Effects of Social Interactions/Motivations on Alcohol Consumption
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This paper was written for Dr. Kraemer’s Survey Research course. Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the effect of social interaction/motivation on alcohol consumption. The study specifically focused on undergraduate college females. A total of 53 female students from a small private 4-year college were recruited to participate. Each participant completed a survey in the privacy of their dorms through door-to-door contact by the researcher. Descriptive statistics and Pearson-r correlation analyses showed that some types of social interaction may play a role in the college females’ alcohol consumption. On the other hand, many females report consuming alcohol in groups before entering college. Therefore, the social groups within which these interactions take place may not necessarily be college-related.

Effects of Social Interactions/Motivations on Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol usage among college students has been a constant focus of many researchers. Over the past few years increased attention has been directed towards the motives behind the alcohol usage. One possible motive is that alcohol is influenced by rate and patterns of peer use (Collins, Parks & Marlett, 1985). This idea has brought attention to the roles played by social groups such as sororities and fraternities (Baer, 1994) and athletes involved in team sports (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Grossman & Zanakas, 1997). It is hypothesized that those students that are a member of these types of social groups would consume alcohol because the social group would serve as a motivational tool. The present study investigated the relationship between the habitualness of alcohol consumption in college females and the relation of different social groups. It was expected that those females involved in specific social groups would consume more alcohol when with others of the social group rather than alone or without these specific peer relations (showing that the social interaction is the motivation for alcohol consumption).

Method

Respondents
A total of 53 undergraduate female students at a small private 4-year college were recruited to participate in the current study. Recruitment was conducted by door-to-door contact throughout the residential dorms; all students who were asked to participate did so anonymously.

Demographic questions revealed that 43% of the respondents were members a sorority and 30% were members of an intercollegiate athletic team at the college. The demographic questions also revealed that 47% of the respondents were freshman, 26% were sophomores, 11% were juniors and 15% were seniors.

The Questionnaire
The questionnaire used in this research was developed by the author with the use of several demographic questions and a second section composed of Likert-type questions. (See attached survey in Appendix A.)

Procedure

The 53 students that participated in this study were randomly selected by the researcher and contacted in person in their dorm rooms. The purpose and confidentiality of the research was described to the participants and questions about the research were answered. The questionnaires were completed at the time of contact and submitted to the researcher in order to ensure confidentiality.

An informed consent form for this research was approved by the LaGrange College Institutional Review Board. All students who participated signed an informed consent form prior to participation. (See informed consent form in Appendix B.)

Results

In order to determine if different social interactions have an effect on the amount of alcohol consumption consumed in undergraduate females a coding method was used for the Likert-type items on the questionnaire. The coding was as follows: Very often (1), Often (2), Sometimes (3) and Almost Never (4). The purpose of the coding was to determine correlations and significance in the calculations.

Means and standard deviations were calculated in order to compare responses to the eight Likert-type questions. These results can be found in Table 1. Pearson-r correlations were calculated comparing all variables. The results of these analyses can be found in Table 2.

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Discussion

The correlation coefficients showed significant relationships between several of the variables identified in the survey. One of these is that the younger the female on an athletic team the more alcohol is consumed ($r = -.472$, $p<.05$). The reason for this may be
based on experience of the athletes. The younger, less experienced athlete in college life may be lead to more alcohol consumption by the example of older college females. In order to further investigate this hypothesis, a comparison of a sample of females in a longitudinal study from the lower class (younger females) to the upper-class college standing should be studied.

The results also showed a correlation between those sorority members who consume alcohol with other members of a sorority of fraternity and those who consumed alcohol before entering college \((r = .406, p<.05)\). A similar correlation was found between those members of athletic teams and those who consumed alcohol before entering college \((r = .514, p<.05)\). This correlation indicates that the females who consume alcohol currently with the specified social groups were already consuming alcohol before entering college. Although this finding contradicts the hypotheses of this study, that the social groups are the motivation for college female alcohol consumption, it should also be noted that there is high variance of the regularity of alcohol consumption of females before entering college \((M = 3.43, SD = .797)\); showing that although some of the females consumed alcohol before entering college many of the group members didn’t consume alcohol until after entering college.

