



WILLIAM & MARY  
CHARTERED 1693

Journal of Sorority and Fraternity  
Life Research and Practice

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Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 6

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March 2016

## Just the Facts, Bro: Developing a Successful Alcohol Education Program for Fraternity Members

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### Recommended Citation

Hamm, K. Joy Ed.D. (2016) "Just the Facts, Bro: Developing a Successful Alcohol Education Program for Fraternity Members," *Journal of Sorority and Fraternity Life Research and Practice*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25774/5ez7-wp87>  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/oracle/vol11/iss1/6>

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# Hamm: Just the Facts, Bro: Developing a Successful Alcohol Education Program JUST THE FACTS, BRO: DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL ALCOHOL EDUCATION

## PROGRAM FOR FRATERNITY MEMBERS

K. JOY HAMM, CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP) on fraternity drinking, ascertain elements of the program that may lead to behavioral change and understand the role chapter culture plays in the success of the program. Although the researcher did not find significant evidence to support ASTP as an effective alcohol education program for reducing high-risk drinking, certain elements of ASTP do seem to be viewed as useful by members of fraternities. The findings from this study enabled the researcher to make several recommendations regarding alcohol education within the fraternal community.*

Prevention specialists and higher education professionals have been studying college students and alcohol for more than 30 years and have learned that members of the fraternity and sorority community are at an even greater risk for negative consequences resulting from their high-risk drinking than their non-affiliated peers (Cashin, Presley, & Meilman, 1998). Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gladhill-Hoyt, and Lee (1998) stated that, while fraternity and sorority members may only represent a portion of the entire college population nation-wide, their higher levels of use play a major role when discussing the impact of alcohol misuse and abuse on college campuses. For this reason, it is important to thoroughly explore alcohol use within the fraternity and sorority system and seek more effective ways to reduce high-risk drinking within this unique student group.

While much research concerning the reduction of high-risk drinking within the general college population has been conducted, there has been little focus on how to reduce heavy drinking and associated negative outcomes among fraternity and sorority members. In fact, many undergraduate and alumni members of fraternities and sororities “claim that too little systematic research on a national scale has been done, that too much of the criticism related to alcohol use by fraternity and sorority members

has been based on anecdotes” (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996, p. 263). The lack of empirical research related to drinking within the fraternity and sorority community makes developing prevention programming even more difficult (Turrisi, Mallett, & Larimer, 2006). In order to change the high-risk drinking behaviors of fraternity and sorority members and reduce the associated negative consequences, campus-based professionals as well as inter/national organization staff members must develop targeted programming that specifically address the needs of these organizations (Larimer, Anderson, Baer, & Marlatt, 2000).

### Literature Review

While high-risk drinking can lead to many different problems experienced by college students (Perkins, 2002), certain student groups - athletes, first year students living in residence halls, and fraternity and sorority members - are at higher risk for engaging in dangerous drinking behaviors as well as for increased negative consequences associated with their alcohol use (Brenner & Swanik, 2007; National Center on Addiction & Substance Abuse, 2007; Zamboanga et al., 2009). As alcohol is frequently available to students at the parties hosted by fraternities and sororities, chapter houses are often viewed

as havens for heavy drinking and these high-risk behaviors are frequently viewed as acceptable by members (Caron, Mosey, & Hovey, 2004). Often, college administrators, faculty, and students believe that fraternities contribute to, and possibly even encourage, risky alcohol use (Borsari & Carey, 1999).

Anecdotal information indicating abusive drinking behaviors within the fraternity and sorority community has long been shared (Cashin et al., 1998), and research on the subject has supported the fact that members of these organizations actually do drink more frequently and heavily than non-affiliated students (Scott-Sheldon, Carey, & Carey, 2008). Sorority women on average consume 6 drinks per week compared to a rate of only 3 three drinks per week for other female students while fraternity members have been found to drink 20 drinks per week compared to 8 drinks per week for non-members (Cashin et al.). In addition, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) (2007) reported 64% of fraternity and sorority members engaging in binge drinking while only 37% of non-members do so.

