negative emotional reactions as compared with 26.0% of men. Other researchers using continuous rating scales (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010b; Lewis et al., 2011; Owen & Fincham, 2011) have found that men and women reported more positive than negative emotions to hooking up; however, men typically reported hooking up to be more positive and less negative as compared with women (Lewis et al., 2011; Owen & Fincham, 2011).

To date, most research on young adults’ reactions to hooking up has centered on emotional reactions. Although young adults’ emotional reactions to hooking up are important, there are also other developmentally salient outcomes that may relate to the hookup experience. Accordingly, we examine how young adults perceive that hooking up affects normative developmental tasks for young adults: (a) social/peer network, (b) sexual/romantic sense of self, and (c) academic performance (Beyers & Goossens, 2002; Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2005).

HOOKING UP REACTIONS: SOCIAL/PEER NETWORKS

Lewis and colleagues (2011) found that approximately 78% of young adults hook up with a friend or an acquaintance; thus, there may be a shift in the ways the members of the social network relate to one another. In a similar vein, hooking up can influence feelings of social connection with others,
such feelings of loneliness (Owen, Fincham, & Moore, 2011). Given that
social/peer networks have been linked to engagement in college/university
activities, retention, and less psychological distress (Bai & Pan, 2009; Fried-
man & Mandel, 2009; Heckert et al., 2000), it is important to better understand
how young adults’ perceive that hooking up is associated with their feelings
of connectedness with their peers.

Hooking Up Reactions: Romantic and Sexual Sense of Self
Hooking up is one way that young adults can explore elements of romantic
relationships and their sexual sense of self. For example, some young adults
(65% of women and 45% of men) hook up with the hope of transitioning
into a committed relationship (Owen & Fincham, 2011; also see Eisenberg,
Ackard, Resnick, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009). Romantic and sexual explo-
ration is commonly reported as motivations for engaging in hookups (Glenn
& Marquardt, 2001; Hughes et al., 2005). Thus, the extent to which hooking
up is perceived to positively or negatively affect one’s romantic and sexual
sense of self is likely to be influenced by young adults’ relational schemas
and sexual motivations.

Attachment theory suggests that internal working models of rela-
tionships shape motivations for future romantic and casual relationships
(Gentzler & Kerns, 2004; Hazen & Shaver, 1998; Paul et al., 2000). Se-
cure attachment reflects comfort in close relationships whereas insecure at-
tachment reflects two facets, either anxiety about becoming close to others
or the avoidance of close relationships altogether. In theory, young adults
with more anxious attachment may be more likely to have negative sexual/romantic reactions to hooking up because they typically have relational
schemas that predispose them toward investment in a relationship while
heightening their fear of abandonment by their romantic partners (Hazen &
Shaver, 1998).

In the sex-motives literature, Cooper and colleagues (Cooper, Barber,
Zhao Yang, & Talley, 2011; Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998) has pro-
posed a two-dimensional model: approach vs. avoidance and self vs. social.
These two dimensions produce four prototypical sexual motives: (a) self-
affirmation (avoidance/self), which reflects engaging in a hookup to escape
negative emotions and avoid threats to self-esteem; (b) self-enhancement
(approach/self) or the desire to hook up for sexual gratification; (c) partner-
approval (avoidance/social), which reflects the desire to seek approval or
minimize negative reactions of the hookup partner; and (d) relational inti-
miticy (approach/social) or the hope to develop a stronger intimate con-
nection with the hookup partner (Cooper et al., 1998). These motives have
been associated with decisions to engage in casual sex encounters (see
Cooper et al., 2011) and might influence the ways in which hooking up
affects young adults' sexual sense of self. We expected young adults who endorse more self-affirmation, partner approval, and relational intimacy sexual motives might exhibit less positive sexual/relational hooking up reactions, given that hooking up typically does not involve clear communication between partners about the relational connection or longer term committed relationships (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Owen & Fincham, in press).

