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# Career Planning and Alcohol Consumption

Christina Rota

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Rota: Career Planning and Alcohol Consumption

Career Planning and Alcohol Consumption

Christina M. Rota

Sacred Heart University

Author Note

Christina M. Rota, Student at Sacred Heart University.

Correspondence concerning this thesis paper should be addressed to

Christina M. Rota, Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT 06825.

E-mail: [rotac@mail.sacredheart.edu](mailto:rotac@mail.sacredheart.edu).

### Abstract

*Academic Festival, Event 92 [2017]*

In my research I sought out to test the hypothesis whether disconnection with career planning/ job prospects is associated with higher levels of alcohol use. The hypothesis follows from Emile Durkheim's theory regarding anomie that holds if social and moral norms are unclear it can lead to deviant behavior and lack of stability in other aspects of life. Insufficient integration in culture and society has negative consequences for the individual. The research design was quantitative, more specifically a cross sectional survey. It was administered through; Survey Monkey, with a web link sent out to participants via Facebook and Email. A non-probability, purposive sampling design was conducted and derived a sample of 88 undergraduate males and females. The Pearson correlations test was conducted which found the bivariate relationship not significant. A multiple regression was conducted between the independent variable and family functioning to further analyze the data and proved to be insignificant.

## Career Planning and Alcohol Consumption

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between career planning and alcohol consumption. The key concern is that if there is a disconnection between career planning undergraduate students may be more likely to abuse alcohol. Insufficient integration in culture and society has negative consequences for the individual and can diminish aspirations for the future. Career planning is an ongoing process that can help students manage their learning and development through structured exercise to identify objective, marketable skills, strengths, and weaknesses, etc. One can work individually, with a counselor, professor and/or academic advisor to design learning and action plans to achieve goals. Alcohol consumption includes drinking of beverages for their physiological and psychological effects, but when consumption is high or entails binge drinking, it is often a symptom of other problems.

This is an important issue because excessive alcohol consumption has negative consequences for college students such as increased violence, including sexual assaults, psychological and physical impairments.

“The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that each year 696,000 students are assaulted by another student who has been drinking, 97,000 experience alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape and 1,825 die from unintentional injuries. Additionally, 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.”

The consequences identify a negative spiral that resemble detachment from career focus that may lead to alcohol abuse, worsening academics and poor job prospects.

**Theoretical Framework***Academic Festival, Event 92 [2017]*

Emile Durkheim introduced the concept of anomie to describe individuals' insufficient integration in culture and society. This dislocation usually occurs in rapid social or cultural change. According to Garfield (1987), "Durkheim described anomie as one result of an inequitable division of labor within the society, such inequality, causes a breakdown for lack of rules in society and results in class conflict" (Garfield, 1987). When individuals experience sudden social changes there is less guidance and regulation. Deviant behavior, including extreme forms such as suicide, is more likely to occur. "Anomie is literally a derangement of collective representations, a situation in which morals and standards are 'upside down'" (Meštrović, 1987). Related to this study, the disconnection with career planning is a specific form of anomie and higher levels of alcohol is the self-destructive, deviant behavior. The primary function of college is to prepare for a rewarding career but some individuals may find all of this to be futile given an economy with fewer good job prospects. With insufficient integration in school and career preparation higher levels of alcohol may increase.

Robert Merton also studied the concept of anomie in his theory of social strain. According to Merton, "a gap between people's aspirations and their access to legitimate means of achieving them results in a breakdown of values, at both societal and individual levels" (Garfield, 1987). A large scale example of this would be the "American Dream" in the United States. "The "American Dream" of social mobility, meaningful work, home ownership, material comforts, and easeful retirement—is held up as a legitimate expectation for *all* members of society, not just for a fraction of them" (Garfield, 1987). The goal has been culturally defined for years, and an aspiration for all those within the country. However, for the majority of the population, this goal is seldom achieved.

Merton identifies five adaptive behaviors by people caught in the strain of insufficient legitimate means to attain societal goals: conformity, ritualism, innovation, retreatism, and rebellion. Conformists accept cultural goals and appropriate means of reaching them. Ritualism is a direction taken by people who begin with desired cultural goals, but become discouraged and give up the means of achieving them. People are realizing that their goals may not ever become reality. Innovation is when the individual understands the cultural goals presented, but uses alternate ways to accomplish them. Retreatism is when the individual is beginning to fail and rejects cultural goals and the institutionalized means of achieving them. The final deviant response, rebellion, the individual alienates themselves and resorts to other means of attempting to achieve cultural goals.

In this model, career planning would be considered a legitimate means to attain the goal of the American Dream. Lack of involvement in career planning is conceptualized as retreatism.

