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Expectations Regarding Acquaintance Sexual Aggression Among Sorority and Fraternity Members[1]

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Among women, college is a high risk period for sexual assault by male acquaintances. Differences in expectations held by men and women may contribute to misinterpretation of social cues and subsequent sexual aggression and may impair women's ability to respond effectively. This paper presents findings from a predominantly Caucasian sample (85.9%) of college sorority (n = *66) and fraternity* (n = *34) members regarding the social context within which they interact and their expectations regarding perpetration of and response to sexual aggression. Results showed differences in men's and women's expectations and responses, and in particular highlighted how men's expectations were related to women's resistance of unwanted sex. Understanding the cognitive processes that men and women draw upon in social interactions can be useful for developing sexual aggression prevention and resistance interventions.*

Research to date indicates that college is a high-risk period of sexual assault for women (Patton & Mannison, 1995; Sorenson, Stein, Siegel, Golding & Burnam, 1987; Ward, Chapman, Cohn, White, & Williams, 1991). College

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women are at roughly three times greater risk for sexual victimization than are women in the general population (Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski, 1987), and the majority of these offenses are committed by someone known to the woman (Aizenman & Kelley, 1988). Although findings are mixed about whether their experiences are significantly different from nonsorority women, studies indicate that sorority women, too, experience high levels of sexual victimization (Coperhaver & Grauerholz, 1991; Kalof, 1993; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Rivera & Regoli, 1987).

Women in general perceive their risk of assault by a stranger as greater than by an acquaintance (Furby, Fischhoff, & Morgan, 1989; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1995) and are more likely to take measures to protect themselves from these kinds of attacks (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Warr, 1985). However, findings indicate that acquaintances and intimate partners pose far greater probability of threat to the average woman than do strangers (Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1990; Russell, 1984). Sorority women are at no less risk of acquaintance rape relative to other college women. In fact, they are at higher risk relative to non-college women and to any college women whose socializing involves low alcohol consumption. However, sorority women in general may believe they are at lower risk by virtue of identification with the Greek system (e.g., traditions of family-like referents such as "my brothers and sisters") and a sense of freedom and security within it (Larimer, 1992; Moffat, 1989).

Individual resistance is an important component of preventing sexual aggression. A major difference affecting the ability to resist aggression by strangers versus acquaintances lies in the cognitive processes that a woman must undertake before she engages in a behavioral response (cf. Carver & Scheier, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Recognizing danger cues in a familiar social context requires much more complex psychological processing than does recognition of such cues in a stranger attack (Amick & Calhoun, 1987).

Understanding cognitive processes that men and women draw upon in social interactions is important for developing sexual aggression prevention and resistance interventions. Theoretical formulations that account for cognitive variables are beginning to emerge (Nurius & Norris, 1996). One area that holds promise is the investigation of individuals' expectations concerning social situations in influencing social interactions. In particular, differences in expectations held by men and women may contribute to misinterpretation of social cues (Abbey, 1982; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991) and result in an increased likelihood of sexual aggression on the part of men and impair women's ability to perceive and respond effectively to it. For example, many typical dating behaviors used by a woman can be construed as "leading him on" and as the basis for justifying aggression (Cook,

1995), and concern about offending a male acquaintance has been found negatively associated with assertive resistance of unwanted sexual advances (Norris, Nurius, & Dimeff, 1996). The systematic study of social expectations has not been well addressed nor included in prevention programs. The current paper addresses this gap by examining sorority and fraternity members' expectations related to sexual aggression and their relationship to likelihood of engaging in sexually aggressive acts on the part of men and self-defensive responses on the part of women.

THE RELATION OF EXPECTATIONS TO PERCEIVING AND RESPONDING TO THREAT

Expectations reflect the cognitive schemas and beliefs that individuals have about themselves and their environment and thereby provide an indication of what men and women draw upon as they assess risks related to sexual aggression and make decisions about how to behave. As individuals observe others' behavior, they continually evaluate that information relative to their preexisting expectations and goals to form an interpretation and to guide their responses (Bandura, 1986; Cantor & Zirkel, 1990). Situations that are atypical or that are disruptive tend to evoke a heightened level of alertness and attention to the environment. This level of vigilance is difficult to sustain and, in the course of normal life events, people operate in a predominantly automatic fashion, relying heavily on a priori expectations about how people will behave and how the situation will unfold. Thus, within normative or familiar situations, people are distinctly inclined to perceive, interpret, and act in a manner consistent with the understandings and assumptions that undergird their expectations (Bargh, 1984; Langer, 1989).

