

Perspectives

College phenomenon poses many unforeseen problems

Dangerous Liaisons

By Kristi Gause
Contributing Reporter

It is a typical Friday night scenario. Students are preparing to go out, have a good time and maybe meet their Mr. Wonderful or Miss Right.

Before the women head out to the parties they dress up in their Friday night finest, hoping they'll have a semi-intelligent conversation with the guy who could be the "One."

The men, on the other end of the spectrum, are busy dousing themselves with cologne hoping to get a little more than a conversation.

For some students, the goal is to get as completely inebriated as possible without ending in Student Health Services.

For others, the night turns out to be just another night to hang out with friends.

Yet many of these students have a particular mission on this Friday night. Simply put, these people want to hook up.

"It's a chance to get together out of nowhere with someone," freshman Melissa McGhie said. "People hook up only once because they are embarrassed by their actions and do not want to have more ties to that person," freshman Sabrina Parker said.

Hooking up can be as simple and as innocent as a peck on the lips and as serious as oral sex or intercourse, depending on the people involved.

It usually involves the use of some kind substance, generally alcohol.

Although two thirds of the students are under 21, alcohol often instigates a hook-up.

"Hook-ups generally occur after parties, and alcohol is usually involved," sophomore Jamie Jennell said.

It does not have to evolve into a long-term relationship, however, which is something some students have a problem with.

"It's done for the whole dare and excitement — once it happens, the challenge is over, along with the 'want' or desire for the person," freshman Ryan Hoag said.

On the other hand, many women might expect something to develop out of what was more than likely a drunken act of kindness.

Sometimes the unexpected does occur and long-term relationships evolve from one of these hook-ups.

"At least a friendship is expected. If people cannot remain friends after hooking up, then they are not mature enough to be at college," freshman Elizabeth Diorio said.

Some men, however, have a totally different perspective. Some simply see hook-ups as a

part of a typical weekend.

"There's a high sexual attraction involved in hooking up. There's also the initial excitement of meeting someone new that makes you want to do it," freshman George Rork said.

It should be noted, however, that this is not every college guy's perspective of women. Many do look to form meaningful relationships.

Some students may think getting physically involved with someone at first will increase their chances for finding Mr. or Mrs. Right.

When many students hook up, they see it as a way to relieve themselves of the sexual frustration that often plagues them.

"People hook up a lot of the time to get over the uncertainty they have about themselves," Rork said.

Generally, there are a few key elements to the hooking-up situation.

First, according to student response, most hook-ups occur at parties or small group gatherings such as a private party in a room.

"At a party, a guy has to act like he's interested in more than just hooking up to get my attention," Jennell said.

Second, alcohol, sometimes in the form of "beer goggles," is usually a major factor. Beer goggles means that a person finds another individual increasingly more attractive as he or she drinks more alcohol.

Many people use beer goggles as an excuse for the less-than-memorable hook-ups, saying he or she was too drunk to realize what the person looked like. Also, as men and women drink, their sexual desires increase. Often, as two people hook up and drink more, they advance further sexually.

"If you're intoxicated and dancing, one thing leads to another," sophomore Annie Simons said.

On a sobering note, alcohol and hook-ups can be a dangerous mix. According to Natascha Romeo, the health educator at the Health Service, 60 percent of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases are involved with alcohol and 90 percent of rapes are alcohol-related.

"The problem is that alcohol is not separated from sex many times, and when students drink, their decisions and behavior becomes impaired, which is a

dangerous mix," Romeo said.

According to a report from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, "four out of five students (78.8 percent) who were not binge drinkers and who lived on campus experienced at least one second-hand effect of binge drinking, such as being the victim of an assault or an unwanted sexual advance."

Also, hookups originate from a mutual physical attraction and a few choice words spoken.

"You start dancing, you move closer and closer to each other until you eventually start kissing," sophomore Sarah Gilmore said.

"Just making eye contact and then starting up a conversation seems to be the way it most often happens for me," freshman Jeb Fugate said.

"It usually happens at a party with someone I know from before that evening," sophomore Laura Sargeant said.

Women often seem to be more affected by the hookup. The morning after a hook-up, unless it constituted merely a light kiss, women have a stronger tendency to regret their actions from the night before, especially when sexual intercourse occurred. They also generally expect some contact afterwards.