Anomie is often tested in its relationship with various dependent variables, often including alcoholism, which is the dependent variable in my research.

**Existing Studies***Academic Festival, Event 92 [2017]*

Previous studies have examined the relationship between educational or career aspirations and substance abuse. James Anthony, Rosa Crum and Carla Storr (2005) examined the connection between educational aspirations together with the risk of alcohol hindrance among adolescents. In a longitudinal study, 1,229 students in the public school systems took part. The trial began in 1985, when the students entered first grade in an urban school district in the United States. The students were interviewed on a yearly basis by a trained interviewer. The qualitative study included questions related to alcohol involvement and educational aspirations for the future. Nearly half of the students, 49.8%, had reported to the use of alcohol with a dramatic yearly increase. It was found that; students with lower educational aspirations were not more likely to increase alcohol use or experience more alcohol use related problems during the 1-year follow- up interval of this study. The findings were contrary to what was expected.

Richard Isralowitz and Alexander Reznik (2014) studied the impact of alcohol use among youth in Israel. The study sought to determine if there is a relationship between unemployment rate and rate of opiate exposure in Kentucky. A purposive sample method was conducted with data collected between 2004 to 2012 of youth between the ages of 13 to 18 years; included 57 Ethiopian, 176 Soviet Union, and 193 Israeli origin boys who participated in a 90-day drug treatment program. Prior to their treatment, the boys were asked to take a self-report questionnaire to assess their background characteristics, substance abuse patterns, and other problem behaviors based on the last 30 days. Ethiopian parent unemployment rates were 39.3% and dependence on public welfare benefits 60.4%, both proved to be higher than those of Soviet Union and Israeli origin. Also, children of Ethiopian parents were more likely to be doing poorly

in school before fully dropping out. A majority of the sample (93%) reported a lifetime of alcohol use.

Diana Gascon and Henry Spiller (2009) examined the relationship of unemployment and opiate exposure rate in Kentucky. Various counties in Kentucky were compared. Data was obtained by the United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Labor and the Kentucky Regional Poison Center. The time frame reviewed ranged from 2000 to 2005. After conducting extensive analysis, it was proven that three of the six years displayed a significant correlation between higher unemployment rate and higher rate of opiate exposure. Therefore, the authors conclude that, "The trend of unemployment rate is of greater importance than the actual rate itself" (Gascon & Spiller, 2009). People may observe the negative trend and be discouraged to job prospects due to a competition of limited jobs.

In summary, the three studies yielded inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between educational or career interests and substance abuse. My study differs from these in that the study population is college students. My study pertains to career aspirations instead of educational and treats alcohol abuse as the dependent variable.

### **Purpose of Research**

I hypothesize that as career planning decreases, alcohol consumption significantly increases. Excessive alcohol consumption has negative consequences for college students such as increased violence, including sexual assaults, psychological and physical impairments. It is important to explore one potential cause of alcohol consumption which is disconnection from career planning. With raising awareness through my study, campaigns can be geared to promote increased career focus that would hopefully diminish the self-destructive aspect of alcohol abuse.



## **Method**

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### **Participants**

The participants in my study were undergraduate students from John Cabot University and Sacred Heart University. The obtained sample size for this study was eighty-seven college students. Of the students, 34% were seniors, 21% juniors, 24% sophomores, 21% freshman, 29% males and 70% females participated. Most of the students categorized themselves as middle class and only two associated with the lower class. There was a very low diversity among races with 86% selecting white as their racial category.

### **Research Design**

My research design is quantitative, more specifically a cross sectional survey. The data was collected beginning on September 13, 2016 and lasted until October 19, 2016.

### **Measures**

The independent variable in this study is career planning. It measures the extent to which a student works with a counselor, professor and/or academic advisor to design learning and action plans for a future career. The independent variable was constructed as an index combining seven different questions. Various dimensions covered included; resources, internships, wants/wish's, interviews, advisement and graduate school entry tests. The dimensions can be found in the appendix.

The dependent variable in this study is alcohol consumption. The dependent variable had three measures. The first utilized a numerical textbox for respondents to report drinks consumed per week. The second measure consisted of a multiple choice option assessing the extent of

whether or not the respondent believes he/she has a problem with alcohol consumption. The third measure was an index that combined answers to six Likert style questions regarding practices/behaviors and psychological/physical impairments associated with alcohol consumption.

The control variable used in this study was family functioning. The index consisted of a seven questions. Dimensions of family functioning include protection, communication/problem solving and support.