One of the difficulties in preventing acquaintance sexual aggression is that expectations associated with sexual assault are discrepant with expectations associated with dating and socializing, particularly when the latter involves familiar persons and settings. Women's fears of sexual assault reflect expectations that this is most likely to occur with strange men and in isolated public places (Gordon & Riger, 1989) and that other women are more at risk than oneself (Cue & George, 1995; Hoeckner, 1992; Nason, 1995). In contrast, sorority women often regard fraternity men as members of a valued social network and potential partners, and regard social events in the Greek system as sheltered opportunities for partying and building relationships (Norris, et al., 1996). This suggests that a particular set of behaviors by a fraternity "brother" that, in a different context or by an unknown man may be interpreted as danger cues, would tend here to be

interpreted in a more situation- and expectation-congruent fashion—perhaps as joking, showmanship, or seduction.

In this study, we compared men's responses to previously victimized and nonvictimized women. Previous research has shown that a history of victimization increases the risk of future victimization (Gidycz, Coble, Latham & Layman, 1993; Koss & Dinero, 1989) and that victimization is also related to number of consensual sex partners (Mandoki & Burkhart, 1989). Thus, we wanted to examine differences between victimized and nonvictimized women in the context of socializing with men. In general, normative socializing is likely to contain factors associated with increased risk of sexual aggression (for example, alcohol consumption by both women and men, opportunities for physical isolation, high level exposure to risk through frequent socializing). Therefore, we first assessed the nature of contexts wherein sorority women socialize with fraternity men. We anticipated that both men and women would report a high frequency of social events and a high level of alcohol consumption. Furthermore, Kelly and DeKeseredy (1994) found that victimization experience affected women's expectations and fear of future victimization. Therefore, we expected previously victimized women to perceive their own risk of victimization to be higher than nonvictimized women perceived theirs. Within each of the three groups we investigated to what extent each would endorse particular types of responses associated with sexual aggression. Thus, we were able to obtain an in-depth view of how women's projected responses to sexual aggression contrasted against men's endorsements of women's actions that would effectively stop their pursuit of sex. Finally, we examined men's expectations regarding pursuing sex and how these are related to women's refusals.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 34 men and 66 women, predominantly Caucasian (85.9%), 18-22 years of age, primarily freshmen and sophomores (80%), drawn from ten sorority and eight fraternity houses randomly selected at a major west coast university. For this study, only currently single heterosexual students were included, and the majority (67% of women; 100% of men) indicated that they had experienced consensual sexual intercourse.

Recruitment was undertaken through informational announcements about the study at business meetings of the sorority and fraternity houses as well as posted written descriptions of the study's purpose and the procedures to be used. These announcements and postings were preceded by formal approval by the Panhellenic Association and the Interfraternity

Council (the umbrella organizations that provide organization and leadership to the campus' separate sororities and fraternities) and overview presentations to the chapter presidents. Participants voluntarily contacted the investigators by phone indicating their interest in participating and were compensated $10 for a time commitment of approximately two hours (all data collection was done at the School of Social Work). The nature of the questions to be addressed in the discussion group and on the questionnaire were reviewed with participants in advance of consenting to participate, they were reminded that they were free to discontinue participation at any point without penalty, and were assured that neither their individual nor house identities would be released or associated with their responses.

After giving informed consent, respondents were involved in two separate tasks. First, they completed a 20-30 minute questionnaire assessing demographic variables, characteristics of common mixed-gender social activities, alcohol consumption habits, sexual experience, perception of women's risk of acquaintance sexual aggression, projected reactions to sexual aggression in dating (women), projected reactions to women's responses to sexual aggression (men), and social expectations related to men's pursuit of sex when consent of the woman is in question. Second, respondents took part in 90-minute same-gender focus groups (generally 4-7 in size), led by a same-sex facilitator, that discussed goals and expectations in common socializing situations, how sexual interest is conveyed and interpreted, what role alcohol plays, perceptions of peer norms and expectations regarding various aspects of courtship behavior, and indicators of sexual aggression and how these are interpreted and handled. Each group was made up of men or women from between two and four separate sororities or fraternities. This approach was used to minimize the likelihood of participants providing the chapter's "party line" by mixing points of view from varied houses and by fostering some degree of personal comfort in allowing a participant to attend with a friend if she or he chose.

