

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

This month's research paper looks at the impact of alcohol consumption and the expectations college kids have about alcohol use on their ability to protect themselves and their "willingness" to use sexually coercive behaviors. We purposely use the term "kids" because the research about this age group often considers them fully adult in their decision processes. But such thinking ignores the research about youth development, brain development and proven successful treatment interventions for sexually abusive youth. While these kids are legally adults, many of them cannot legally drink--the significant and often negative impact of alcohol consumption on thinking and sexual behaviors in this age group demands our full attention and our best practices if we care about preventing sexual violence.

We hope you enjoy the article and we hope you also grapple with these important issues.

The Role of Alcohol in Sexually Coercive Behavior by Both Male and Female College Students

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

The Research

Palmer, McMahon, Rounsaville, and Ball surveyed 370 college students to explore the:

- relationship between coercive sexual experiences,
- use of protective behavioral strategies,
- alcohol expectancies (e.g., what the user expected would happen by drinking alcohol), and
- the amount of alcohol consumption.

While acknowledging some study limitations, the research indicated that: 34% of the women and 31% of the men reported unwanted sexual contact while 6% of the women and 13% of the men reported engagement in sexually coercive behaviors. Victims reported greater alcohol consumption, increased negative consequences due to their use of alcohol, and used fewer protective strategies. Students who used sexually coercive behaviors also reported greater alcohol consumption and noted significantly higher sex-related alcohol expectancies for the effect of alcohol on sex (e.g., beliefs that alcohol would decrease inhibition, reduce tensions, and increase social pleasure). Of particular interest was the fact that this is one of the first studies to explore alcohol expectancies and the use of protective strategies among male victims and female perpetrators.

Implications for Professionals

This research suggests a very high correlation between alcohol use and sexual victimization/victimizing. While exploration of substance

As always, we welcome your feedback. And if you want us to examine a particular issue in an upcoming issue, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis

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FEATURED NEARI RESOURCES

2011-2012 NEARI PRESS CATALOG

This month we are excited to announce the release of NEARI's 2011-2012 Catalog. We have a number of new books coming out on topics as far ranging as sexual violence prevention, pornography, treatment of spectrum disorders, and the integration of indigenous healing practices. And as we reflected on our entire listing of books, we realized that there are a number of important titles by well-respected authors that have either been self-published or published by other companies. We wanted to highlight these titles and you will see that our new catalog reflects these new additions as well.

In February, we will be breaking our "once a month" rule in a few weeks to send you an

use has always been a part of any good risk/protective factor evaluation, this research reinforces the importance of a thorough exploration of this dimension for both victims and victimizers. In addition, the correlation between alcohol expectancies in both populations and the consistency of beliefs across gender for those who abuse provides guidance for prevention programs and treatment interventions. Embedded within alcohol expectancies are significant thinking errors by both victims and those who use coercive sex that precede the use of alcohol or drugs. Exploring and altering these distorted value statements allows treatment providers not only to work on eliminating the risk factor of substance abuse, but also work on the cognitive components that give the user "permission" in his/her own mind to use alcohol to aid in committing a coercive sexual act or use protective practices. From a protective perspective, the research emphasizes the importance of teaching alcohol protection strategies to young people headed for what may be a "first in their lives" unsupervised environment around alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Implications for the Field

This study suggests that there are problematic beliefs and values guiding the actions of those that abuse as well as those who are abused. When these belief and values are combined with alcohol, they create a volatile interaction contributing significantly to sexually abuse. The safety plans that treatment programs use with sexually abusive youth might also be useful in any institution looking to create a safer environment for youth.

Although the researchers did comment on the impact of past victimization and alcohol use (e.g., increasing the student's vulnerability to future victimization) there is an equally compelling need to explore the impact of perpetration on the student who used sexually coercive behaviors. If they successfully abuse someone, are they more likely to sexually abuse again? To create more effective prevention and treatment interventions, it would be helpful to explore this further and identify whether a few students were perpetrating a significant number of sexually abusive situations or whether there were a broad range of students engaging in this behavior.

Overall, this research provides a call for intensive, consistent, and targeted prevention programs to alter a trajectory that can significantly affect the lives of many young people.

Abstract

Alcohol use and sexual assault on college campuses are highly prevalent and the focus of numerous prevention and intervention efforts. Our goals were to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between coercive sexual experiences, utilization of protective behavioral strategies, and alcohol expectancies and consumption among male and female college students. We surveyed 370 college students regarding their past year experiences

electronic version of NEARI's Catalog. We hope you will enjoy this new listing as much as we do!

In the meantime, if you want to check out any of our practical brochures, workbooks, and textbooks, please visit NEARI Press publications:

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About the Editor:
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[David Prescott website](#)

An internationally recognized expert in the field of sexual abuse assessment, treatment, management, and prevention, Mr. Prescott has published numerous articles and authored, edited, and co-edited books on risk assessment, interviewing, and providing residential treatment to youth. He is a Past President of ATSA and is currently Clinical Director for the Becket Programs of Maine, overseeing inpatient and outpatient services for juveniles.

and found that 34% of women and 31% of men reported unwanted sexual contact, 6% of women and 13% of men reported engaging in sexually coercive behavior, and 4% of women and 9% of men reported experiencing both unwanted contact and engaging in sexually coercive behavior. Findings indicated students who experienced unwanted sexual contact reported significant differences in alcohol expectancies. More specifically, those who engaged in sexually coercive behaviors had significantly higher sex-related alcohol expectancies. In addition, recipients of unwanted contact reported higher alcohol consumption, used fewer protective strategies when drinking, and experienced more negative consequences due to their alcohol use. Results suggest that campus alcohol and sexual assault prevention efforts should include information on alcohol expectancies and use of protective strategies.

Citation

Palmer, R.S., McMahon, T.J., Rounsaville, B.J. & Ball, S.A. (2010). Coercive Sexual Experiences, Protective Behavioral Strategies Alcohol Expectancies and Consumption Among Male and Female College Students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25, 1563-1578.

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