Due to their consumption rates, fraternity and sorority members experience more negative consequences associated with their drinking than their non-affiliated peers (McCabe et al., 2005). They are more likely to miss class, earn poor grades, engage in unprotected sex and commit violence when compared to the general college student population (Caron et al., 2004). Turrisi and associates (2006) reported 79% of fraternity men and 72% of sorority women experienced a hangover as a result of drinking. In Wechsler, Kuh and Davenport's (2009) study, 44% of fraternity men and 37% of sorority women reported having missed a class due to drinking. In addition, Scott-Sheldon, Carey, and Carey (2008) found that members of fraternities and sororities are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, such as not using a condom, when under the influence of alcohol than non-affiliated students.

The recurring research themes surrounding

fraternity and sorority membership and high-risk drinking have led to studies aimed at determining why members may drink more frequently and at a higher rate than their non-affiliated peers. The self-selection recruitment process for joining an organization may partly explain these behaviors (Park, Sher, Wood, & Krull, 2009). According to Caudill et al. (2006), the perceived approval of heavy drinking among members may attract new members who drink heavier. Students who come to college already heavy drinkers may search for social groups where they feel these behaviors can continue (DeSimone, 2007).

The new member period may also contribute to alcohol consumption among members. A part of the new member process involves leaning about organizational norms and values as well as finding a place within the chapter (Borsari, Murphy, & Barnett, 2007) and this bonding is often accomplished through the use of alcohol (Kuh, 1993). As new members begin to learn what will be accepted in terms of alcohol use within the organization, some may feel pressure to drink in order to fit in (Borsari & Carey, 1999). Organizations can actually take on the role of the "enabler" in relationship to members and their drinking behaviors (Lo & Globetti, 1995). These groups may help to shield members from scrutiny when they are engaging in high-risk behaviors (Caron et al., 2004) as members often care for each other when negative consequences from drinking result (Cashin et al., 1998).

Many members view alcohol simply as a vehicle for social activity or friendship (Cashin et al., 1998) As peer groups contribute to actual drinking behaviors (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000), the amount of time that members spend together means that they will have a greater opportunity to influence each other (Caudill et al., 2006). Within close-knit groups, gaining approval can be highly desirable; therefore members may conform to behaviors they believe to be acceptable among their chapter peers (Larimer, Turner, Mallett, & Geisner, 2004). Finally, chapter leaders may influence how much other members

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drink as leaders often set the norm for what will be accepted within the chapter regarding alcohol use (Higher Education Center, 2008).

While it is important to consider the role that chapter culture plays in the drinking habits of fraternity and sorority members, it is also important to note that individuals bring personal characteristics and family backgrounds with them when they join the chapter. These individual characteristics influence drinking behaviors (Baer, 2002) and could possibly impact the success for chapter-level alcohol education programs. A family history of alcoholism (Havey & Dobb, 1993) and parents' drinking behaviors (Brennan, Walfish, & Aubuchon, 1986) can influence the amount of alcohol a college student consumes. In addition, students who report engaging in high-risk drinking behaviors in high school are more likely to engage in heavy episodic drinking in college (Weitzman, Toben, & Wechsler, 2003). While attacking alcohol issues at the chapter level is certainly important, some students may require individual interventions in order to change their own drinking behaviors (Larimer & Cronce, 2002), which could in turn change the drinking culture within the chapter.

After reviewing the research available on the topic of alcohol and fraternity and sorority membership, it is impossible not to see that the "frequency of binge drinking by fraternity men and sorority women is cause for great concern and immediate action at every institution that hosts such groups" (Wechsler et al., 1996, p. 276). Although alcohol education is taking place on most college campuses, research has shown that when used with fraternity and sorority members, conventional alcohol prevention efforts such as "just say no" educational campaigns have proven to be ineffective at changing members' drinking behaviors (Hunnicut, Davis, & Fletcher, 1991). In addition, numerous studies that have focused on solely providing information about alcohol and its effects on the body have shown no effect on reducing high-risk drinking or its associated negative consequences among college students

(Collins, Carey, & Sliwinski, 2002; LeChance, 2004). These approaches often do not take into consideration the individual alcohol-related risks associated with this population or the chapter context in which drinking occurs (Larimer et al., 2000). Therefore, different strategies must be employed to address the needs of this group of students (DeSimone, 2007) and these strategies should focus on the environmental factors that contribute to high-risk drinking within social fraternities and sororities (Park et al., 2009).