Measures

Perceived risk of sexual victimization was assessed through five items, derived from the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982; Koss et al., 1987), concerning respondents' perceived likelihood of encountering unwanted sexual intercourse (women responded in terms of their own risk, and men rated college women's risk): (1) you/she feel it would be useless to stop him because he was so sexually aroused; (2) you/she would feel pressured by continual arguments; (3) he would threaten to use physical force; (4) he would use physical force; (5) he would give you/her alcohol or other drugs. These items were answered on 1-7 scales, ranging from

"extremely unlikely" to "extremely likely" and created a mean-based scale (alpha = .92).

Prior acquaintance sexual aggression experience[3] was based on yes answers to at least one of the following items derived from the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982; Koss et al., 1987) during the past year: Have you (a) . . . been in a situation where a man became so sexually aroused that you felt it was useless to stop him even though you did not want to have sexual intercourse?; (b) . . . had sexual intercourse with a man when you didn't really want to because you felt pressured by his continual arguments?; (c) . . . been in a situation where a man used some degree of physical force to get you to have sexual intercourse with him when you didn't want to, whether or not it actually occurred?; (d) . . . had a man attempt sexual intercourse with you by giving you alcohol or other drugs, but intercourse did not occur?; (e) . . . had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol or other drugs? Women who responded yes to one or more of these items were categorized as previously coerced (N = 30) for purposes of subsequent within and between group analyses.

Response to unwanted sexual advances was based on participant ratings of 18 defensive strategies, by means of 5 point scales (0-4; not at all to highly likely): by women of how likely it was that they would engage in each behavior and by men of how likely it was that they would stop pursuing sex if they saw that behavior by the woman. These items were derived from the literature on assault resistance as well as from preliminary pilot testing in which we queried respondents about defensive strategies. These strategies were aggregated into three mean-based subscales: (1) gentle or indirect messages (8 items; e.g., "Jokingly try to tell him that he is coming on too strong"; alpha = .78), (2) verbal assertiveness (5 items; e.g., "Raise your voice and use stronger language, e.g., Hey LISTEN! I really mean it . . ."; alpha = .93), and (3) methods that were physically defensive or sought help from others (4 items; e.g., "Be physically defensive, e.g., hitting, kicking, scratching"; alpha = .95).

A modified version of the Daily Drinking Questionnaire (Collins, Parks, & Marlatt, 1985) was used to assess the typical pattern of alcohol consumption in the past 30 days. Participants reported how many of five types of social events they attend in a typical month; how many drinks they consume and over what time period. They also reported the most they drank on any particular occasion, and the average number of drinks typically consumed on a daily basis in a given week. Average and peak blood

[3]A comparable measure assessing perception of sexual aggression was administered to male participants. However, no more than 5 individuals reported committing even 1 sexually aggressive act. Consequently, no further examination of the data was conducted.

alcohol level in a typical week in the past 30 days was calculated using a mathematical formula based on the participant's weight, gender, the total number of drinks, and hours spent drinking for each day of the week (Mathews & Miller, 1979).

Men rated the influence of 24 items related to whether they would pursue sex with a woman whose interest in having sex was in question. These items were derived from prior pilot testing with fraternity members regarding reasons they thought men would engage in this behavior and on findings from related research on alcohol-related problem behaviors among college students (Duthie, 1991; Duthie, Baer, & Marlatt, 1991). These items, rated on 5 point scales (1-5; not important to extremely important) were aggregated into four sex pursuit subscales: (1) a belief that women are signaling desire for sex by actions such as drinking, kissing, and petting (4 items; e.g., "If she had been drinking a lot, I would figure that she was using alcohol as an excuse to have sexual intercourse"; alpha = .67), (2) a view that sexual advances of men are expected and a sign of prowess (7 items; e.g., "Because guys are supposed to take the lead on sex, I would see it as my role to make the next moves", "I would know that I could really make her feel good"; alpha = .82), (3) an expectation that intoxification/arousal effects may overwhelm reasoning (7 items; e.g., "I might be too intoxicated to pick up on signals from her to slow down or stop", "I might be too heated up so that I wouldn't notice or pick up signals from her to stop"; alpha = .79), and (4) concerns about women's responses and perceptions (6 items; e.g., "I wouldn't want her bad-talking me or the house later if we got into something she really wasn't ready for", "I might hesitate fearing that I wasn't understanding her intentions"; alpha = .92).