"I would expect at least a friendship, but if nothing else, at least a phone call," sophomore Heather Grall said.

Some don't expect anything at all after a hook-up.

"It depends on the person, but I generally expect nothing afterwards," Sargeant said.

"I would expect nothing afterwards," freshman Jordan Brehove said.

However, there are a few gentlemen out there who feel bad for taking advantage of a woman or letting things get out of hand. "If people are going to do personal physical things with each other, I would hope that they want something more than a physical thing," sophomore Scott Brown said.

It should be stressed, though, that not every student in college is interested in one-night stands or casual sexual contact with a string of partners. "People become afraid of commitment or they are ashamed of their actions, and they don't do it again," sophomore Jamie Jennell said.

As this sort of casual sexual contact grow more serious

between two people, the risks involved become greater. The chances for rape, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases increase as the number of partners a person has increases.

By "partners," according to Romeo, it is not necessarily meant they are sexually active — one can contract sexually transmitted diseases or be sexually assaulted without having actual intercourse.

For those who are or plan to be

physically involved with anyone else, a near stranger or a long-time significant other, a few precautions should be taken.

Even if students are not planning to be sexually involved with someone, they are encouraged to take advantage of the free condoms at Student Health, a service that could save their lives.

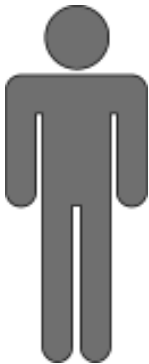
Everything should be up front and mutual, according to Romeo and Campus Outreach Services, a date-rape prevention group.

Too many nights are ruined because of a lack of communication between the couple. The people involved should make clear exactly what is going to happen that night and what will not happen.

Although it seems not too many people will take a break from their amorous activities to lay down their bedroom rules, it could save the couple from an unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease.

"Many students are surprised to find out they can contract genital warts or herpes and still be virgins," Romeo said.

Students should remember that when they become physically involved with an unfamiliar individual, they are putting themselves at risk for everything from date rape to AIDS. Participants in hooking-up, like any sport, should take care.



What does "hook-up" mean?

A general definition of the term "hook-up" is needed to properly discuss the subject.

After asking a variety of students, a wide range of definitions were given from "just a kiss" according to freshman Jeb Fugate to a "kiss with the tongue and beyond" according to sophomore Anne Simons. Most usually agree that some form of physical connection occurs.

"It's a physical bond that can be a one-night thing or turn into something lasting," freshman Jessica Poirier said.

It should be noted that very few students were will to share their personal experiences of hooking up. Most would not comment on that aspect.

Other definitions were more specific.

"It's some form of sexual relations that stops before actual intercourse," sophomore Scott Brown said.

Other students see the heavy use of alcohol as a necessity for hooking up.

"It's like a big, drunken orgy," freshman Rob Hock said.

A good working definition for "hook-up" could be any physical, affectionate contact between two willing people.

Rape Prevention

According to Campus Outreach Services, an organization designed to inform, counsel and prevent date rape, students are advised to take the following precautions:

"Be aware that the rapist might be someone that you know, that it might happen in your house or room, that you have the right to say 'No' and be respected, that you are more at risk when you have been drinking or using drugs.

"Establish sexual limits for yourself and communicate these firmly and clearly.

"Trust your instincts: if you feel pressured, afraid or uncomfortable, leave, get help or protest loudly.

"Watch for controlling behavior such as: putting you down, manipulating you to get his way, talking negatively about women, making all the decisions in the relationship, subscribing heavily to sex-role stereotypes, acting excessively jealous or possessive."

Men should follow the following guidelines as well, according to Campus Outreach Services:

"Never force, pressure or coerce anyone to have sex. Don't take silence as consent.

"Don't have sex with someone who is drunk, passed out or asleep.

"Stop if someone says 'No,' is reluctant or is not clearly consenting.

"Don't assume that someone wants to have sex because of their reputation or dress.

"Don't make or laugh at degrading jokes about women.

"Challenge abusive behavior when you witness it. If you see a woman in trouble at a party, don't be afraid to intervene."