Alcohol education efforts targeting fraternity and sorority members should challenge their perceived positive expectancies about alcohol use, clarify their norms regarding peers' drinking and teach them moderate drinking guidelines (Larimer et al., 2000). According to Sher, Bartholow, and Nanda (2001), the beliefs that many members have about alcohol consumption in terms of amount and frequency within their individual chapters influence their own rates of consumption. Sharing normative data that is chapter specific with members can help to clarify beliefs about drinking behaviors (Berkowitz, 2001). Chapter leaders' individual behavior often helps to establish drinking norms within an organization. As such, targeting leaders and asking them to examine the effect their own behavior has on their group behavior has been shown to be an effective intervention strategy (Borsari & Carey, 1999). By emphasizing the impact of group dynamics on individual behavior, leaders can begin to see the role their own drinking behaviors play in group norms and in support of the environmental risk factors associated with alcohol use within their organizations (Capone, Wood, Borsari, & Laird, 2007).

Helping members to determine appropriate standards for alcohol use while affirming healthy drinking behaviors can lead to a reduction in some of the more risky alcohol use among fraternity and sorority members (Hunnicut et al., 1991). When members understand how to self-regulate their use by monitoring the number of drinks they consume, reductions in alcohol con-

sumption are often seen (Delva et al., 2004). These strategies, when incorporated into alcohol education with members, can improve the effectiveness of programs (Wall, Reis, & Bureau, 2006).

The Alcohol Skills Training Program, a group-administered program that attempts to change high-risk drinking by teaching moderate drinking strategies and encouraging participants to evaluate negative experiences associated with their own use as well as normative drinking behaviors within their chapter, effectively addresses many of the unique cultural factors that may influence alcohol use within the fraternity and sorority community (Fromme, Marlatt, Baer & Kivlahan, 1994; Larimer et al., 2001). In a 2002 report, The Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) stated that ASTP was one of the most effective ways to challenge students' current drinking patterns. ASTP has been shown to reduce the amount of drinking as well as negative consequences resulting from drinking even two-years after the intervention (Task Force); however, there has been limited research regarding its impact on special interest groups such as fraternities and sororities. In addition, there have been no studies focused on determining what programmatic aspects may lead to its effectiveness or what role chapter culture may play in its efficacy.

## Methodology

### Research Design

A sequential mixed methods approach, utilizing surveys, questionnaires and interviews, was used to gather data for this study. Quantitative data was collected through a quasi-experimental, two-group design that incorporated both a pre-test and post-test. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data from selected candidates who participated in the ASTP chapter program.

### Sample

A convenience sample was used to determine

which chapters would participate in the study. After the Chief Executive Officer for the men's national fraternity provided commitment allowing access to chapters and individual members to participate in the study, three chapters were selected to receive the ASTP intervention – the experimental group – and three additional chapters were selected as the control group. All chapters were located on public university campuses in the Southeast and the chapter demographics of those selected for each group were as similar to one another as possible. Within the experimental group, there was a chapter that matched each chapter within the control group in terms of chapter size, campus size and chapter culture as viewed by the fraternity's national headquarters staff. Two hundred and fifty-seven male members of the fraternity completed the survey and questionnaire for purposes of quantitative data collection – including 120 members in the experimental group and 137 members in the control group. The interview sample was selected purposefully from chapter members in the experimental group, with those showing various degrees of behavioral change related to their responses on the pre-test and post-test being invited to participate in the interviews. Four chapter members were interviewed for purposes of collecting qualitative data.

