

**Alcohols' Affect on Risk Perception Among Sexual Minority Female: A Laboratory
Paradigm**

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According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), sexual assault has been defined as any form of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the recipient (CDC, 2012). Sexual assault risk recognition refers to one's ability to recognize social cues that may help identify the potential risk for sexual assault to occur within an interaction or situation. The objective of the proposed research project is to investigate the link between alcohol intoxication and sexual assault risk recognition in a community sample of young sexual minority women. The lifetime prevalence of sexual assault ranges from 16% to 85% among lesbian and bisexual females (for review, see Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). As a result, researchers have highlighted that sexual minority women (i.e., lesbian and bisexual women) are at increased risk for sexual victimization compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Drabble, Trocki, Hughes, Korcha, & Lown, 2013; Rothman et al., 2011; Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013).

There is a well-established link between alcohol use and sexual assault, in that women are often drinking prior to being sexually assaulted (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2004). One explanation for this link is the theory of alcohol myopia, which refers to the ability of alcohol to impair the perception and processing of social cues (Steele & Joseph, 1990). Once a certain level of alcohol consumption has been reached, women are no longer able to recognize cues that may otherwise warn them of a potentially harmful situation. Researchers hypothesize that sexual minority victimization may be due to greater amounts of hazardous drinking among non-heterosexual victims of sexual assault (Drabble et al., 2013; Stevens, 2012). Specifically, bisexual survivors of sexual victimization report greater problem drinking than their heterosexual counterparts (Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). Further supporting the need to understand sexual minority women's ability to recognize risk is the finding that sexual minority women experience more serious consequences of the experiences that follow sexual

victimization, such as negative psychosocial adjustment (Long, Ullman, Long, Mason, & Starzynski, 2007; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015).

While there are fewer studies examining women's risk-taking than men's risk-taking, there are currently no studies that examine sexual minority women's ability to detect risk for sexual assault during alcohol intoxication. Thus, the proposed project will utilize an alcohol administration protocol and established experimental paradigms. Participants will be invited to the laboratory to take part in a validated laboratory paradigm, which allows for the mimicking of interactions that may precede a sexual assault in real life, but conducted in the laboratory (Angelone, Mitchell, & Carola, 2009). This provides an opportunity to examine women's ability to detect risk cues from a potential perpetrator as it would be outside of the laboratory. These paradigms have been shown to parallel behavior that may exist outside of the controlled, laboratory environment (Hall & Hirschman, 1993). Among others, participants will complete measures of alcohol expectancies, victimization history, and rape myth acceptance, all of which have been previously associated with sexual assault risk.

This study will be conducted in the ASSeRT Lab at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. This lab is unique in that it is one of only a few alcohol administration labs in the country. Dr. DJ Angelone, who along with Dr. Meredith Joppa serves as lab director, previously went on sabbatical to obtain training under the protocol established by the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NACAAA) in the area of alcohol administration with Dr. William George at the University of Washington. Dr. George's research in this area has been awarded NIH grant funds. As such, graduate students are provided with the invaluable experience of receiving training in this area. This grant would serve as seed funding for graduate students to submit future grant proposals to the NIH for dissertation research.

Participants will be reimbursed for their time and debriefed once their BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) has reached .03 or below, at which time they will also receive referrals and contact information in case of distress. Participants will also be asked to contribute feedback about the study and their experience engaging with the graduate student research coordinators, which will provide valuable information for researchers to refine the protocol for the future.

We look forward to the potential opportunity to expand this study to sexual minorities in order to continue bridging the gap within the literature concerning sexual minorities and sexual assault. By assessing risk detection while intoxicated among sexual minority women, we are taking a valuable step towards understanding how alcohol may be impacting this populations increased risk for sexual assault.

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