Another correlation was found between the frequency of alcohol consumption by females in groups before entering college and females who currently consume alcohol in groups, however not specified as sorority groups or athletic groups \((r = .613, p<.01)\). This demonstrates that some social aspects may rest in the alcohol consumption in females in general, however not limited to college females and furthermore not related to sorority groups and athletic groups.

These finding suggest that although there may be some social influence to alcohol consumption in college females they may not be directly related to sorority membership or athletic team membership. Additional research should focus on the factors which are associated with alcohol consumption before a student enters college.

Appendix A

**Effects of Social Interactions/Motivations on Alcohol Consumption**

I am conducting a survey to determine the effects of social interactions on alcohol consumption in college females. I am asking that you respond honestly to the questions below. This survey will only take a few minutes to complete and all answers that you provide are anonymous. Filling out the survey indicates you have given your consent to participate.

For each question below, circle the choice which best applies:

1. What is your current class status?
   - a. Freshman
   - b. Sophomore
   - c. Junior
   - d. Senior
   - e. Other: Specify __________________
2. What is your age?
   a. 17 – 20 years old
   b. 21 – 24 years old
   c. 25+ years old

3. Which residential housing do you live in?
   a. Pitts or Hawks
   b. Turner
   c. Henry
   d. Candler or Vernon
   e. Off-Campus

4. Are you a member of a sorority?
   a. yes
   b. no

5. If you are a member of a sorority, how long have you been a member?
   a. 1 year or less
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 2-3 years
   d. 3 or more years

6. Are you a member of a LaGrange College Intercollegiate athletic team?
   a. yes
   b. no

7. If you are a member of a LaGrange College Intercollegiate athletic team, how long have you been a member?
   a. 1 year or less
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 2-3 years
   d. 3 or more years

8. In the following questions, please indicate the choice that best applies to you in a typical experience:

   Never   Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Almost
How often did you consume alcohol before entering college?

How often did you consume alcohol alone before entering college?

How often did you consume alcohol in a group of 2 or more before entering college?

How often do you currently consume alcohol?

How often do you currently consume alcohol alone?

How often do you currently consume alcohol in a group of 2 or more?

If you are a member of a sorority, how often do you consume alcohol with other members of a sorority or fraternity?

If you are a member of a LaGrange College Intercollegiate athletic team, how often do you consume alcohol with other members of the athletic team?

Thank you for your participation and taking the time to complete this survey.
CONSENT FORM

DATE ________________

I, ______________________________________, freely and voluntarily and without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or other form of constraint or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled, "Effects of Social Interactions/Motivations on Alcohol Consumption," to be conducted at LaGrange College, during the period Nov 27, 2006 to Dec 15, 2006, with Kaminsia Stewart as Principal Investigator. The procedures to be followed, and their purposes, including identification of any procedures, which are experimental, have been explained to me and I understand them. They are as follows:

The Principal Investigator will personally deliver the questionnaires. In order to assure confidentiality, she will also personally retrieve questionnaires upon completion. The questionnaires will be retrieved by the participant placing their own questionnaires into a large blank envelope that will also have other completed questionnaires in it; none of these (questionnaires) will be examined until the data collection process has ended in order for the participants to remain anonymous.

The attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be expected by my participation in subject project have been explained to me and I understand them to be as follows:
There is a social risk due to the age range of the participant population. Some of the females participating may under the drinking age of 21 required by the state. However your decision whether to participate will not jeopardize your future relationship with LaGrange College or bring forth any law violations due to the state drinking age.

Any benefits reasonably to be expected from my participation and any alternative procedures that might be advantageous have been explained to me and are as follows:

a better understanding of social groups’ relationship to alcohol consumption in females on the LaGrange College campus.

I understand that this consent and data may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the foregoing. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read and understand the foregoing.

______________________________               ______________________________
(Witness)                               (Subject or Legally Authorized Representative)

References
