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Jessica A. Wright

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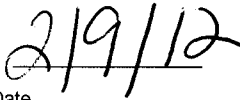
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An Examination of the Intersection Between Alcohol Use
and Unanticipated Consequences for College Females

(TITLE)

BY

Jessica A. Wright

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Masters of Science College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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**An Examination of the Intersection Between Alcohol Use
and Unanticipated Consequences for College Females**

Jessica A. Wright

Eastern Illinois University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the intersection between alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. The second purpose of this study was to examine how the participants perceived their risk of sexual assault. Prior quantitative research in this field indicated that binge drinking is a predictor of risky behaviors. Research also showed that many negative consequences, including sexual assault, can occur as a result of binge drinking. A qualitative study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the drinking behaviors of college females in their own voices, as well as their perceived risk of negative consequences under the influence. General themes and categories from participant responses were evaluated based on prior research. The findings of the present study suggest that the college females in this study were aware that binge drinking can result in negative consequences. Additionally, the participants in this study had a distorted sense of binge drinking. The negative consequences that the research participants experienced are evidence of risky behaviors among college females. These findings are followed by a discussion section linking participant responses to the prior research. Recommendations for student affairs administrators are also included to help gain a better understanding of these findings. In return, this understanding could lead to greater success in curbing drinking behaviors and related negative consequences for females on college campuses.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all college females who are struggling with negative consequences that may have resulted from their drinking behaviors. It is never too late to make a change. This study is also dedicated to every female who has been a victim of sexual assault. You are not alone.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Sexual assault and alcohol use among college women is an issue that colleges and universities deal with on a daily basis. College women are at greater risk to experience rape than women in the general population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Furthermore, binge drinking is a risk factor for women being sexually assaulted (Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2001). Drinking in college has become part of the culture. Environmental factors combined with peer pressure create an environment where binge drinking is accepted among college students. Some students see drinking in college as a rite of passage, a way to make new friends, or a way to feel more comfortable in the college transition. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, about half of college students who drink, engage in binge drinking. College drinking was identified as a major public health issue to be addressed in “Healthy People 2010” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Sexual assault happens to be one of the unanticipated consequences of heavy episodic drinking among college students (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002). According to the 2010 Illinois Core Alcohol and Drug Survey results, 84.6% of Illinois college students had consumed alcohol in the past year. Additionally, 26.4% of Illinois college students reported some type of serious problem as a result of their drinking (Dietz, 2010). Alcohol consumption within the past 30 days was reported among 64.8% of the college females who participated in the 2010 National College Health Assessment (American College Health Association, 2010).

The passing of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 (The Cleary Act) mandated that campuses would annually disclose all crime issues, including those of a

sexual nature that occurred on campus or in the surrounding area. The act was amended in 1992 with the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights, so that colleges would have to develop prevention policies and provide certain assurances to victims. The act was amended again in 1998 to expand the requirements of the act (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). As a result of the federal government passing mandates on sexual crime, institutions of higher education are called to action on the development of prevention programs to address the issue. Ideally, campus administrators seek to foster an environment where students can feel safe and healthy while performing well academically. Because of this, sexual assault and alcohol use are threats that cannot be ignored on a college campus.

Results from the spring 2010 American College Health Association (ACHA) National College Health Assessment of 95,712 students showed that 7.4% of females have been sexually touched without consent, while 1.9% had experienced sexual penetration without consent. Additionally, 1.8% of females reported being involved in a sexually abusive relationship (American College Health Association, 2010). Some researchers believe that the use of alcohol can increase the risk of sexual assault. Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher and Martin (2009) examined the experiences of college women who were sexually assaulted before and since entering college from two large public universities. The results of the study showed that 11% experienced a sexual assault while incapacitated since entering college. A total of 7.8% of women had experienced sexual assault under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs since they entered college. While examining senior-college women, the researchers found that 20% had experienced sexual assault in college, while 10.8% of the sexual assaults were influenced by alcohol and/or other drugs.

Klein, Geaghan, and MacDonald (2007) examined college students' risk perceptions of experiencing unplanned sexual activity after consuming alcohol. The results revealed that students who perceived their risk to be high consumed more alcohol; therefore, suggesting they were also high risk for unplanned sexual activity. It was noted that some students see unplanned sex to be a desired activity; therefore, increasing their risk for greater alcohol consumption to increase the chances of unplanned sex. Clum, Nishith, and Calhoun (2002) examined the relationship between alcohol use and sexual assault and the participant's perception of severity. The results of the study showed that 44% of the women reported unwanted intercourse because they were given alcohol or drugs by a male partner. Alcohol use was reported by 79% of the women.

In addition to sexual assault, there are many other negative consequences that can occur as a result of a college student's alcohol use. In 2002, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism released a report on what colleges needed to know and learn about drinking behaviors of students. Personal consequences for students can include doing poorly academically, missing classes or being tardy to class, relationship issues with friends, family or a partner, and health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases due to risky sexual behavior. Binge drinking can also lead to serious injuries of students including suicide (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the intersection between alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. The second purpose of this study was to determine how these females perceived their risk of sexual assault.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the present research:

1. How would you describe your drinking habits on a weekly basis? (Blowers, 2009).
2. What unplanned consequences have occurred as a result of your drinking habits? (Wechsler et al., 1995).
3. Describe your perceptions of how increased alcohol consumption might increase a female's risk of unplanned sexual contact? (Mohler-Kuo, et al., 2001)
4. In what ways do you perceive the consequences of increased consumption differ between males and females? (Wechsler, et al., 1995).

Significance of the Study

Sexual assault prevention is an important issue for both student affairs and academic affairs. Because of the 1992 Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights (The Cleary Act), there is a mandate for a comprehensive approach to prevention. Programming cannot simply fall upon the shoulders of student affairs administrators; all parts of the university must come together in a collective manner. Furthermore, prevention programming should be evidence based (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002). Findings from this study may allow colleges to reexamine the general effectiveness of their prevention programming and also encourage them to include information on the use of alcohol as a risk factor for sexual assault.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include:

1. The nature of questions may cause a student who has been sexually assaulted to discontinue participation in the individual interviews.
2. Due to the length of the interviews, students might choose to discontinue their participation or limit their answers to some of the questions.
3. Students who have participated in a sexual assault prevention program may have different perceptions of risk than those who have not participated in such programs.
4. Since this study will be qualitative, the results will not be generalizable to the entire student population.
5. Students who have received counseling may also have different perception of risk.

Definition of terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions of terms were used.

Acquaintance Rape: Acquaintance rape is defined as coercive sexual activities that occur against a person's will by someone they know (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network [RAINN], 2011).

Binge drinking: The accepted definition for binge drinking is five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women in a two hour time period (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2010).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The literature review for this study will address the overall alcohol use of college students, perception of sexual assault risk among college females, alcohol use and risk of sexual assault, as well as sexual assault prevention programming. The areas for review are broad, but together they provide a comprehensive review of the topic. A review of the perceptions of sexual assault risk among college females is important to provide a baseline for the study. General perceptions of risk are important because they can be very different from perceptions of risk when consuming alcohol. The review of alcohol use and sexual assault looks at the increased risk and likelihood as well as its effects on the event.