RESULTS

Social Context and Risk Factors

Analyses of variance were conducted on the number of social events attended in a typical month, number of consensual sex partners in the last 6 months, and average and peak blood alcohol levels achieved during the previous month. These latter two variables were computed only for those who reported drinking at social events.

As the results in Table I reflect, both men and women engaged in a relatively high number of Greek social events, $F(2,91) = .62$, p NS, with parties (usually held at fraternity houses) and exchanges comprising about half the events. These were followed in frequency by a combination of dances, prefunctions (which consist of men and women gathering to con-

Table I. Between Group Differences on Social Context and Risk Factors[a]

Social Context Variables	Group Means (*SD*s) Males	Victimized Females	Non-Victimized Females
Total Social Events/Past Month	12.80 (7.72)$_1$	12.24 (4.04)$_1$	11.13 (5.54)$_1$
Peak Alcohol Consumption	.112 (.089)$_1$	.107 (.057)$_1$	.070 (.072)$_2$
Average Alcohol Consumption	.093 (.060)$_1$	.080 (.041)$_1$	.085 (.051)$_1$
Number of Sex Partners/Last 6 Months	1.36 (1.12)$_1$	1.34 (1.26)$_1$	.69 (1.20)$_2$

[a]Means with different subscripts are significant at $p < .05$.

sume alcohol before the official start of a scheduled event), and brotherhood/sisterhood events (traditional activities between fraternity and sorority houses).

Alcohol consumption was reported as being an important part of socializing for most respondents (even though most of them were underage). For those who did drink (roughly 90% of men and 80% of women), heavy episodic drinking associated with social events was characteristic. Group means in peak blood alcohol levels (BALs) revealed levels for men and previously victimized women in excess of .10 (the local legal level of drunkenness for driving), but somewhat lower in nonvictimized women, $F(2,94) = 3.12$, $p < .05$. The average level of drinking across social events for all three groups indicated mean BALs slightly under the legal driving limit, $F(2,78) = .46$, p ns. The mean number of sex partners within the last six months differed by group, $F(2,94) = 3.35$, $p < .04$, with nonvictimized women reporting the fewest partners. The sample range was from 0-6 partners, suggesting considerable variance between the least and the most active individuals.

Perception of Risk

Analysis of variance conducted on the measure for perceived risk of women experiencing sexual aggression by a dating partner during college revealed significant group differences, $F(2, 94) = 37.18$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons employing the Scheffe procedure revealed significant differences between each group: Nonvictimized women believed their risk to be between extremely and moderately unlikely ($M = 1.64$); previously victimized women believed their risk to be between moderately and mildly unlikely ($M = 2.81$); and men believed college women's risk to be between neutral and mildly likely ($M = 4.48$).

Table II. Within Group Differences in Mean Responses to Projected Responses Related to Unwanted Sexual Activity

	Means (*SD*s)		
Resistance Type	Men (N = 34)	Victimized Women(N = 30)	Non-Victimized Women(N = 34)
Indirect	3.30 $(.45)_1$	2.15 $(.52)_1$	1.79 $(.64)_1$
Verbal Assertiveness	3.96 $(.11)_2$	1.57 $(.85)_2$	2.33 $(1.14)_2$
Physical Defensiveness	3.98 $(.06)_2$	.74 $(.70)_3$	1.31 $(1.17)_3$

[a]For within-group comparisons, means with different subscripts are significant at $p < .05$.

Response to Sexual Aggression

Multivariate analysis of variance was conducted on the three types of resistance responses: indirect methods, verbal assertiveness, and physical defense. Because the questions posed to men and women were somewhat different (for women: "How likely is it that you would...." vs. for men: "How likely is it that you would stop if she...."), the analyses were conducted separately for men and for the two groups of women. In the analysis of female subjects, victimization experience served as the between-subjects factor while type of resistance became the within-groups factor. For male subjects' analysis, pairwise within-subjects contrasts were conducted on their responses to the three forms of women's resistance.