Hooking-Up Reactions: Academic Performance

There are two primary reasons to examine the relation between hooking up and academic functioning. Approximately 40% of college students report being so distressed that it interferes with their academic functioning (American College Health Association, 2007) and hooking up has been associated with psychological distress, especially for women (Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Grello et al., 2003; Owen et al., 2010). Thus, it is possible that negative reactions to hooking may affect psychological well-being and academic performance. Alternatively, some young adults may have entered the hookup with the hope of developing a deeper relational connection (i.e., relational intimacy sex motives; Owen & Fincham, 2011). Thus, young adults who report more relational sexual motives might be more likely to report more interference in academic performance when reporting their reactions to hooking up. Regardless of the frame of mind—distress or hope for deeper connection—there may be a level of distraction or disruption to academic behavior.

Across studies, alcohol use and hookups are ubiquitously entangled. Owen and Fincham (2011) found that more alcohol use was associated with fewer positive and more negative emotional reactions to hooking up; suggesting that alcohol use during the hookup does not provide an excuse function but may fuel more regret after the hookup. For reactions to hooking up related to social/peer networks, romantic/sexual sense of self, and academic performance, it is likely that alcohol use plays a role in concert with young adults' attachment styles or sex motives (Cooper et al., 2011). For example, alcohol use during a hookup may relate to a desire for pleasing a partner or increase the likelihood of gratifying their sexual needs. Consequently, it is important to understand the unique effects of sex motives and attachment on reactions to hooking up beyond what is typically associated with alcohol induced states.

This study examines women’s reactions to hooking up; women are more likely to have negative emotional reactions compared with men (e.g., Lewis et al., 2011; Owen et al., 2010; Owen & Fincham, 2011), and women are at greater risk for contracting STIs (in heterosexual casual sex encounters) as compared with men (Mayaud & Mabey, 2004; Padian, 1997). Many of the risk factors for engaging in hooking up are more robust for women. For example, alcohol use is more likely to influence women’s negotiation and decision-making processes as compared with men (Owen & Fincham,
Reactions to Hooking Up

2011b). For example, alcohol use reduces the likelihood of condom use when women hook up (Scott-Sheldon, Huedo-Medina, Warren, Johnson, Carey, 2011). These data highlight potential gender inequities in the larger society and can also influence hookups.

The Present Study

We expected young adults’ perceptions that hooking up positively affected their social/peer networks to report less loneliness and fewer depressive symptoms. We anticipated young adults who endorsed more self-affirmation, partner approval, and relational intimacy sexual motives and more anxious attachment to exhibit less positive sexual/relational reactions to hooking up. We also posited that young adults who report that hooking up negatively affected their academic performance to endorse more depressive symptoms and more relational intimacy sexual motives. Last, we expected that alcohol use would be negatively associated with young adults’ perception that hooking up affected their social/peer networks, romantic/sexual sense of self, and academic performance.

METHOD

Participants

We recruited 400 female participants, of which 190 (47.5%) reported hooking up in the past year. Our sample comprised these 190 college women, of which 74 were freshmen, 69 were sophomores, 34 were juniors, and 13 were seniors. Their average age was 19.54 years ($SD = 2.21$). Regarding race/ethnicity, 129 identified as White, 5 identified as Asian American, 18 identified as Black, 22 Hispanic, and 13 identified as multiethnic/racial, and 3 did not respond. To ensure participants’ responses were valid we included screener items throughout the study (e.g., “Relationships are based on trust, to ensure that we can trust your responses please check the Agree box”). Participants who did not complete these items accurately were screened from the final sample.