Alcohol Use among College Students

Woodyard and Hallam (2010) examined the differences in college student drinking on weekdays, weekends and celebration events. For the study, weekdays were considered Sunday through Wednesday and weekends were Thursday through Saturday. The study took place over the course of two semesters at a Southeastern university in the United States. The researchers collected responses from 214 participants for their study and 58% of the students were female.

The results showed that students actually drank more during the weekends than during campus celebrations, which disproved their hypothesis that students would drink more during celebrations. The researchers noted that if they would have combined weekdays and weekends and just looked at drinking over an entire week the results would have been different. The results showed that 10.7% of the students were consuming 10 or more drinks during the weekend. Results also showed that out of all celebrations, students drink more on New Year's Eve. In fact,

students drank 10 or more drinks during this celebration ($p < .001$). The researchers concluded that prevention and intervention methods should evaluate student drinking patterns and tailor programs based on the results.

Zakletskaia, Wilson, and Fleming (2010) examined drinking rates among students across the United States and in Canada. The researchers wanted to know how much students were drinking and if they were willing to report their drinking habits in a health care setting. The study took place from one medium and one large sized Midwestern institution, one large sized institution on the West Coast and one large sized institution in Canada. The researchers obtained 10,400 surveys between all of the institutions. Students who arrived for appointments in health centers were asked to participate in the study. The response rate for the study was high, with only 10% of students declining participation. Students were asked questions about smoking, exercise and finally, frequency and quantity of drinking.

Students who participated in the study were mostly female, with only 34% of respondents being male. Most of the students lived off campus. Of the students surveyed, 57% reported drinking habits that are considered risky drinking behaviors. Students who were at greatest risk were under the age of 24 ($p < .001$). Over half of the students admitted to binge drinking in the past 30 days, and over a quarter of them had 5 or more drinks the last three times they drank. Out of all of the students surveyed, about half of them had drinking habits that could be considered risky or at risk for alcohol-related issues.

Blowers (2009) examined the similarities and differences in the drinking habits of community college and four year university students. Using the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, Blowers studied two institutions in Northern New York State. A total of 329 community college

students and 521 four year university students participated in the study. Both schools chose to use the Core long form survey. However, the four year institution chose to use the online form, while the community college used pencil and paper in social science classes. Results of the study showed that a majority at community colleges (63%) and four year institutions (73%) consumed at least one drink during the week. However, the majority of students consumed less than four drinks per week at both schools. In regards to binge drinking, 56% of four year students and 47.1% of community college students admitted to binge drinking sometime during the past two weeks ($p = .002$). Students who attended four year institutions were more likely to engage in frequent binge drinking ($p < .01$).

Kaysen, D., Lee, C., LaBrie J., & Tollison, S. (2009) examined the readiness to change among first-year female college students over a 10-week period. They also examined the relationship between personal readiness changes and drinking intentions and behaviors. Initially, there were 285 female students who agreed to participate in the study. Of those students, 182 admitted to at least one drink in the previous month. The other 103 students did not consume alcohol. The study focused on drinking behaviors; therefore, the abstainers were not used in the study. After a questionnaire, students were asked to choose one of the 26 group sessions that were randomly assigned as an intervention or control group. Participants were also asked to complete a weekly online diary which assessed their readiness to change, drinking during the week, and intentions to drink. A total of 160 students completed all 10 weeks.

The results of the study indicated that 56.8% of the participants consumed alcohol during the 10 weeks; and the average number of drinks per week was 5.45. The participants in the intervention groups reported being ready to change more often than those students in the control

group. When the students' readiness to change was higher, they intended to drink less in the following weeks. The students who were involved in a motivational interviewing intervention were more likely to be motivated to change. The researchers suggested that the findings might be female specific because females are more likely to want to change their behaviors.

Wechsler, H., Molnar, B. E., Davenport, A. E., & Baer, J. S (1999) used data from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study to measure college student drinking. The researchers divided students into groups based on their drinking patterns to highlight that some student groups drink more than other groups. A total of 17,592 students from 140 colleges and universities participated in the 1993 study. A questionnaire was given to the students assessing their drinking attitudes and behaviors, binge drinking rates, total amount of alcohol consumed, and personal problems that resulted from their drinking.

The results of the study showed that the median drink for all students was 1.5 drinks and the mean number of drinks was 5.1. The students who admitted to binge drinking made up 44% of the sample, however, they consumed 91% of the alcohol by the college students. There were 44 campuses in which 50% of their students met the binge drinking definition of five or more drinks for men and 4 or more drinks for women. The researchers noted that it is impossible to conduct prevention that suits all students because drinking behaviors vary among the student population.

Wechsler, H., Dowdall, G. W., Davenport, A., & Rimm, E. B. (1995) examined the amount of alcohol consumption and alcohol related problems for male and female college students. The researchers attempted to find a gender specific measurement of binge drinking among college students. The data for the study were collected from 17,592 college students from

140 different colleges. The participants were given a self-administered survey. There were 12,243 students who admitted to drinking within the last 30 days; therefore they were the group of students included in this study. The results of the study showed that the drinking behaviors of 36% of the students had caused regret ($p < .01$) and 21% of the students had unplanned sex as a result of their drinking habits. Women who drank five or more drinks were more likely to have negative consequences than men. Among the women studied, 33% of the women fit the description of a binge drinker.

Bulmer, Irfan, Mugno, Barton, and Ackerman (2010) examined the alcohol consumption trends of students over a period of six years. The researchers used stratified random sampling to choose undergraduate courses at a northeastern university. The researchers visited the classrooms of professors who agreed to be a part of the survey and administered the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey. The survey was administered in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 with 760 to 1,109 students participating each year. The results of the study showed that females were consuming increased amounts of alcohol weekly ($p < .01$). Females were also consuming alcohol more frequently on an annual basis ($p = .006$). White students consumed more alcohol weekly than their counterparts ($p < .001$). Students who lived off campus consumed more alcohol on a weekly basis than on campus students ($p = .001$).

Thombs, O'Mara, Tobler, Wagenaar, and Clapp (2009) examined the causes of risky behaviors among college student bar patrons. The researchers specifically focused on three types of behaviors; alcohol intoxication, illegal drug use, and alcohol expenditures. The researchers collected data by visiting seven on-premise drinking establishments on four consecutive nights. They chose to question every third person that came out of one of the establishments by taking

them to a research station. The researchers obtained data from 1,255 bar patrons; however, an analysis excluded all but 618 patrons. Among the 618 patrons, 81.5% of them used alcohol for the first time by 12th grade and 64% were considered high risk for alcohol dependence. Students who started drinking at an earlier age had a negative relationship with alcohol dependence ($p \leq .001$).

Dierker, L., Stolar, M., Lloyd-Richardson, E., Tiffany, S., Flay, B., Collins, L., and Clayton, R. (2008) examined substance use among freshman college students throughout their first year of college. A total of 4,690 students were recruited from freshman orientation. Students were told they were participating in a survey on health behaviors. Students were given a screener and then were chosen to participate in a web-based survey throughout their first year of college. Students reported on their smoking, alcohol consumption and marijuana use. Students were considered drinkers if they consumed on at least 50 occasions. The results of the study showed that the drinkers averaged 2.3 drinks per day.