### *The Intervention: Alcohol Skills Training Program*

The Alcohol Skills Training Program educates “students about alcohol-related behavior while increasing the student's interest in critically examining their drinking patterns and eventually implementing the skills they learn” (Miller, Kilmer, Kim, Weingardt, & Marlatt, 2001, p. 184). The program, which acknowledges that many college students drink, differs from traditional forms of alcohol education by attempting to educate participants as to how to reduce their alcohol-related risks (Miller et al.). Although the program is designed to be delivered in two sessions, in this study the program was delivered

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in a one-time, two-hour setting. While delivering all “ten components in a sequential fashion is recommended, the components are designed to allow for customization (e.g., unusual scheduling demands)” (Miller et al., p. 187). Therefore, the delivery method of the intervention should not have affected the outcome of the study.

### *Instrumentation*

The Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI), the Daily Drinking Questionnaire (DDQ) and the Protective Behavioral Strategies Survey (PBSS) were used to gather pre-test and post-test data for the quantitative portion of the study. The RAPI asks users to rate the frequency with which negative consequences associated with drinking have occurred using a five-point Likert scale. The DDQ is commonly used to examine drinking behaviors in college students (Baer, Kivlahan, Blume, McKnight, & Marlatt, 2001) and has been used in previous ASTP studies (Kivlahan, Marlatt, Fromme, Coppel, & Williams, 1990). The PBSS was used to evaluate whether or not participants incorporated any or all of the self-protective skills taught during ASTP into their daily lives. These instruments, as well as peak Blood Alcohol Level (BAL) - which was calculated using demographic information provided by participants - combined with responses to the Daily Drinking Questionnaire, were used to determine whether or not ASTP had any impact on fraternity members' drinking behaviors and/or in reducing the negative consequences associated with their drinking.

These instruments, however, did not provide information as to how chapter culture might influence the effectiveness of the program or what elements of the program might have caused members to change their own alcohol use. Therefore, questions from the CORE survey, which asks students to provide information about their campus climate related to alcohol use, were adapted to ask participants to evaluate chapter culture. The Satisfaction Survey previously utilized by University of Washington in evaluating

their alcohol education efforts was also adapted to aid in examining the effectiveness of the programmatic aspects of ASTP.

Finally, interview questions were used for follow-up and clarification purposes. The interviews, structured as a specific set of predetermined questions, were conducted to explore in greater detail the information related to participant responses on the quantitative instruments related to things such as facilitator skill and personality, useful elements of the program and chapter culture.

### *Data Collection*

Collection of data began after obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University. Chapters within the experimental group participated in ASTP with the pre-test, consisting of questions from the RAPI, the DDQ and the PBSS, being administered by the program facilitator immediately prior to the presentation. Control group chapters received the pre-test electronically using e-mail addresses provided by the national fraternity. Chapter members from both the experimental and the control group were e-mailed a URL link with access to the post-test and the additional questionnaire approximately four weeks after program completion. The questionnaire administered at this time included the questions relating to chapter culture from the CORE survey for all chapters with the addition of program satisfaction questions for those chapters in the experimental group. This questionnaire also asked for demographic information that was used to help calculate BAL to increase the validity of the results from other quantitative measures.

After compiling all quantitative data, phone interviews were contacted with chapter members from the experimental group. Interview candidates had indicated a willingness to participate in this part of the process by providing contact information when they submitted their post-test. Only those members who provided this information were considered for interviews. From that

pool of potential candidates, only those that exhibited some level of change between pre- and post-test were contacted. Change in terms of reduced BAL, reduced daily drinking habits and reduced report of negative consequences were considered when selecting interviewees. Although all of these candidates were contacted, not all responded to requests to schedule an interview time. Interviews were audio recorded.

### Limitations

The use of a convenience sample limits the generalizability of the study. In addition, the sample size was small in comparison to population size. However, the study was limited to those chapters scheduled to receive the ASTP intervention during the timeframe of the research. In addition, the researcher limited the chapters even further to only those located on public institutions in the Southeast. This decision was made to account for the fact that region of the country as well as institution type can influence drinking rates of college students (Presley, Meilman, & Leichliter, 2002).