Measures

SOCIAL, ACADEMIC, ROMANTIC, AND SEXUAL HOOKING UP REACTIONS SCALE (SARS)

Developed for the present study, this measure initially comprised 24 items reflecting hooking up outcomes that may positively or negatively influence social ($n = 8$), academic ($n = 8$), and sexual/romantic relationships ($n = 8$). We purposely developed items that were worded positively and negatively to help address the range of potential reactions. After consulting with two content experts (i.e., those who have published studies examining hooking
TABLE 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Social, Academic, Romantic, and Sexual Hooking Up Reactions Scale (SARS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I have gained more confidence about sex (and related behaviors) based on this hookup.</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. This hookup has taught me a lot about my sexual comfort with partners.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. This hookup has strengthened my commitment to be in an exclusive romantic relationship (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend).</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. This hookup helped me be more comfortable talking about sex.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. This hookup taught me important things about myself that will benefit me in future romantic relationships (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. This hookup has negatively impacted relationship with my friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My school work has been negatively impacted as a result of this hookup.</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. This hookup made me feel worse about my ability to be in romantic relationships (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend).</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I feel distracted in class as a result of this hookup.</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Relationship with my friends have become strained due to this hookup.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<td>11. I question my ability to find a suitable partner for a romantic relationship (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend) after this hookup.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I feel less sure about myself sexually speaking after this hookup.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. My friends approve of me for hooking up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I feel more connected with my friends as a result of this hookup.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I have performed better in my classes after this hookup.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I feel more engaged in my school work after this hookup.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alphas</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. F1 = SARS-Sexual/Romantic Reactions; F2 = SARS-Negative Reactions; F3 = SARS-Social/Academic Engagement.

We excluded or reworded 12 items, resulting in 16 items. The items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items are listed in Table 1 and the psychometrics of the scale is presented in the results section.

SEX MOTIVES SCALE (COOPER ET AL., 1998)

We used four subscales of the Sex Motives Scale, which was constructed to reflect the two motivational dimensions described above. All of the items had the same stem: "Now thinking about your sexual experience with your
most recent hookup partner, to what extent did you engage in this experience to . . . “and were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). The first subscale reflected sexual motives regarding relational intimacy (α = .94), and an example is “. . . become more intimate with this person?” The second subscale reflects self-enhancement motives (α = .87). An example item is “. . . just for the thrill of it?” The third subscale reflects self-affirmation (α = .80) and an example item is “to make you feel more self-confident?” The fourth subscale reflects Partner Approval (α = .87) and an example item is “. . . so this person would not be mad at you?” Support for the psychometric properties of the Sex Motives Scale has been demonstrated in previous studies, such as differentiating between exclusive and casual sexual relationships for motives in college and community samples (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Sheldon et al., 2006).

EXPERIENCES IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIP SCALE-SHORT FORM (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007)

This scale used to assess participants’ attachment. Specifically, the scale has two subscales: anxiety and avoidance, with six items per subscale. The items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (definitely not like me) to 7 (definitely like me). Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, and Vogel (2007) reported support for the validity for this shorten measure through correlations with psychological well-being, loneliness, fear of intimacy, and comfort with self-disclosure measures. Cronbach’s alphas for the avoidance and anxiety subscales in the current sample were .86 and .75, respectively.

TYPE OF PHYSICAL INTIMACY

Participants endorsed the types of physical intimacy involved in their hookups. The response options were “kissing,” “petting,” “oral sex,” and “intercourse (vaginal, anal).” Participants were able to endorse more than one type of physical intimacy. On the basis of their responses, we coded penetrative hookups (hookup-penetrative) if the participants indicated “oral sex” or “intercourse” (n = 99; 52.1%) and nonpenetrative hookups (hookup-nonpenetrative) if the participants indicated “kissing” and/or “petting” only (n = 91; 47.9%). We used this variable as a control variable in the analyses.

LONELINESS

The University of California–Los Angeles Loneliness Scale is a commonly used measure to assess individuals’ perceptions of how lonely they feel (Russell, 1996). The eight-item version used required participants to make ratings on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The University of California–Los Angeles Loneliness Scale has demonstrated adequate reliability across samples and is commonly related to numerous indicators.
of psychological distress (e.g., depression, low self-esteem; see Vassar & Crosby, 2008). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .83.

**DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS**

The 10-item version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977) assessed depressive symptoms. The items are rated on a 4-point scale, with higher scores indicating more distress. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale has demonstrated adequate reliability and validity estimates in numerous studies (see Cole, Rabin, Smith, & Kaufman, 2004). Cronbach’s alpha in this study was .78.

**ALCOHOL USE**

We used two items to assess the degree to which the young adult and their hookup partner were intoxicated during the hookup:

- During your most recent hooking up experience, were you and/or your partner under the influence of a substance (e.g., alcohol)?
  - I was____ and My partner was____.

These items were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (not intoxicated) to 4 (very intoxicated). The correlation between these two items was high, \( r = .87 \), and we averaged the two items to create a composite score. Previous studies have identified that alcohol use before hooking up is more predictive of emotional reactions (Owen & Fincham, 2011). Accordingly, we opted to use this method to assess alcohol use as opposed to a measure of general alcohol use.

**Procedures**

Participants were recruited through an introductory course on families across the lifespan that fulfills a social studies requirement and therefore attracts students from across the university. Data were collected during the spring semester of 2012 at Florida State University. Students were offered multiple options to obtain extra credit for the class, one of which comprised the survey used in this study. Of the class, 98% decided to participate in the study. They completed informed consent and were told how to access the online survey. They were given a 5-day window in which to complete the survey. All procedures were approved by the university’s institutional review board.

**RESULTS**

To determine whether distinct reactions to hooking up emerge in social, romantic/sexual, and academic domains we conducted an exploratory
factor analysis, using principle axis extraction with oblique rotation for SARS
items. We retained items that loaded >.40 on a factor with cross loadings
no greater than .30 on other factors. A three-factor model emerged (see
Table 1) albeit one that differed slightly from what was predicted. Factor
1 accounted for 32.13% of the variance with items reflecting reactions to
sexual behaviors and romantic relationships (labeled sexual/romantic re-
actions). Factor 2 accounted for 10.60% of the variance, and the items
loading on this factor reflected a negative reaction about the hookup in
regard to academic, peer relationships, and efficacy in future romantic rela-
tionships (labeled negative personal reactions). The third factor accounted
for 4.81% of the variance and the items reflect increased engagement
within their social network and academics (labeled social/academic en-
gagement). Internal consistency estimates for the three factors ranged from
.70 to .84.

The means and standard deviations for the SARS variables in the study
are shown in Table 1. Participants reported a mean score on the SARS-
negative personal reactions of 1.93, suggesting that negative reactions to
hooking up were not common. For the other two SARS subscales, the mean
scores were closer to the midpoint of the scale (3.15 and 3.50). The dif-
ference between negative personal reactions and sexual/romantic reactions
\( (d = 0.82) \) was statistically significant \( (p < .001) \). Similarly, the difference
between negative personal reactions and social/academic engagement \( (d = 1.24) \)
were statistically significant \( (p < .001) \). In addition, there was a statis-
tically significant difference between social/academic engagement and sex-
ual/romantic reactions \( (p < .01, d = -0.40) \).

Next, we examined the bivariate correlations between the SARS sub-
scales and the other variables in the study. Because the subscales yielded by
the SARS did not conform exactly to what was expected, our predictions can-
not always be linked directly to the associations with other variables. Table 2
shows that negative personal reactions were positively associated with more
anxious attachment, alcohol use, depressive symptoms, and feelings of lone-
liness as well as the sex motives of relational intimacy, self-affirmation, and
partner approval. Given that negative personal reactions include reactions
regarding young adults’ social relationships, academic performance, and ro-
mantic relationships these associations are consistent with what is to be
expected. Social/academic engagement reactions were negatively associated
with anxious attachment and sex motives of relational intimacy and self-
affirmation. These results are consistent with our expectations; however,
we also anticipated that social/peer aspect of this subscale would result
in significant associations with loneliness and the academic aspects of this
scale would be associated with fewer depressive symptoms—but neither
expectation was supported by the data. Sexual/romantic reactions demon-
strated a negative association with anxious attachment, alcohol use, as well
as the sex motives of relational intimacy and self-affirmation. These results
are consistent with our original predictions.
**TABLE 2.** Bivariate Correlations With the Social, Academic, Romantic, Sexual Reactions Scale