For women the overall tests of the between- and within-subjects factors were significant, between $F(1,62) = 4.30$, $p < .05$; within $F(2,124) = 31.45$, $p < .0001$, as well as the interaction between the two factors, $F(2,124) = 9.75, p < .0001$. (See Table II for means.) Pairwise comparisons indicated that nonvictimized women reported a higher likelihood of using both verbally assertive ($p < .0001$) and physically defensive ($p < .004$) methods than previously victimized women. In addition there was a nonsignificant trend ($p < .07$) showing a greater likelihood of previously victimized women to report using passive means of resistance. Within group contrasts indicated that although both groups of women were least likely to project using physically defensiveness means, nonvictimized women were most likely to employ verbal assertiveness while previously victimized women reported their greatest likelihood of using indirect means.

For male subjects, within-group comparisons indicated their lowest likelihood of stopping their pursuit of sexual activity when women employed passive means. Differences between their responses to women's verbal assertiveness and physical defensiveness were not significant.

Table III. Mean Levels of Men's Expectations Regarding Sexual Pursuit[a]

Sexual Pursuit Subscales	Mean	*SD*
1. Women drinking/petting are signaling desire for sex	1.83_1	.84
2. Sexual advances are expected of men and show their prowess	1.93_1	.78
3. Intoxication/sexual arousal would impair perception and reasoning	2.35_2	.90
4. Concerns about women's perceptions and responses	3.95_3	.96

[a]Means with different subscripts are significant at $p. < .01$.

Men's Expectations Concerning Pursuit of Sex

A final set of analyses assessed the relative importance of men's expectations concerning their pursuit of sex with a woman whose consent was in question. Within group repeated measures analysis of variance showed an overall difference among the mean levels of the four subscales, $F(1, 32) = 30.17$, $p < .0001$. This multivariate test was followed by pairwise t-tests to determine which of the subscales differed from one another. As shown in Table III, men were most likely to endorse concerns about women's perceptions and responses to them as most important, followed by factors that might impair their perceptions, and, least of all, expectations concerning the importance of demonstrating their sexual prowess and women's actions signalling their desire for sex.

Whereas the above reflect men's beliefs regarding how these social expectations would influence their behavior, we also assessed the relationship between these expectations and men's anticipated response to women's resistance. Table IV indicates that the four sexual pursuit subscales were not significantly correlated with assertive and defensive resistance methods. With respect to men's stopping pursuit of sex when women use indirect resistance methods, men's expectations were negatively related to their be-

Table IV. Correlations of Men's Expectations Regarding Their Pursuit of Sex With Women's Response to Resistance

	Resistance Methods		
Sexual Pursuit Subscales	Indirect	Verbal Assertiveness	Physical Assertiveness
Concerns About Women	.30[b]	.11	.25[a]
Sexual Prowess/Advances Expected	−.51[d]	−.10	.01
Drinking/Petting—Woman Signaling Desire	−.37[c]	−.19	−.12
Intoxication/Arousal Overwhelm Reason	−.11	−.05	−.02

[a]$p < .08$.
[b]$p < .05$.
[c]$p < .01$.
[d]$p < .001$.

liefs in a) the importance of demonstrating their sexual prowess, and b) that women signal desire for sex through drinking or petting, whereas expectations concerning women's perceptions of and responses to them were significantly positively correlated. That is, the more that men believed in the importance of demonstrating their sexual prowess or that women's behavior signals a desire for sex, the less likely they would be to stop pursuing sex, while a stronger endorsement of concerns about women's perceptions and responses increased their likelihood of restraint even if women used indirect resistance. Men's expectations were not related either to use of verbal assertiveness or to physical defensiveness.

DISCUSSION

What we have found is that study of social expectations provide important information about the social cognitive context within which men and women communicate and interpret their intentions and boundaries concerning sexual activity. Until recently, the emphasis in rape prevention has been more on resistance than on risk reduction and on protection from assaults from strangers than from acquaintances or partners (Griffin & Griffin, 1981; Marchbanks, Lui & Mercy, 1990; Ullmann & Knight, 1991;1992). However, assessing social expectations can provide valuable guidance toward development and implementation of effective prevention efforts.