As the study relied on self-report data, participants may have over- or under-reported their usage. Previous research has shown, however, that "self-report measures have demonstrated reasonable levels of reliability and validity" (DelBoca & Darkes, 2003, p. 9) related to alcohol use. Furthermore, the survey and questionnaire descriptions relied on the interpretation of the participants, meaning some of the results could be biased (Cashin et al., 1998). The CORE survey items were modified from their original format to ask questions specific to the culture within each fraternity chapter, meaning that the validity and reliability of the questions could have been compromised. However, an expert panel did review the modifications prior to their use in this study. Finally, the interview questions could be viewed to lack validity as they were developed by the researcher.

It should also be noted the members of one chapter from the experimental group presented

some behavioral issues during the ASTP presentation. In addition, while 80% of members are required to be present during the presentation, many fewer members of this chapter attended, and those in attendance were disruptive and made inappropriate comments. This could have impacted the overall results of the research study.

### Results and Data Analysis

The results of this study were used to determine whether or not ASTP reduces high-risk drinking and associated negative consequences with fraternity members, to explore which aspects of ASTP make the program successful for use with fraternity members and to evaluate the association between chapter culture and program success. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was utilized, with interview participants identified as Fraternity Member 1, Fraternity Member 2, etc. to protect their confidentiality.

In order to determine whether or not ASTP reduces high-risk drinking with fraternity members, average number of drinks per week as well as peak blood alcohol level for all chapters included in the study were computed. Among members of the experimental group, a reduction in drinks per week and in peak BAL would indicate that participation in this particular alcohol education program did reduce high-risk drinking behaviors among members. An ANCOVA was conducted with results indicating there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups for average number of drinks per week,  $F(1, 48) = .39, p = .54$ ; or for peak BAL,  $F(1, 31) = .001, p = .98$ .

The RAPI was utilized to determine whether or not ASTP reduces negative consequences associated with high-risk drinking in fraternity members. Scores on this instrument range from 0 to 69 with higher scores indicating a greater number of negative consequences experienced by the drinker. Therefore, if the mean RAPI score for the chapters in the experimental group were reduced, it would be an indication that

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ASTP had an impact on reducing negative consequences among members. An ANCOVA was conducted with results of the analysis indicating no significant difference between the experimental and control groups for RAPI scores,  $F(1, 45) = .39, p = .34$ .

One of the unique features of ASTP is its use of a moderate drinking skills development component. Therefore, later use of these skills by members who participate in the program would indicate this element leads to program success. The PBSS, which is divided into three scales – stopping/limiting drinking, manner of drinking and serious harm reduction – was used to determine implementation of these strategies by members. Within each scale, an increase in score within the experimental group would indicate

strategy use. In order to determine if changes in scale scores could be attributed to ASTP, an ANCOVA was conducted. Analysis did not indicate any significant difference between the experimental and control groups for stopping/limiting drinking,  $F(1, 52) = .12, p = .73$ ; manner of drinking,  $F(1, 52) = .12, p = .73$ ; or harm reduction,  $F(1, 51) = 2.35, p = .13$ .

In order to explore whether or not chapter culture surrounding alcohol played a role in program success, a Pearson  $r$  was calculated to determine if a significant relationship existed between responses to the CORE and scales within the PBSS. These scores as well as significance values are reported in table format.

The results of the Pearson  $r$  indicated positive correlations between believing that the chapter is

**Table 1**  
*Correlation of CORE and PBSS Data*

	<u>Stop/Limiting</u>		<u>Manner Of Drinking</u>		<u>Harm Reduction</u>	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
I believe my chapter is concerned about the prevention of alcohol abuse.	.111	.422	.295	.029	.194	.155
I am actively involved in efforts to prevent alcohol abuse in my chapter.	.193	.158	.340	.011	.291	.031
I abide by the chapter policy and regulations that concern alcohol.	-.095	.492	.094	.495	.204	.135
The social atmosphere in this chapter promotes alcohol use.	.193	.158	.110	.425	.154	.261
Compared to other fraternities with which I am familiar, this chapter's use of alcohol is less than other fraternities, about the same as other fraternities, or greater than other fraternities.	-.138	.323	-.046	.741	.071	.613

concerned about the prevention of alcohol abuse and manner of drinking ( $r = .295, n = 55, p = .029$ ), between members being actively involved in efforts to prevent alcohol abuse in their chapter and manner of drinking ( $r = .340, n = 55, p = .011$ ) and between members being actively involved in efforts to prevent alcohol abuse in their chapter and serious negative consequences ( $r =$