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<th>9</th>
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<th>12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SARS-neg</td>
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<td>2. SARS-SR</td>
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<td>3. SARS-SA</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
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<td>4. HU-sex</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>5. Avoidant</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>6. Anxious</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
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<td>7. Depressive</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<td>8. Lonely</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Alcohol</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>10. Intimacy</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>.15</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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<td>-.08</td>
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<td>11. Enhance</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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<td>12. Self aff</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
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<td>13. Part apprvl</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.45**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. SARS = Social, Academic, Relational Reactions to Hooking Up Scale; SARS-neg = SARS-negative reactions; SARS-SR = SARS-sexual/romantic reactions; SARS-SA = SARS-social/academic engagement; HU-sex = hooking up sexual intimacy (coded 1 = oral/intercourse, 0 = kissing/petting); avoidant = avoidant attachment; anxious = Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form, anxious attachment; depressive = Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale, depressive symptoms; lonely = University of California–Los Angeles, Loneliness Scale; alcohol = alcohol use; intimacy = sex motives-intimacy; enhancement = sex motives-enhancement; self-aff = sex motives-self-affirmation; part apprvl = sex motives-partner approval.

*p < .05, **p < .001.
Reactions to Hooking Up

### TABLE 3. Linear Regression Models Predicting SARS Reactions to Hooking Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative reactions</th>
<th>Sexual/romantic reactions</th>
<th>Social/academic engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$b$ (SE) $\beta$</td>
<td>$b$ (SE) $\beta$</td>
<td>$b$ (SE) $\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious .13 (.06)</td>
<td>-.24 (.08) $-\ast$</td>
<td>-.16 (.06) $-\ast$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive .09 (.15)</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely .40 (.13)</td>
<td>.28 $\ast\ast$</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol .10 (.07)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy .09 (.07)</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.19 (.06) $-\ast\ast$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-aff .02 (.07)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.19 (.08) $-\ast\ast$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part apprvl .23 (.10)</td>
<td>.19 $\ast$</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** SARS = Social, Academic, Relational Reactions to Hooking Up Scale. Anxious = Experiences in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form, anxious attachment; depressive = Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale, depressive symptoms; lonely = University of California–Los Angeles, Loneliness Scale; alcohol = alcohol use; intimacy = sex motives-intimacy; self-aff = sex motives-self affirmation; part apprvl = sex motives-partner approval; HU-sex = hooking up sexual intimacy (coded 1 = oral/intercourse, 0 = kissing/petting). $\ast p < .05; \ast\ast p < .01; \ast\ast\ast p < .001.$

Although univariate associations with reactions to hooking up are interesting, it is important to examine them in a multivariate context. Significant bivariate correlations with the SARS factors were therefore used in three different regression equations where each SARS factor served as the outcome variable (see Table 3).

The model predicting negative personal reactions was statistically significant, $F(7, 182) = 9.93, p < .001,$ adjusted $R^2 = .25.$ Of the predictor variables, anxious attachment, feelings of loneliness, and sex motives–seeking partner approval were positively associated with negative reactions. The second equation predicting sexual/romantic reactions was also statistically significant, $F(7, 182) = 8.30, p < .001,$ adjusted $R^2 = .21.$ Anxious attachment, sex motives–intimacy, and sex motives–self-affirmation were negatively associated with young adults’ sexual/romantic reactions. The third regression predicting social/academic engagement reactions was statistically significant, $F(3, 184) = 9.85, p < .001,$ adjusted $R^2 = .12.$ Consistent with the previous model, anxious attachment, sex motives–intimacy, and sex motives–self-affirmation were negatively associated with social/academic engagement reactions.