Sexual assault risk among college females

Perception of sexual assault risk and actual risk are very different. Crawford, Wright and Birchmeier (2008) examined risk perception and behavioral choices among college women as well as prior sexual assault as a risk factor. Participants in the study completed multiple questionnaires and vignettes. For risk perceptions, participants were asked to read one of four vignettes asking them to imagine attending a party, accepting a ride with a male, and sexual intercourse without physical harm. The researchers randomly manipulated the variables of who poured the beer and attended to the drinks in the selected vignettes. There were a set of questions after each paragraph of the vignettes. Participants were asked to rate their risk using a 10 point

Likert scale with regard to the type of overall experience they were likely to have, degree to which this experience would affect them, and their perceived degree of control in these circumstances.

The researchers hypothesized that the participants who were given the riskier vignettes would make more cautious choices and that prior sexual assault would lead to being less capable of avoiding a rape. The results showed that participants would be less likely to leave a party with a male who had been pouring their beer, indicating a perceived risk. However, a majority would choose to leave the party with the male instead of leaving alone (Crawford et al., 2008). The results also showed that victims of a prior sexual assault would be able to perceive a threat, but were more likely to make riskier choices.

Freeman and Temple (2009) examined the prevalence of sexual assault among ethnic low income adolescents, as well as the effects of their living situations, parents' education and plans for college. A total of 1,634 high school students participated in a survey on sexual assault victimization. The participants were considered ethnically diverse and from low income families. The survey was administered during a mandatory English class with a 75% response rate. The results of the study showed that 8.6% of the students had been physically forced to have intercourse. Students who identified themselves as non-Hispanic multiple races were more likely to have experienced a sexual assault ($p = .0035$). Students who did not come from a traditional household were more likely to experience a sexual assault ($p < .0001$). Gender did not play a part in this study.

“Hooking up” is a term that is often used among college students to represent casual consensual sex. Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, and Backstrom (2009) used rape scripts to examine

how often college women saw rape as a potential consequence of “hooking up” and how often rape occurred within that context. The goal was to provide an index of the awareness of women and potential risks from “hooking up.” Out of the 109 females who participated in the study, 68% of them admitted to engaging in a “hook up,” while 31% reported that over half of their “hook ups” were bad experiences with 29% having experienced a sexual assault. The results of the study showed that the majority of participants did not perceive “hooking up” as a typical rape situation.

Alcohol use and the risk of sexual assault

The use of alcohol can increase the risk of sexual assault. Krebs et al. (2009) examined the experiences of college women who were sexually assaulted before and since entering college from two large public universities. A random sample of traditional undergraduate students, ages 18-25, was selected. A total of 12,846 students were invited to participate in the survey from both schools. One school had a 42.2% response rate while the other had a 42.8% response rate.

The results of the study showed that 11% experienced a sexual assault while incapacitated since entering college. A total of 7.8% of women had experienced sexual assault under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs since they entered college ($p < .001$). While examining senior-college women, the researchers found that 20% had experienced sexual assault in college ($p < .001$) and 10.8% of the sexual assaults were influenced by alcohol and/or other drugs ($p < .001$). In a supporting study, Lawyer, Resnick, Von Baknic, Burkett and Kilpatrick (2010) found that drug related assaults happened five times more frequently when compared to forcible sexual assault.

In the same study, Lawyer et al. (2010) sought to examine how often sexual assaults occurred due to force, threat, or voluntary versus involuntary alcohol and/or drug use. Participants in the study ($N = 314$) were asked to answer survey questions in a computer lab. Among other questions, participants were asked questions about their alcohol and drug consumption and drug related sexual assaults. The results showed that 29.6% of participants had experienced a sexual assault or rape. The same participants who reported a sexual assault or rape also reported that they had experienced an alcohol or drug related sexual assault or rape. Of those reporting assault, 84.4% had experienced an incapacitated assault. If they had consumed drugs before an assault, participants were asked to specify what type of drug. Of the participants who had been assaulted, 96.1% had used alcohol prior to the assault ($p < .01$). As if confirming the Lawyer et al. results, Horvath and Brown (2007) reviewed 93 rape cases reported to police where victims were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. They found that in 86% of the cases, the victims had voluntarily used alcohol before the rape occurred.

Loiselle and Fuqua (2007) used audio taped vignettes and alcohol to examine whether females would respond to risk differently when under the influence. The researchers conducted the study at Western Michigan University with 42 undergraduate women who received extra credit for participating. Since alcohol was used in the study, all participants were properly screened for medical conditions, including pregnancy. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups; alcohol group and placebo control group. There were four surveys administered including items dealing with sexual experiences, a rape myth acceptance scale, sexual assertiveness, and sexual communication. Each participant was also given a breathalyzer test to be sure no alcohol was consumed prior to the study. The researchers chose to use a .04% Blood

Alcohol Content (BAC) level based on prior research showing that amount was enough to influence perceptions. Participants in the alcohol group were given 15 minutes to consume three alcoholic drinks. Those in the placebo group were also given three drinks with drops of vodka and lime to disguise the tonic water. Participants listened to an audio tape between a man and women that ended with nonconsensual sexual intercourse.

The results showed that 31% of participants had previously been sexually assaulted with 57% of cases involving alcohol. When listening to the audio tape, the placebo group thought that the man should have ceased advances after an average of 92.19 seconds while the alcohol group responded after an average of 134.38 seconds ($p = .000$) The researchers were able to conclude that alcohol affects response and perceptions. However, they found no significant relationship between prior sexual assault and the detection of risk.

Pumphrey-Gordon and Gross (2007) examined the effect of alcohol on the recognition of date rape risk. The researchers studied 100 female undergraduate students at a public university located in the southeastern United States. Participants were between the ages of 21-28 and had prior experiences with alcohol. Participants received ten dollars for their participation. The study was conducted in two parts. During the first part of the study, participants were given several surveys including items addressing demographics, and the Comprehensive Effects of Alcohol Scale, Daily Drinking Questionnaire, Sex-Specific Alcohol Expectancies Scale, and the Sexual Experiences Survey.

The second part of the study took place 2-3 days after the first survey. Participants were divided into four groups of 25 and then were assigned to an alcohol group and then a placebo group. The goal blood alcohol level was .05%. Participants were asked to consume the same

amount of liquid within five minutes, while spending the next ten minutes completing personality tests. An average blood alcohol level of .045% was achieved among those consuming alcohol. Participants then listened to an audio tape of two college students, a male and a female, returning to the male's apartment after a party. Participants were asked to press a button when they thought the male had gone too far.

The results showed that 56 participants had experienced some type of unwanted sexual advances with 18 being a completed rape and 25 attempted rapes. There were no significant findings for response latency. However, the participants who consumed alcohol showed less resistance for the man's unwanted advances ($p < .05$). The researchers also found that the belief that alcohol affects sexual risk taking was unrelated to the attempted rape experiences but were related to prior sexual coercion. The researchers concluded that using alcohol may impact a female's perceptions of risk.

Buddie and Testa (2005) examined living arrangements during college. They also examined students versus nonstudents. They also examined alcohol consumption as a risk factor of sexual aggression. The researchers chose a sample of participants from a larger study on alcohol use and sexual behavior. The women who were chosen to participate in this study, completed questionnaires on a computer as well as face to face interviews. Participants were asked questions about their living arrangements and then social aggression, using a modified version of the Sexual Experiences Survey. They were also asked about their drinking habits in the past twelve months.