$.291, n = 55, p = .031$ ).

Qualitative data were collected in order to more fully explain what aspects of ASTP might lead to the program's success. Responses from open-ended questions related to program usefulness, which were contained in the post-program questionnaire, were coded to find themes. Two major categories emerged and within these cat-

egories several themes became obvious. A table detailing these themes and their occurrence rates is provided (Table 2).

Finally, interviews were conducted to explore what impact programmatic elements and/or facilitator style might have had on the success of

the program. These interviews were transcribed and coded. During this process a new category emerged. A table detailing these themes and their occurrence rates is provided (Table 3).

Some of the responses to interview questions that illustrated these themes are provided.

**Table 2**

*Categories/Themes Emerging from Satisfaction Survey*

Programmatic Elements	Facilitator Style
Alcohol's effect on body and mind = 9	Knowledge of college alcohol use = 3
Information related to BAL = 7	General demeanor/personality = 2
Program provided real life information = 2	
Information related to drug interaction = 2	

**Table 3**

*Categories/Themes Emerging from Interviews*

Programmatic Elements	Fraternity Member			
	1	2	3	4
Alcohol's effect on body and mind		X	X	X
Program teaches responsible drinking	X	X	X	
<u>Facilitator Style</u>				
Knowledge of college alcohol use	X	X	X	
General knowledge about alcohol	X			X
Individual Member Behaviors	X	X	X	X

*Alcohol's effect on the body and mind.* Fraternity Member 2 found the information given during the presentation did cause him to change his drinking behaviors and felt that the discussion regarding alcohol's effects on the body and mind accounted for this change. He said, "um, at one point, we discussed the amount of alcohol and its effect on the body and how much alcohol is in one drink and how much damage it does to you. And, I guess the information that was provided was a factor in [changing my drinking behaviors]."

Fraternity Member 3 also found this information to be a useful part of the program. He stated, "[the facilitator] was talking about how, like,

various settings can affect your mood, like, a lot when you are, like, drinking. So, I really liked that part because I didn't really know it beforehand."

*Program teaches responsible drinking.* Rather than using an abstinence approach, ASTP teaches responsible drinking habits. This seemed to resonate well with those interviewed. Fraternity Member 1 said he would recommend the program to a friend because, "I just feel that it is beneficial that everyone understands the risks and understands, like, if they do decide to drink, when to stop, and, like, what can, like, the risks and everything."

Fraternity Member 2 responded that this ele-

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ment of the program not only influenced him to recommend it to a friend but it also caused him to change his drinking behaviors. He stated, "I think it is good. Um, it teaches responsibility and is very informative. So, I would recommend it." He continued, "I have cut back. And, I just don't see it as a good, responsible thing to do any more. I don't need to just party all the time. I need to promote a good image and show that I am responsible."

Fraternity Member 3 stated he would encourage a friend to attend this program "just to make sure they don't abuse alcohol. So, that they don't, they don't hurt themselves. So, that if they do decide to drink, then they would have, they would be safe with it at least."

*Facilitator knowledge about college alcohol use.* During interviews, members indicated that they valued a facilitator who was knowledgeable about college student drinking and understanding of fraternity membership. Fraternity Member 1 stated, "he seemed like he knew how to, like, act around college kids. Um, you know what I mean. And, uh, he just, to me it felt like he understood what we were like at our age. And, I really liked that about him because I felt like I could relate to him even though he was older and he was a person of, like, um, and he had a lot more experience than we had. But, I felt like he was down to earth and he could understand where we were coming from." He believed this positively influenced chapter response to the program. "It was easier, as a whole for us, I believe, and I can't talk for everyone, but I felt like it was easier for us to be truthful and honest with him. When he would ask us questions, we didn't feel like we had to hold anything back, you know, without fear of judgment."