Cumulatively, a number of studies have provided details about objective variables that appear associated with increased risk of heterosexual acquaintance sexual aggression (for example, Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). However because many of these variables are also associated with contemporary norms of dating and socializing among young adults, threat perceptions and response are often nested within an ambiguous social context requiring conflicting cognitive orientations (that is, pursuing goals and situation analysis related to affiliation or entertainment versus those related to safety and protection). In the sorority and fraternity culture, emphasis on college experience as a last bash before entering responsible adulthood and on their social groups as valued and protected networks may impede women's efforts to screen for early stage warning signals of sexual coercion or aggression. These social expectations may also impede men's likelihood of detecting early stage resistance cues, and of subsequently responding appropriately to indications of resistance.

In this research, a high proportion of the fraternity men reported that they would stop pursuing sex with an unwilling woman. Their responses may in part reflect a tendency to provide a socially desirable response.

However, it also suggests an inroad to making use of men's cognizance of right and wrong and their sense of consequences and accountability. However, findings of high blood alcohol levels associated with fraternity-sorority socializing may indicate that some men will be less likely to desist (Abbey, 1991; Abbey, Ross, & McDuffie, 1994), especially those who endorse the expectation that alcohol consumption would keep them from exercising sexual restraint. Also calling into question whether, in real world situations, these men do desist from further sexual aggression are our findings of significant negative correlations between sexual pursuit attitudes and stopping pursuit of sexual advances in the face of low level resistance, as well as prior findings of norms within some male peer groups that support coercive behavior (Kanin, 1957; Martin & Hummer, 1989; Sanday, 1990).

The finding that women who had previously experienced acquaintance sexual aggression assessed their future risk to be higher than women without such experience is consistent with earlier findings (Kelly & DeKeseredy, 1994). What is less clear, however, is the relationship of perceived risk to subsequent behavior and well-being. Kelly & DeKeseredy (1994), for example, found that women who had been victimized by dating partners were significantly more afraid than nonvictimized women to be home alone, an outcome that is not likely to have an empowering influence on women's perceived efficacy in self-protection. It was also troubling to find that previously victimized women indicated that of the three types of resistance they would be most likely to use indirect forms. Men, however, stated that they would be least likely to stop pursuing sexual activity when a woman employed such methods. Thus, previously victimized women may be at increased risk of experiencing victimization again. It cannot be determined from this study what form of resistance these women employed in their earlier aggression experience. They may have found in their earlier experience that even being physically defensive was ineffective and thus have developed a fatalistic outlook for the future or become more aware of constraints on active self-defense (e.g., as a function of intoxication or psychological impediments such as fear of alienating a man she cares about or being socially stigmatized; see Graham 1996; Nurius, Norris, Young, Graham, & Gaylord, 1996). Nonvictimized women, on the other hand, may still possess relatively more self-assurance with regard to their ability to respond directly and assertively to sexual aggression. Future research should address whether women who experience sexual aggression also experience disincentives to react assertively to sexual aggression in the future. Specifically, does a societal tendency to blame victims lead to a perceived tarnish on their reputation and affect their status and that of their social group (e.g., their sorority houses or, comparably, other valued referent or membership groups)? If so, this could lead to women weighing their will-

ingness to react to sexual assault against their possible embarrassment and social stigma for being found in a compromising situation.

The finding that men assessed women's risk of acquaintance sexual aggression to be higher than women assessed their own risk is discrepant with some prior findings (e.g., Cook, 1995). This may be attributable to the fact that, in the present study, risk was specific to oneself versus expectations about risk to women in general, suggesting that these sorority women may either be indicating a high degree of trust in men with whom they personally interact or a high level of optimism about their ability to avoid or deflect potential threat. Prior research with both college students and community samples across a range of personal risks has indicated a surprisingly weak correspondence between actual risk factors and judgments of personal susceptibility (Weinstein, 1984; 1987). While this positivity bias is worrisome with respect to impeding women's empowerment in self-protecting against sexual aggression (for example, unrealistic optimism about one's susceptibility and control which mitigates against accurate identification of high risk and behavioral preparation), it has been found to be positively correlated with various aspects of mental health such as happiness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (McKenna, 1993; Taylor & Brown, 1988). In a similar vein, this normative bias may play a role in motivating men to anticipate and perceive their behavior in a positive light (for example, overestimating their ability to resist negative peer or socialization influences; overestimating their ability to cope with alcohol effects; and being inclined to read unclear situations on the basis of self-interest) and thus never to prepare for the conflicts they are likely to experience in interpreting and appropriately responding to social cues from women.