The results of the study showed that female students living away from their parents had higher rates of sexual aggression and alcohol use. However, when compared to nonstudents, they

had lower rates of alcohol and drug consumption and less sexual partners. The researchers also found that women who lived with their parents had more sexual partners than those that lived away from home ($p < .05$). They found that binge drinking was a predictor of attempted rape/rape but not for sexual aggression. The researchers concluded that the women's risky behaviors were not due to college, but to the age group.

McCauley, Ruggiero, Resnick and Kilpatrick (2010) examined female rape history compared to binge drinking and drug use habits. The researchers randomly selected women ages 18-34 years of age from a national sample. They conducted telephone surveys with 1,998 women in the target age group. The women were asked questions about prior victimization followed by questions on drug/alcohol use and incapacitated rape. A rape was reported by 23.6% of participants while drug/alcohol use played a part in 3.5% of those cases. The researchers found that being in the 21-25 age group was a risk factor for binge drinking. The researchers were able to suggest that prior victimization played a part in binge drinking. The highest levels of binge drinking seemed to occur among those women who experienced incapacitated rape ($p < .001$). The researchers suggest that looking at both victimization and drug/alcohol use could maximize the benefits of prevention and treatment.

Klein, Geaghan, and MacDonald (2007) examined college students risk perceptions of experiencing unplanned sexual activity after consuming alcohol. To determine the effects of the risk perceptions, the researchers randomly chose 900 students from a freshman class at a northeastern college in the United States. In all, there were 380 students who submitted the information necessary for the study. The results revealed that students who perceived their risk to be high consumed more alcohol, therefore, suggesting they were also high risk for unplanned

sexual activity. It was noted that some students see unplanned sex to be a desired activity therefore increasing their risk for greater alcohol consumption to increase the chances of unplanned sex. The researchers suggested that students understood that alcohol consumption increased their chances for negative outcomes. They also suggested that among some student populations high risk activities are seen as something they want to maintain.

Clum, Nishith, and Calhoun (2002) examined the relationship between alcohol use, sexual assault and perception of severity. They also examined peritraumatic reactions from the sexual assault. The researchers hypothesized that women would view sexual assault or the physical and emotional reactions of the assault to be less severe when combined with alcohol use. Participants for the study were obtained through psychology classes at a large Southeastern university in the United States. Participants were required to complete research participation as part of their coursework. The researchers looked for women who had experienced a rape or attempted rape within the last 4 years and at least 3 months prior to the study. Several different questionnaires were used in the study and 57 women met the requirements for the study.

The results of the study showed that 44% of the women reported unwanted intercourse because they were given alcohol or drugs by a male partner. Alcohol use was reported by 79% of the women. The researchers also found that alcohol was not a significant factor in peritraumatic physical and emotional reactions ($p = .29$). They also noted the relationship between quantity of drinks and the type of sexual assault.

Sexual assault prevention on campus

Sexual assault prevention programs can be beneficial for students. One popular and fairly new model is the bystander approach. McMahon (2010) conducted a study on rape myth

beliefs and bystander attitudes where 2,338 students were surveyed at a new student orientation program. The results of the study helped to frame elements of rape prevention programming on college campuses. Since the sample of students supported typical rape myth beliefs, it was suggested that prevention programs seek to address victim blaming. The study also showed that overall students were willing to be good bystanders and intervene in a rape situation. However, believing in the myths made it less likely they would do so. If bystander programs are to be effective, the likely first step is to address the acceptance of rape myths.

Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss and Wechsler (2010) used data from three Harvard School of Public Health college alcohol surveys to examine college drinking environments. The study also examined whether women were more likely to be raped in heavier drinking environments. They used a sample of 119 colleges and found that women who attended colleges and universities where there was a heavy drinking environment were more likely to experience a rape. The results suggested that colleges and universities should use primary, secondary and tertiary prevention approaches. As a result of the study, the researchers also suggested that substance abuse prevention should be a part of rape prevention programs as well as increased education of male students on campus.

Berkowitz (2003) highlighted the success of social norms approaches for alcohol and other drug use on campus. Because of this success, the idea was to expand the approach to include sexual assault prevention. Social norms theory is about relating to others that the perceptions of campus norms are most often false. Peers have a huge influence on each other, so correcting the false information with truth can be useful for prevention. This approach can include one-on-one, small groups, or campus campaigns. To create a social norm campaign a

campus must first identify their campus misperceptions. For example, the author found that women in sororities who have experienced sexual assault are afraid to talk about it. This is an example of a misperception because sorority sisters most often want others to seek their support. Using the social norms approach with small groups could be beneficial in such a situation.

Carmody, Ekhomu, and Payne (2009) conducted focus group interviews with 17 campus advocates working in sexual assault centers. Participants were asked multiple questions regarding their experiences, trends in sexual assault, successful practices, relationship with campus police, and underserved students to name a few. The results of the study revealed many different issues within sexual assault prevention on college campuses. The first issue was lack of funding. Some of the advocates mentioned that their campus administrators would not support applications for external funding. They felt that it was better to keep sexual assault statistics within the campus sexual assault centers. The second issue was the need for more education for incoming freshman, faculty and police officers. The advocates noted that they already conducted some education programs, but expansion was needed. Other issues highlighted by the advocates were the need for a statewide coordinator to coordinate services on all campuses and the need for increased services for international students.

Summary

Research about alcohol used among college students, sexual assault risk among college females, alcohol use and the risk of sexual assault, and sexual assault prevention programs on campus have been reviewed in this chapter. This review of literature is meant to give the reader an overview of the alcohol use and sexual behaviors of college females. Chapter III will discuss

the methodology of the current study. Chapter IV will present the results of this study while Chapter V discusses the implications of the results.

Chapter III

Methodology

Design of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the intersection between alcohol use and sexual behaviors of female college students. The second purpose of this study was to determine how these females perceived their risk of sexual assault. A qualitative approach was used to better understand the phenomenon of alcohol use and sexual behaviors among female college students. A qualitative approach also allowed the researcher to obtain the richest data possible.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of five traditional, four-year undergraduate, female students. All females were between 21-23 years of age. Participants were recruited through flyers passed out in the quad, through health studies classes and through word of mouth. The study was marketed as a study on college female alcohol use and unanticipated consequences. Potential participants were given a flyer with the researcher's contact information (Appendix B).

If the participants agreed to join the study, they scheduled a time to be interviewed. Participants read and signed an informed consent document (Appendix A) indicating the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time without consequences. Numbers were substituted for participants' names in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant 1 was a 21 year old Caucasian female. She was a senior student, majoring in health studies and pre nursing. She was also a member of a social sorority.

Participant 2 was 22 year old Caucasian female. She was a senior student, majoring in health studies. She was also a member of a social sorority.

Participant 3 was a 23 year old Caucasian female. She was a senior student, majoring in health studies.

Participant 4 was a 21 year old African American female. She was a senior student, majoring in health studies. She was a member of NAACP, Black Student Union (BSU) and minority health.

Participant 5 was a 21 year old Caucasian female. She was a senior student, majoring in History with teacher certification. She was also a member of a social sorority.