Fraternity Member 2 said the facilitator seemed warm and understanding because, "he was able to, he was in a fraternity when he was our age. So, he knows how it goes. He understands . . . he said he has been there. It was never whoa. It was never, you know, negative."

Fraternity Member 3 said the facilitator was

"understanding. Um, he listened to us when we, when we had to ask something or know something. He basically took our input also. So, instead of just telling us what he was told to tell us, he responded."

*Facilitator general knowledge about alcohol.* Participants also appreciated a facilitator knowledgeable about alcohol use in general. Fraternity Member 2 stated, "he was knowledgeable, not only of what was provided, but he gave us other examples, and, um, details that were not on the sheets but were from the same sources. So, I found him to be very credible and very knowledgeable."

Fraternity Member 4 said, "he just gave a really coherent presentation. It was easy to follow. I figured he knew what he was talking about."

*Individual member behavior and its impact on chapter culture.* Interview participants frequently noted that individual member behavior impacts the chapter culture surrounding alcohol as well as adherence to chapter alcohol policies. Fraternity Member 1 stated, "I guess because our chapter is full of different types of people from different backgrounds that either understand, like, what, about the dangers of alcohol and those that, like, don't fully understand or really care, I guess. But, I am not saying as a whole we don't. I am just saying that this chapter is full of many different kinds of people from so many different types of backgrounds. He later said, "it's kind of like you'll have one person who does drink and another who doesn't, who doesn't even like being around alcohol. That kind of stuff."

Fraternity Member 1 said he was motivated to follow chapter policies and regulations because "I have seen people struggle with alcohol. Um, I have had family members struggle with alcohol abuse and everything. And, I don't want to go down that path, you know, like, I have seen some other people do."

Fraternity Member 2 also discussed how individual member characteristics can play a role in chapter culture. He said, "well, there are a lot of guys that are under the age of 21, and I guess a

handful of guys that are over the age of 21. And, where the guys that are over the age of 21 understand the consequences of and, um, I guess the problems with underage drinkers at the house and may want to keep it to a minimum, all the guys that just got out of high school want to experience it.” He explained, “high schoolers, well, recent graduates of high school, walk around drinking and they see the social life of fraternity as an opportunity to drink again.”

Fraternity Member 2 chooses to follow the chapter’s alcohol policy because “I have strong beliefs and, um, I guess strong morals that help me follow rules.” Fraternity Member 3 stated, “I know that [the policies] are there for a reason basically. They are there for safety. So, um, I just do it.” Fraternity Member 4 said, “I am just usually like, like drinking and driving is, like, a huge thing. And, that is just, like, something I wouldn’t normally do. So, I don’t know. I was just raised that way.”

### **Discussion**

The quantitative data analysis in this study did not support the use of ASTP to reduce high-risk drinking behaviors or negative consequences for fraternity members. This contradicted previous studies which demonstrated that ASTP was effective in reducing both the frequency and amount of drinking as well associated negative consequences (Fromme et al., 1994; Larimer et al., 2001; Task Force, 2002). However, the current study did provide some insight into how chapter culture can influence individual members’ implementation of the self-protective strategies taught during the program. This seems to support previous research which has shown that elements of chapter culture can contribute to high-risk drinking among fraternity and sorority members (Borsari et al., 2007; Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000; Higher Ed Center, 2008; Park et al., 2009). In addition, the qualitative data analysis provided feedback which can be used by campus-based professionals and national staff members to improve the quality of alcohol education

programs for fraternity members.