**DISCUSSION**

Hooking up can influence several aspects of young adults’ lives, including their sense of self as sexual and romantic partners, social networks and academic performance. Although conceptually distinct these facets of young adults’ lives were interrelated at the empirical level. Young adults’ reactions
to hooking up reflected the degree to which they perceived: (a) increases in their awareness and comfort about sexual behaviors and interest in romantic relationships (sexual/romantic reactions), (b) enhancements with their social networks and academic performance (social/academic engagement), and (c) negative effects on their peer relationships, academic performance, and confidence about future romantic relationships (negative personal reactions).

Comparison of the three domains showed that young adults reported greater (large effect sizes) sexual/romantic reactions and social/academic engagement reactions as compared with negative personal reactions, which supports previous studies that have found that young adults report that hooking up results in more positive than negative emotional reactions (e.g., Lewis et al., 2011; Owen & Fincham, 2011). These three areas for hooking up reactions extend ways to understand how young adults’ perceive the benefits and costs to hooking up beyond emotional reactions to hooking up.

Hooking up can result in increased awareness of the sexual self, including confidence in talking about sex with sexual partners and comfort in sexual behavior as well as increased dedication toward and knowledge of future exclusive romantic relationships. These aspects may be important in navigating sexual encounters, such as discussing condom use (Serovich & Greene, 1997), as well as strengthening confidence in romantic relationships, which has been associated with higher relationship quality (Owen et al., 2012). Depending on how a hookup experience unfolds and the meaning and reactions individuals generate, they may become more or less at ease with sexual behaviors and their sense of a sexual self. For example, following a hookup experience, one might feel more confident in their sexual skills and may feel more comfortable with their sexuality ( AUTHORS blinded). In contrast, individuals who engage in a hookup may decide that they value more commitment and security in romantic relationships. Whether positive or negative, it seems that these experiences may shape views of self and expectations or desires in future relationships.

The degree to which these sexual/romantic reactions are positive or negative appears to be related to attachment styles and sexual motives. Specifically, young adults who reported more anxious attachment styles as well as sex motives of relational intimacy and self-affirmation were less likely to have positive sexual/romantic reactions to hooking up. In many ways, anxious attachment and these two sex motives share a theoretical commonality. That is, anxious attachment styles reflect a longing to be emotionally close with others while fearing abandonment and searching for ways to reduce this anxiety (Hazen & Shaver, 1998). Thus, relational intimacy sexual motives might reflect one approach to developing emotional connectedness with others. Simultaneously, self-affirmation sex motives reflect a sexual approach to help avoid negative consequences or likely fear of abandonment. Future research is needed to understand how these sexual motives and anxious attachment relate in the prediction of sexual/romantic reactions, because there was little...
statistical overlap between these concepts. Thus, the ways in which anxious attachment and sexual motives relate to hooking up is likely to explain different aspects of the experience.

Another interesting and underexplored aspect of casual sexual behaviors is the potential positive perceived influence on academic performance and peer relationships. Common within this developmental phase is a focus on acceptance within peer groups and success in academics (Beyers & Goossens, 2002). Although we expected that academics and social networks would not converge, we found that one aspect of young adults' reactions to hooking up includes their perception that their social network and academic performance were enhanced after the hookup. Thus, hooking up can result in positive effects, as perceived by young adults, in their social networks and academic performance. Similar to sexual/romantic reactions, young adults who reported more anxious attachment and sexual motives of relational intimacy and self-affirmation were less likely to report positive social/academic engagement reactions. Thus, the approach (relational intimacy) and avoidance (self-affirmation) sexual motivations coupled with anxious attachment might by a barrier for young adults to benefit from the hookup—regardless of the foci (i.e., with peers, academics, or sexual/romantic).