Methods

Data were collected at a mid-sized, Midwestern comprehensive university with approximately 10,000 students. Individual interviews were conducted in an observation room in the Counseling and Student Development Department. The door to the interview room was shut during all of the interviews to ensure privacy of the participant. After the purpose of the study was outlined, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. Once the purpose of the study was explained and signatures were obtained, participants were interviewed by a female interviewer using the interview guide approach (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006). The interviews were audio and video recorded. Data were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis. All of the data were secure and stored in a password protected computer. Data will be kept in a locked and secured location for three years before it is destroyed. A written description of the data collection as well as the analysis and interpretation of results was given to a colleague for review, to ensure proper research methods were used.

The following research questions were used in each interview with follow-up probes based on participant responses.

1. How would you describe your drinking habits on a weekly basis? (Blowers, 2009).
2. What unplanned consequences have occurred as a result of your drinking habits? (Wechsler et al., 1995).
3. Describe your perceptions of how increased alcohol consumption might increase a female's risk of unplanned sexual contact? (Mohler-Kuo et al., 2001).
4. In what ways do you perceive the consequences of increased consumption differ between males and females? (Wechsler et al., 1995).

Data collection

Data for this study were collected through one-on-one interviews using open-ended, guided questions with volunteer participants. The study used personal interviews to allow participants to be free with their information instead of giving the most socially acceptable answer in front of their peers. All participants were interviewed by a female interviewer. A female interviewer was used to make the participants more comfortable when sharing information. Before their interview, participants signed an informed consent form. They were reminded that they could withdraw their participation in the study at any moment and that their names would not be used in the final document. Audio and video recordings were downloaded to a password protected computer drive. All data will be kept in a locked location. No one but the researcher will have access to the data and recordings. The recordings were reviewed in the researcher's office after hours, when no one else was present. All recordings and data files will be kept for three years. After three years, all data will be destroyed.

Chapter IV

Findings

The following research questions were used in each interview to examine the intersection between alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. The questions also helped determine how the females perceived their risk of sexual assault. The questions were framed based on research from previous studies on alcohol use and negative consequences, including sexual assault among college students. The research questions as well as participant responses are found in this chapter. Additionally, common themes that resulted through the interviews are also outlined.

Research Question #1: How would you describe your drinking habits on a weekly basis?

Participants were varied in their answers concerning weekly alcohol drinking habits. Three participants indicated that they drink three to four nights a week, typically towards the weekend rather than the first of the week. The other two participants indicated that they only drink occasionally, also nearer the weekend. Participant 1 reported drinking the most.

I'll go out Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, [and] Saturday. It really depends on how much I have to get done that week. If I have a test the next day I obviously won't go out or if I have a huge paper, I won't go out. Like I never put drinking or fun before school. But I do if I get it all done, I'll for sure go out.

As a follow up, participant one was asked how many drinks she drank in a typical night. She responded, "...before I go out I'll always like take shots...If I drink beer I'll drink like four before I go out, maybe 5." She went on to indicate that she would drink whatever type of beer had the most alcohol in it. At no time did the participant indicate remorse or concern about her

level of drinking. Her demeanor was rather excited and she spoke as if her behavior was typical in a social setting.

Participant 2 also reported drinking fairly often. She reported drinking three times a week. When asked to describe what her drinking habits were like she indicated, “probably too much, maybe like four drinks before the bar...probably shots in between and then at the bar beers, like a couple of beers and then one or two shots.” When reporting her drinking behaviors, participant 2 answered in a thoughtful and reflective manner, an indication to the PI that she was uneasy and embarrassed about how much she was drinking.

Participant 3 indicated drinking less than participant one and two and believed it to be within moderate levels. “I occasionally go out on the weekends, but I hardly ever drink during the week unless there is a special occasion like a birthday or something like that.”

Participant 4 reported drinking less than participants one through three. Her drinking was described as once or twice a month: “...I’m not really a drinker, so I don’t really drink very much. So I’ll probably say maybe once or twice a month.” Participant 4 felt as though she was in control of her own drinking behaviors.

Participant 5 indicated that compared to previous years she drank less this year, “Well, this year’s gotten a lot harder so I definitely drink less. Probably go out like three nights a week.” However, going out did not mean that she would always consume alcohol. She simply described it as a “social outing” with her friends. A follow up question was asked about the nights of the week she drank and she responded,

It used to be Tuesdays, but now it is probably more Thursdays. Now I kind of base it on what I have due at 8am. It used to be Tuesdays because Wednesdays were later, but since I have class at the same time every day it's just whatever I have due.

When asked if she goes out on the weekends she responded, "Like on Fridays, me and all my friends will do 4 o'clock club at [a popular local student bar], maybe someone's apartment and then the bars."

All the participants had drinking patterns that trended toward weekend consumption. Most of the participants were conscious of needing to drink less when they had early morning school commitments or important assignments due.

As a follow up question to this discussion, all participants were asked to describe how they would define the term, *binge drinking*. The participants were all aware of the term and attempted to offer a definition of what it meant. Although none of the definitions given by the participants were technically correct, they did offer varying examples of what they thought binge drinking meant. Participant 1 was the first to comment about drinking to the point where one blacks out:

.... Drinking to the point where you don't remember. Like you kind of brown out. Like you don't completely black out usually, because that like, when you black out it's like more of an issue than I feel like binge drinking.

Participant 1 was the only participant to use the phrase "brown out" versus "black out."

Participant 2 answered the question indicating her perceptions of binge drinking and addressed her own drinking at the same time, "drinking to excess at any time...I'm pretty positive that women are supposed [to have] one every hour and I definitely have more every hour."

Participant 3 was aware that a healthy amount of alcohol for a female to drink is fairly low. However, she disagreed with how much females should drink and believed that they should be able to drink more. When asked what she thought the number of drinks a female should be able to have in one sitting, she responded, "Maybe like six or seven." A follow up question was asked about how long of a time span should the six or seven drinks be consumed. She indicated that, "Maybe like two hours or just like one hour maybe, one or two hours." Participant 4 defined binge drinking as at 10 to 15 drinks in one sitting.

Participant 5 did not know how to define binge drinking but offered an example of what she thought it was: "binge drinking to me is just drinking to get drunk, drinking the cheap, I don't know, jungle juice...I don't really know what binge drinking is and I'm in college. That's pretty sad." She went on to indicate that she personally drinks to have a good time and to not get drunk.

Four of the participants were in an academic major where drinking is discussed as a health topic. This major also addresses the dangers of drinking while learning to plan and develop programs to prevent binge drinking. The interviews were marked by a lack of mindfulness or self-reflection about the level of drinking expressed by the participants. There was a marked disconnect between the topic of increased alcohol consumption, such as what they might study in the textbook, and their own personal experience of drinking.

Research Question #2: What unplanned consequences have occurred as a result of your drinking habits?

The majority of participants experienced some type of unplanned consequence that happened while consuming alcohol. Some were more severe than others, but each of the consequences had a negative connotation and was difficult for the participants to talk about.

Participant 2 experienced quite a few negative consequences as a result of her drinking behaviors. She had previously commented on less severe consequences such as losing her keys and ID, but then disclosed the following.

...I got a DUI once. So that wasn't a good time in my life, but it did happen...I have slept with a male once and I didn't really want to. I mean, I knew him. I just meant I didn't want to, as I would have rather not. Like I did know him and we've slept together before but it's like we were drunk and went home together. So it was one of those things.