Prior research suggests that women who were romantically interested in men who aggress against them were not verbally definite in their resistance (Byers, Giles, & Price, 1987; Kanin, 1969; Norris et al., 1996). Women have also been found to be more definite in their resistance to higher levels of unwanted sexual advances (for example, genital fondling versus breast fondling, Byers et al., 1987). These findings when viewed in light of cognitive influence effects such as expectations illustrate the complexity of risk perception and response. If variables that are associated with risk of acquaintance sexual aggression are also associated with socializing and movement toward consensual intimacy, what are the cues that help women distinguish personal risk? If evidence suggests that most men will not be assaultive of an acquaintance but women's greatest risk of assault is from acquaintances, what expectations are most realistic for women to use when entering social events in her life? Is risk perception best conceptualized solely in terms of safety or are women grappling with multiple types of risk (for example, rejection by the male, embarrassment, stigmatization, social

costs that the male can impose if refused) that confound safety-related considerations (Nurius, 1996)?

Fraternity men's expectations related to terminating pursuit of sex with a woman whose consent is in question is another area of interest for future research. The findings presented here suggest that these social expectations may be influential when women are resisting with means that are open to misinterpretation or dismissal by the man. It is noteworthy that men indicate an increased likelihood of ceasing to pursue their sexual goals when they endorse high concern about women's perceptions and responses. How much does this reflect positivity bias? Do fraternity men have a more positive view of their own responsiveness relative to responsiveness of other men as found by Byers et al. (1987)? Or, can their responses be explained by a sense of "political correctness," a consciousness of what is expected or a sense of needing to present themselves in a socially desirable fashion? Are there other factors at work including an emerging consensus on definitions of unacceptable behavior (Muehlenhard, Powch, Phelps, & Guisti, 1992)? Further research on these issues will be important complements to investigation focused on women's perceptions and actions.

We conclude from this study that generalized information about risk and forms of acquaintance sexual aggression are likely to be insufficient preparation for prevention of sexual aggression. Many men would benefit from a better understanding of possible motivations and explanations for their behavior. It is likely that there is more than one pattern of male sexual aggression and multiple predictors of sexual aggression; different types of prevention efforts may be needed to address predictors such as miscommunications, beliefs that they are only seeing token resistance, and sexual aggression as expressions of hostility and anti-social aggression (Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991; Yllö, 1993).

Several qualifications need to be considered. First, responsibility for aggression unequivocally belongs with the aggressor. Efforts to identify risk factors and ways women can better identify and respond to situations of sexual aggression should not divert responsibility for men's behavior to women but rather inform efforts to empower women to effectively protect themselves. Second, further investigation is needed to ascertain the stability of these findings and their generalizability, as well as to provide more in-depth analysis of cognitive and contextual factors involved in detecting risk and resisting aggression. While this study provides an opportunity to understand social expectations within a well-defined social system, it also introduces considerations specific to this system such as the trust accorded to fraternity men based on their membership within a shared social group and concern for protecting one's sorority chapter reputation. We anticipate, however, that many of these effects would generalize to other valued social

or cultural groups and that the basic patterns of how expectations influence perception of and response to risk would generalize to other college students. Finally, this study investigated subjects' projected responses. Efforts were made to develop stimulus material that was ecologically valid for this sample. However, projected responses need to be compared to retrospective accounts of actual responses to assess how representative these expectations are of actual behavior. What projected responses do tell us is what these men and women believe they would do or not do, which is important information for prevention programming.

Overall, this inquiry should help our understanding of acquaintance sexual aggression as a social process to be analyzed and undermined as it occurs (Marcus, 1991). This follows a public health approach, using a two pronged effort to both reduce the cause or source of the health problem, as well as to bolster the host to better ward off the illness or problem (McCall, 1993). Men will benefit from research that will assist them to better recognize and interpret their own behavior as sexual aggression and women's resistance to it. Women will benefit from research to inform developing acquaintance rape prevention strategies that "start where the woman is." Recognizing danger cues is the first step in mounting an effective defense (Rozee, Bateman & Gilmore, 1991). Therefore, understanding the elements that facilitate women's perception of and self-protective response to threat in their social lives is crucial.

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