Last, hooking up can result in negative reactions and our study found one general factor that encompasses these negative reactions. The lack of specificity across the social, sexual/romantic, and academic in young adults' negative reactions lends itself to a couple of explanations. It is possible that the negative effects of hooking up affects young adults' universally—from academics to peers to sexual/romantic sense of self. Alternatively, negative reactions to hooking up may reflect a general discomfort about the experience and this subscale may reflect such a sentiment. Given that social, academic, and sexual/romantic sense of self are interrelated, it is difficult to disentangle what is driving this factor and more research is needed to better understand young adults' negative reactions. For example, there are potential health concerns related to hooking up that can cause anxiety and distraction, such as the possibility of contracting an STI or becoming pregnant. Consequently, these reactions may influence one's ability to concentrate or focus on academic tasks, may relate to how one feels around peers, and may influence one's sexual/romantic sense of self.

Young adults' negative personal reactions were positively associated with anxious attachment, feelings of loneliness, and the sexual motive of partner approval. Young adults' anxious attachment style coupled with partner approval sexual motives appeared to lead to more negative reactions. It could be that the desire to be with others and wanting to reduce negative reactions from the hookup partner resulted in an interaction that was not advantageous, which may be due to the transient nature of hookups (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2009). It is possible that these factors, coupled with feelings of loneliness, may have resulted in ruminations after the experience leading
to increased academic distraction, negative interactions (or isolation from) with peers, and questioning of the sexual/romantic sense of self. These results parallel previous research on partner approval sexual motives (Cooper et al., 2008) and loneliness-emotional reactions research (Owen & Fincham, 2011), and yet extend those findings regarding attachment theory and reactions to hooking up.

Limitations and Implications

The present study has several limitations. First, the correlational design does not yield information on direction of effects. Consequently, we used theory to guide our models and their interpretation. Second, we collected data with women only; thus, it is important to replicate our findings (including factor structure) with men. We decided to focus on women’s hooking-up experience because of growing evidence that women tend to have fewer positive outcomes than do men (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Lewis et al., 2011; Owen et al., 2010; Owen & Fincham, 2011). Third, we purposely focused on reactions that would be most consistent with young adults in college; as such, we do not expect or intend our findings to extend to young adult women who are not in college. Fourth, our originally predicted factor solution was not fully realized, which may suggest that further scale development is needed. Thus, the SARS is probably best considered to have initial support but further validation is needed to increase the viability of this measure. Fifth, although alcohol use during the current hooking up and emotional reactions to hooking up have been noted in previous research (e.g., Owen & Fincham, 2011), such an association was not found here. It is possible that alcohol use during the hooking up could differently relate to emotional reactions versus social, relational, and academic reactions. Thus, given the ubiquitous nature of alcohol use within hookups, future research may want to explore the role of alcohol use in the variety of reactions to hooking up.

Notwithstanding these limitations, there are implications for educational practice and future research. Our findings may help inform relationship education programs (Fincham, Stanley, & Rhoades, 2011). That is, central to positive or negative reactions to hooking up for a range of outcomes seem to rest with attachment theory and sexual motives. Specifically, relationship education programs may want to address unique variants for young adults who endorse more anxious attachment as they tend to have fewer positive and more negative reactions to hooking up. On the basis of our study, it could be that young adults who report more anxious attachment may not get their relational needs met via hooking up. It is possible that more problematic they may not gain knowledge or confidence about their sexual or relational sense of self, which is consistent with previous research regarding the relationship between anxious attachment and misidentification of respectful relationships.
Reactions to Hooking Up

(Owen, Quirk, & Manthos, 2012). Consistently, sexual motives that focus on approach motives for relational intimacy as well as avoidance motives for avoiding personal or partner discomfort tend to result in less positive and more negative reactions to hooking up. Thus, it would be important for young adults to consider their motivations in the context of what may result from hooking up.

REFERENCES