The experience of receiving a DUI as a result of drinking was described as a negative emotional event, more so than sleeping with the acquaintance after becoming drunk. She was visibly disappointed in herself and described the consequences of obtaining the DUI as regrettable; she stated she stopped drinking as a result until she was 21. However, she did not appear to describe the sexual encounter after getting drunk with as much regret or disappointment.

Participant 3 had a similar experience with a male, but contracted a sexually transmitted disease as a result of having sex under the influence of alcohol. "...I drank on my friend's 21st birthday and got too drunk and ended up hooking up with a random person and because of that, I got HPV. So, now all of my relationships are affected." When asked if this was her first random

hookup, she commented, “This was the first time that I had just met the person. Like before, I kind of knew them, but it was still random.” Participant 3 described her sexual encounter in more negative terms, perhaps because she did not know the person and because there was a lasting consequence to her behaviors. Participant 3 described other sexual encounters while under the influence of alcohol, but these were not seen as negatively as being sexually active with a person she did not know.

The other participants did not associate any unplanned consequences with their drinking. They did, however, highlight negative consequences later in the interviews that were a result of their drinking. Participants 1 and 4 seemed unwilling to admit any unplanned consequences and were extremely quick to answer. Participant 1 even listed the things that have not happened to her when she said, “I’ve never gotten pregnant. I’ve never had a pregnancy scare...I’ve never gotten a sexually transmitted disease. I’ve never been raped. I’ve never been forced into doing something I didn’t want to.”

Research Question #3: Describe your perceptions of how increased alcohol consumption might increase a female’s risk of unplanned sexual contact?

Participants were asked about increased alcohol consumption and how that impacts a female’s risk of unplanned sexual contact. All participants agreed that increased consumption increases a female’s risk. Participants used words like “relaxed”, “let loose”, “open up”, and “not care” to describe how alcohol makes someone feel. Participant 1 commented about random hook ups and increased alcohol use.

...I feel like a lot of people go out if they want to randomly hook up with someone, they'll be drinking or they'll be drunk. I don't know anybody who can be sober and just randomly hook up with somebody...they barely know.

Participant 2 spoke about being in a sorority for the first time after being asked about the risk of an unplanned sexual encounter after increased alcohol consumption.

...Being in a sorority, I see it happening a lot. I don't know. I guess we or everybody just lets loose or opens up but maybe too much, maybe because we're drinking too much. So guys just take advantage of that I think and girls in a way kind of want attention.

As a follow-up question to this comment, participant 2 indicated that sorority culture makes it easier to be around alcohol consumption.

Participant 3 and Participant 4 commented about how drinking seems to increase a female's hormones and make a female want to have sex while under the influence. Participant 5 discussed her perception that males see females who are under the influence of alcohol as more eager to have sex. However, she did not perceive herself as one who is seen that way, even when she was under the influence.

I definitely think that guys aren't necessarily attracted to the drug girls, but they see them as definitely easier to get if that makes sense. Most guys know I'm not, and I'm not just saying this, I'm more friends with all the guys. But, I've seen how they perceive those girls...they'll be like 'she's a drunk mess' or they'll be hitting on her.

Research Question #4: In what ways do you perceive the consequences of increased consumption differ between males and females?

All of the participants agreed that females usually suffered from more severe consequences than males with increased alcohol consumption. Participant 1 thought that it was okay for males to become extremely and visibly intoxicated while it was not okay for females to do so.

...It's way more okay for a guy to black out and do stupid stuff than it is a girl because guys are just acting like idiots and boys and that is just the way they are. Girls have to step back and be [classier]. No boy likes a girl who is wasted, falling everywhere but a guy blacks out and it's completely fine.

Participant 5 continued the sentiment: "I do think it's different. First off, girls get drunk a lot easier than guys." She went on to say, "I think there's a difference when people see a drunken girl and a drunken guy. I think people just think he's drunk and he's funny whereas they can see a girl like she's a slut or something like that." So the participants indicated a different standard existed along gender lines. Although they were consistently aware of the double standard and angry about its existence, none voiced a desire to challenge or do anything about it. The amount of alcohol or the fact that someone could drink to the level of abuse was not judged or seen as a negative event. Rather, the participants were angry about the social stigma that is attached to binge drinking along gender lines.

Participant 3 stated there were negative sexual consequences for females when consuming too much, but not for males. "...It's easy for a guy to get drunk and be like 'oh yeah, I'm going to hook up.' The only thing that [he] needs to worry about is STI's or getting rejected

or the girl crying rape.” She went on to state that she did not feel females have to worry about raping someone “But for the girl, she not only has the rape thing, but also has to worry about STI’s and pregnancy. Girls are more emotional.” This last statement prompted a follow-up question to which she responded with the following statement.

I think they’re [males] just out to get laid. They don’t have feelings involved. If it does happen, then the next day they are like whatever. I mean, unless they really like the person, but chances are it’s just like a one night thing and they’re immediately over it. A girl would be like ‘you should call me and we should hang out.

Based on her personal encounter with the consequences of a previous “hook up”, participant 3 both personalized and generalized her responses. Although not all males and females think the way she indicated, the participant was aware of cultural stereotypes that impact the meaning of alcohol consumption.

Likewise, participant 4 also mentioned how increased consumption affected the ways females are perceived sexually.

...Females usually aren’t the ones who are trying to have sex or who can force sex upon the males. I mean, they can’t pin them down and force them to have sex. Usually it is the opposite way around. I would say that’s a consequence because it turns out to be sexual assault or it turns out to be a regret that you had.

In this case there is a stated difference in approach to sex under the influence. In spite of both parties being impaired, this participant indicated that females could still be overpowered against their will, whereas men could not be raped.

Additional Themes

There were a few other unanticipated themes that emerged from the interviews. They are outlined in the paragraphs below. The themes were all related to consequences of drinking behaviors and gave better insight into the drinking behaviors of these females.

Temporary memory loss

Participant 1 experienced temporary memory loss due to her drinking on multiple different occasions.

There was one time my freshman year. I went out with my friend. We were in my dorm room taking shots and then we went to the bar. I don't remember one single thing about the bar. I woke up in my bed, in the morning by myself. I didn't have my coat with me. I had on what I wore out that night and that's it. I had no idea what happened and no idea how I got home. I had no idea who drove me home.

Her tone was factual in expressing this event and no apparent regret was expressed. Perhaps this was because she could not recall any negative consequences. Participant 2 also described a night that she could not remember. "I lost my keys so that was like waking up. It was just horrible without your stuff. Not knowing what I did because I felt like I was acting stupid if I don't even know I was there." This time regret was expressed about drinking to a point of memory loss. "I don't like not knowing. I never know why we still do it." This prompted a follow-up question about how many drinks were consumed before black out: "I don't know, a lot, like ten. Doesn't that seem like a lot? I don't know. I feel like a college student's tolerances are also higher just because we drink every weekend." At this point in the interview, the participant seemed reflective on her drinking behaviors and even expressed that she realized she was drinking a lot.

Participant 3 described her memory loss in terms of “bits and pieces missing.”

Participant 5 could not remember her 21st birthday after 11:30PM. “I got so drunk so fast that at one point I could hardly stand up.” Participant 5 laughed nervously while describing this night of drinking. She said that she felt embarrassed about this night multiple times during this part of the interview.