Participants did note that some of the major components of ASTP - Building Rapport, Alcohol and the Body and Blood Alcohol Level - as being useful parts of the program. In addition, participants in the current study identified teaching responsible drinking as a valuable. As one of the unique features of ASTP is its incorporation of moderate drinking guidelines and teaching these strategies has been previously shown to reduce both rate of drinking and experiences of negative consequences (Martens, Pedersen, LaBrie, Ferrier, & Cimini, 2007), one would hope to see increased implementation of these strategies after participation in the program. However, despite participant feelings that this was useful information to share, this study showed no significant differences between the experimental and the control group related to use of these strategies.

Although previous literature related to prevention for use with college students has indicated that lack of knowledge does not account for why college students engage in risky drinking behaviors (Larimer & Cronce, 2002), participants in the current study found the program elements related to alcohol’s effect on the body, blood alcohol level and drug interaction to be the most useful aspects of the study. As several members of the study credited this information as the reason for changing their behavior, this research seems to support the continued inclusion of this information as a part of alcohol education programs. However, it should be noted, as Collins et al. (2002) stated, information sharing should be not used alone as an intervention tool; rather, it should be incorporated into a larger prevention and education programming effort. Finally, facilitator style, including possessing warmth and empathy, was viewed as very important by participants. According to members interviewed in the study, those providing the alcohol education must be able to communicate an understanding of alcohol use on a college campuses in general and in fraternities specifically.

### *Implications*

Inter/national organization staff members as well as campus-based professionals should consider alcohol education programs focusing on responsible drinking habits and including information related to alcohol's effect on the body and mind, blood alcohol level and drug interactions. The providers of alcohol education programs should be empathic and able to relate to college students as well as possess good knowledge about alcohol use in general while being understanding of the unique challenges that fraternities and sororities may face.

Although the use of group programming may be efficient and cost conscious, individual backgrounds seem to play a strong part in members' response to alcohol education efforts. This is due to the fact that personal history and previous drinking habits can have an influence on drinking among college students (Baer, 2002). Therefore, some members may benefit more from individual interventions. This seems to reflect previous research which has indicated that individual interventions have been shown to reduce high risk drinking (Larimer & Cronce, 2002).

As there seems to be a positive relationship between implementation of self-protective behaviors and members who believe the chapter is concerned about the prevention of alcohol abuse as well as those that are already actively involved in prevention efforts within the chapter, program development should focus on how to incorporate those members into prevention efforts. This finding supports previous research which has shown that chapter norms related to alcohol use influence members' individual decisions about alcohol use (Borsari & Carey, 1999).

### *Recommendations for Further Research*

The current study involved only one national fraternity, with all chapters in the sample being located in the Southeast at state-supported universities. In addition, most of the men involved in the study were Caucasian. Broadening the study to include a greater diversity of par-

ticipants would serve to increase the validity and potentially reliability of the results. Previous research has indicated that students in the Northeast tend to drink more than students located in other parts of the country (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee 2000), that men tend to drink more and more frequently than their female counterparts and that white students drink in higher amounts than students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds (Kapner, 2003). Therefore, replicating this study with chapters representing other demographic groups, especially sororities and members of culturally-based groups as well as those located at different types of higher education institutions in different areas of the country, would add valuable insight into effective prevention efforts that could span the entire fraternity and sorority community.

Also, as there seems to be a contradiction between this study and previous research (Larimer & Cronce, 2002) regarding the effectiveness of incorporating general knowledge about alcohol use and its health risks into prevention efforts, more research in this area may be useful. In addition, this study contradicts previous studies which have shown ASTP to be an effective tool in reducing college student drinking (Fromme et al., 1994; Kivlahan et al., 1990; Larimer et al., 2001; Miller et al, 2001). Further study to determine if these results can be replicated is needed. In addition, research should try to determine why ASTP might not be effective, especially with fraternity and sorority members, as this information could add to body of knowledge related to prevention efforts targeted at members of fraternal organizations.

Finally, as this study indicated that there may be a relationship between members' belief that their chapter is generally concerned about prevention efforts as well as those that are actively involved in these efforts and the implementation of self-protective behaviors, further research regarding chapter culture and its overall impact on reducing high-risk drinking is needed.

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