Impaired Relationships

Three of the participants had relationships that were impacted negatively as a result of their drinking. Participant 1 described herself being a totally different person while drinking. “...You’re not the same person. I know with my ex-boyfriend, if we were drunk together and I made him mad it would just blow out of proportion.” She went on to describe a night of drinking called “black out Wednesday,” which is the night before Thanksgiving.

I was at the bar and I was really drunk and I saw him with a girl and it turned into this huge fight...he was literally screaming in my face...I’ve never seen him so mad before in my life. Then he just started chugging alcohol just because he was so pissed off at me...that was a little scary.

Participant 2 echoed similar sentiments and stated she always fights more in a relationship when she has been drinking. She thought that her drinking fueled the arguments to a level that they would not be if she were sober. “I’d have to add that in relationships, I always fight more when we’re drinking. It’s just never good when we’re drinking together.” Participant 1 described how being angry under the influence is different, “When you’re drinking, you don’t step back because it’s just like you’re so mad and so fueled. I don’t know, drinking just does that to you.” She was aware of how being impaired changed her ability to self-regulate during an argument. She

indicated the progression from arguing to screaming was easier and less controlled. Her feelings of fear were evident in her description when reflecting on this incident.

Participant 3 has been forced to rethink her drinking behaviors due to contracting a sexually transmitted disease from hooking up with a random person after drinking. All of her future relationships are affected as a result of her drinking. She also described a time when her mother had caught her drinking. "...I drank in my hometown and I was staying with my parents. It was when I had my first hangover and my mom walked in my room while I was throwing up the next morning. She yelled at me about drinking." Participant 3 described feeling bad and regretful about disappointing her mother.

School Performance

Three of the participants described having some level of negatively affected school performance as a result of their drinking. Participant 1 described not being able to get out of bed for classes after a night of drinking.

...If I had a 9:30 and a 10:00 [class] both of us would never get out of bed to go to our class. We would be late to class...I hate going out and feeling like shit in the morning. It's the worst and then your teachers can tell when you're hung over. They're not stupid when you go to class looking like you got hit by a bus.

Participant 2 described doing poorly in classes because of her drinking. "...My first semester of my freshman year in college I did badly when I shouldn't have. I mean, they were really easy classes. I was excited and I went out too much." Participant 2 described feeling bad about wasting her parent's money on college. She also described how it felt to go to class

hung over, “it’s hard to learn when you’re hung over.” Participant 2 expressed regret when discussing how her drinking behaviors affected her academic performance.

Participant 4 described missing assignments due to her drinking behaviors.

I missed an assignment or not following along in classes. I’d probably be like oh well, dang, I should have never did [that]....I’m really sorry for it, but there’s those mornings when you wake up and you’re tired and you can’t do anything that you planned.

Even though she felt bad about missing the assignments, she said that she would not describe herself as being regretful about the missed assignments.

Summary of Results

The participants in this study described a lot of different consequences as a result of their drinking behaviors. The data indicated that the females in this study held a distorted sense of how much alcohol a female should consume. Interestingly, four of the participants were in an academic major where drinking is discussed as a health topic. This major also discusses the dangers of drinking while learning to plan and develop programs to prevent binge drinking. Many of them have been involved sexually with a male under circumstances that could be considered sexual assault. None of the participants were able to describe a textbook response to consent for sexual contact, indicating an apparent lack of education surrounding sexual assault. All of the participants believed that a female can give consent for sexual contact under the influence of alcohol. When it came to relationships, a majority of the participants had a relationship that had been affected as a result of their drinking whether it was a family member or romantic relationship. All of the participants were active on campus in some way, including sororities and other registered student organizations.

The topics focused on by the research participants indicated that further education could impact the level of drinking among college females. Furthermore, greater research into educational interventions that work with college students could impact the culture on a college campus. The issues discussed by the research participants are not new, but they are significant and deserve more attention than they have previously received.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The purpose of the present research was to examine the intersection between alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. The second purpose of this study was to determine how these females perceived their risk of sexual assault. In most cases, the findings of this study were consistent with those of prior researchers. A comparison of the current research with prior research follows.

Woodyard and Hallam (2010) examined the differences in college student drinking on weekdays, weekends and celebration events. For this study, weekends were considered Thursday through Saturday. They found that students drink most often on the weekends than at any other time, including celebrations such as New Year's Eve. Every female interviewed during the course of this study also admitted to drinking more towards the weekend. While not every participant drank every weekend, a majority did consume. Academics were considered a deterrent to some drinking behaviors and were noted in all of the interviews. Most of the participants would abstain or drink less if assignments were due. However, each participant admitted that consuming alcohol impacted their academic performance at least once.

In regards to binge drinking, all of the participants had a distorted sense of healthy alcohol consumption. Wechsler et al. (1993) used data from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study to measure college student drinking. Of the campuses whose data were used, 44 institutions had 50% of their students meet the binge drinking definition of five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women. All of the participants in this study exceeded that definition, by admitting to consuming much more than four drinks. Participant 1 admitted to

always taking shots of hard liquor or 4-5 beers before going out and would also choose beers with the highest alcohol content. Participant 1 would then continue drinking at a bar or house party. Participant 2 also reported high rates of binge drinking: "Probably too much, maybe like four drinks before the bar...probably shots in between and then at the bar, beers, like a couple of beers and then one or two shots." Even if participants did not consume often, the amount that they were drinking during social outings was extremely dangerous

Participant responses also related to the study conducted by Wechsler et al., (1995) who examined the amount of alcohol consumption and alcohol related problems for male and female college students. The researchers suggested that women who drank five or more drinks were more likely to have negative consequences than men. The participants in the present study admitted to several negative consequences as a result of their drinking. The most common regret was having sexual contact after drinking and a few of the participants had sex with a random person after drinking. There were also other negative consequences that resulted from the research inquiry. Participant 3 contracted a sexually transmitted disease as a result of her drinking behavior and concluded "all of my relationships are now affected". Participant 1 had anger issues that escalated with drinking and participant 2 received a DUI before she was 21. Participants expressed some regret for the consequences of their drinking, but participant 2 expressed the most regret because of her DUI.

Buddie and Testa (2005) examined living arrangements during college as well as among students versus non students. Additionally, they examined alcohol consumption as a risk factor of sexual aggression. They found that binge drinking is a predictor of attempted rape/rape but not for sexual aggression. They concluded that the women studied had risky behaviors due more to

age than college attendance. Contrary to their findings, the participants in the current study were all traditional age college students and at risk for negative behaviors associated with drinking.

The participants were asked about perceived risk of sexual assault with increased alcohol consumption. Loiselle and Fuqua (2007) conducted a study to examine whether females would respond to risk differently when under the influence of alcohol. Of those studied, 31% had previously been sexually assaulted and 57% of the cases involved alcohol. The participants in the present study all agreed that females could give consent for sexual contact while under the influence of alcohol. However, the three participants who reported having sex under the influence of alcohol all commented that they would not have engaged in this behavior sober.

The participants of the present study also related to a study conducted by Klein et al., (2007) which examined college students risk perceptions of experiencing unplanned sexual activity. The researchers suggested that students understand that alcohol consumption increases their chance for negative outcomes. They also suggested that among some student populations, high risk activities are seen as something they want to maintain. This finding was supported by the participants in the present study. The participants expressed little regret for the negative consequences they experienced as a result of their drinking. They all understood that drinking can bring negative consequences. At no point in the interview did any of the participants give an indication that they wanted to change their behaviors.

Discussion

The participants in the present study had a distorted sense of what is considered a healthy amount of alcohol to consume. Four of the participants were in an academic major where drinking is discussed as a health topic. This major also discusses the dangers of drinking while

learning to plan and develop programs to prevent binge drinking. The fact that these respondents have additional knowledge beyond the general student population and still continue to consume large quantities of alcohol is an indicator of the lack of both classroom instruction and effective alcohol programming on campus.

The negative consequences that the research participants experienced are evidence of the risky behaviors of college females. Binge drinking is a risk factor for women being sexually assaulted (Mohler-Kuo et al., 2001). The participants that admitted to having sexual intercourse under the influence of alcohol all regretted their decisions when they were sober. The females in this research study all believed that a female could give consent for sexual contact under the influence of alcohol. They also alluded to the fact that females are the ones that can be sexually assaulted. The beliefs of the research participants indicated that further education of students about sexual assault is needed. The Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 was amended in 1992 with the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights and expanded again in 1998. This act calls to action institutions of higher education to develop prevention programs to address the issue of sexual assault.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

1. The participants in the present study have highlighted the fact that knowledge alone does not change behaviors in college students. Four of the participants were from a major in which alcohol is discussed and prevention programs are developed. Prior research has shown that there are some evidence based strategies for alcohol that have proven to be effective with college students (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002). Many student affairs professionals do not have informed

knowledge about such programs to implement them. Additional research as well as evaluation of current prevention programming on campus is recommended to ensure that effective programs are being conducted. Students must be motivated and willing to change their behaviors. Motivational interviewing is a great example of an effective, evidence based strategy to use with students (Miller & Rollick, 2002).

Student affairs professionals should educate and train themselves on such methods.

2. Due to the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights, universities and colleges are mandated to create some type of sexual assault prevention services for students. Allocating resources for this mandate is extremely important. First, universities need to be in compliance with the mandate resulting from the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights. Secondly, students need to receive effective prevention programming to help them make better choices when it comes to alcohol and sexual contact. The participants in the current study all believed that a female could give consent. A stronger focus on the law of consent should also be addressed by student affairs professionals.
3. According to prior research, traditional college age females are at risk because of their age and not necessarily due to attendance at an institution of higher education. Student affairs professionals should be aware of this while dealing with females on campus. Because this age group has a predisposition to make poor choices, careful consideration should be used when approaching alcohol and sexual assault issues.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. The first recommendation for future researchers is to expand the qualitative data to include the use of focus groups. Individual interviews allowed for participants to share information without social influences but might not have been the best approach with the topic of alcohol abuse. Focus groups could help to increase the awareness between participant responses and how the others in the group react. Conducting individual interviews did not provide a medium for immediate feedback from other peers.
2. Obtaining quantitative data on the number of drinks on a daily, weekly and monthly basis might be helpful for future researchers. The individual interviews allowed the participants to discuss their drinking habits to some extent, but some of the participants had a difficult time determining the number of drinks they were consuming. Encouraging participants to record their drinking habits on a daily, weekly or monthly basis before the qualitative interviews might be beneficial for the research process. This could allow further discussion on individual behaviors during the qualitative portion of the study.
3. Future researchers could expand the discussion regarding the apparent disconnect between knowledge and behavior. The participants in this study were aware that drinking alcohol increases their risk of adverse consequences; however none of them offered any desire to change their behaviors. Regardless of the negative consequences that occurred as a result of their drinking behaviors, the females in this study continued to drink to excess. Additionally, four of the participants were in a major where alcohol abuse and prevention is discussed as part of the curriculum. Further research on how that knowledge affects their drinking behaviors could be beneficial.

Conclusions

The present study attempted to examine the intersection between alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. The second purpose of this study was to determine how these females perceived their risk of sexual assault. Student affairs administrators should be concerned about these two issues because they directly impact the learning capabilities and academic performance of students on their campus. The females in this study all admitted to drinking some time in the past 30 days. Most of them were consuming more frequently, such as several times a week.

All of the females in this study indicated that their academic performance had suffered at least once because of alcohol consumption. Student affairs administrators are not only concerned with academic performance, but also with the health and well being of students. A few of the participants drank to the point of temporary memory loss or becoming physically ill. Three of the participants admitted to having sex under the influence of alcohol with random people. Only one of the participants directly voiced regret for her behaviors. None of the participants offered any suggestions for how to change their behaviors or situations.

It is important that student affairs administrators research the types of prevention programs that have been proven to be effective with college students. Student affairs administrators cannot do this work alone. It takes multiple departments and involvement across campus to ensure the effectiveness of programs. Proper understanding of the issues could lead to greater success in curbing the drinking behaviors and negative consequences for the females on college campuses.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study related to alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. This study is being conducted to complete a thesis requirement in the College Student Affairs' master's program. As the principle researcher, I hope to gain a better understanding of the drinking behaviors of college females and any unanticipated consequences associated with those behaviors. You were selected as a possible participant because you fit the general criteria for students I am evaluating (age and gender).

Should you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to interview with the primary investigator of the study for approximately one hour on the topic of alcohol use and unanticipated consequences among college females. There are no foreseeable risks or ill effects from participating in this study. Benefits may include a better understanding of your own perceptions related to alcohol consumption or your own drinking behaviors.

The interview will be videotaped and audio recorded; however, the researcher will not place your name on any documents resulting from the interview. Any information obtained during this study will be confidential and will be viewed only by the primary investigator and the thesis advisor. This informed consent document will be kept separate from the interview data. All video and audio recordings as well as transcripts will be kept locked in a cabinet for three years before being destroyed.

Your participation in this research project will help gather information about your experiences with alcohol and any unanticipated consequences associated with drinking. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to discontinue participation at any time. You will receive a copy of this consent form for future reference. Please feel free to ask any questions of the primary investigator before signing this form or at any time during the interview. If you feel as though you need counseling services following the interview, please contact the Eastern Illinois University counseling center at 217-581-3413 or SACIS at 217-348-5033.

If you have any questions, please contact me, Jessica Wright, at jawright3@eiu.edu at any time.

I, _____, agree to participate in this study. I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this study and have given my consent to participate.

You may withdraw at any time from this study without penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Ave., Charleston, IL, 61920, 217-581-8576, ejuirb@www.eiu.edu.

Participant's Signature

Date

Primary Investigator's Signature

Date

Faculty Supervisor
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Appendix B

Flyer

Attention females age 21-24:

You are invited to participate in a study related to alcohol use and unanticipated consequences for college females. This study is being conducted to complete a thesis requirement in the College Student Affairs' master's program. As the principle researcher, I hope to gain a better understanding of the drinking behaviors of college females and any unanticipated consequences associated with those behaviors. Should you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for about an hour. **Your name will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of TWO \$20 Wal-mart gift cards!**

If interested, please contact me, Jessica Wright, at jawright3@eiu.edu. Please contact me **no later than September 16, 2011.**

I hope you will participate! I look forward to hearing from you!