### **Procedure**

A non-probability, purposive sampling design was used in my study. The questionnaire was designed using the Survey Monkey platform. I only allowed for college students to answer the survey because that was the desired population being studied for my research. My Facebook friends and email contacts were invited to participate in the survey via a Facebook link that was posted as well as emailed. I would follow up with students I selected from my contacts with a second email reminding them to participate in the survey if they have not done so. I also posted the link on Facebook a second time. Anonymity and voluntary participation was assured to each participant with the consent form in the first page of my survey.

### **Results**

The independent variable, career planning, had the possibility to report a maximum of 28. The minimum a 7 and a midpoint of 17.5. Based on the actual findings, I reported a maximum of 28, minimum of 7 and an average of 18.3. The second variable was the dependent variable index, problems with alcohol consumption. The theoretical maximum that could have been reported is 12, minimum of 6 and midpoint of 9. Based on the actual findings, I reported a maximum of 12,

minimum of 6 and mean of 7. In both indexes a full range of data was found.

In this study the statistical test used for the basic hypothesis test is the Pearson correlations test comparing the two variables. See Table 1. In my research I sought out to test the hypothesis whether disconnection with career planning/ job prospects is associated with higher levels of alcohol use. The significance is .159 meaning, the results found are not significant and do not confirm my hypothesis. The strength  $-.161$  resembles an inverse relationship that is weak. Therefore, the data shows that we can't trust the weak association is real. An advanced hypothesis test for multiple regression was conducted. The model summary proves that family stability is significant, however, the R square only reports 15% which leaves the remaining 85% unaccounted for proving that it has such a low impact on the findings.

**Table 1 Bivariate Correlations**

		How many drinks do you consume on an average week?	Career Planning Index	Problems with Alcohol
How many drinks do you consume on an average week?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.111	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.331	.000
	N	78	78	77
Career Planning Index	Pearson Correlation	-.111	1	-.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.331		.159
	N	78	81	78
Problems with Alcohol	Pearson Correlation	.558**	-.161	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.159	
	N	77	78	78

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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**Part A Regression Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.397 <sup>a</sup>	.158	.135	1.17924

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Functioning, Career Planning Index

**Part B ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1411.851	2	705.926	9.760	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5424.367	75	72.325		
	Total	6836.218	77			

a. Dependent Variable: How many drinks do you consume on an average week?

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Functioning, Career Planning Index

**Part C Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	33.322	6.344		5.253	.000
	Career Planning Index	.056	.211	.029	.265	.792

<b>Family Functioning</b>	1.010	Acad. Festival, Event [2017]	236	-0.462	-4.283	.000
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a. Dependent Variable: How many drinks do you consume on an average week?

### Discussion

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After conducting the study, it was found that the hypothesis could not be confirmed. One of the limitations of this study is the internal validity. Cause and effect cannot be proven with only one control variable. The homogeneous sample did not allow for use of other variables as controls, such as gender and class. There are extraneous variables that I cannot account for. Sampling was also limited. I did not expand beyond people outside of my social network. The group that part took in the study are not very heavy drinkers. Future studies should strive to include more people that have problems related to drinking. Also, the non-probability sampling method does not allow generalizing the findings.

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*Academic Festival, Event 92 [2017]*

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Appendix A  
*Academic Festival, Event 92 [2017]*

Independent Variable Measurement:

Matrix/ Rating Scale

Career Planning

How involved have you been in the following career planning activities...

Very Involved, Somewhat Involved, Minimally Involved, Not Involved at all

(Dimension 1: Utilizing Career Resources Center)

Sought out career planning resources

Sought out information on internships.

Have or had one or more internships.

(Dimension 2: Communication)

Communicated with my family about my future career plans/ wishes.

Have prepared for interviews.

(Dimension 3: Test Preparation)

Sought out information about professional or graduate school entry tests.

Sought out advice on career options.

Appendix B  
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Dependent Variable Questions:

Alcohol Consumption

(Dimension 1: Drinks per week)

How many drinks do you consume on an average week? Numerical textbox.

Do you think you have a problem with alcohol consumption? Major Problem/  
Moderate Problem/ Minor Problem/ No

(Dimension 2: Practices/ Behaviors, Psychological/Physical Impairments)

Agree or Disagree

I usually drink until intoxicated

I am often late or tired during the work day due to drinking

My alcohol consumption prevents me from obtaining and/or holding a job

I have injured myself following drinking too much

I often argue with others when drinking

My GPA has been negatively affected by my drinking

Appendix C

Control Variable Questions:

(Demographics)

What is your Gender? Male/ Female

What year are you in college? Freshman/Sophomore/ Junior/ Senior

What is your GPA? Numerical Textbox

What socioeconomic class do you consider yourself? Upper Class/ Upper Middle  
Class/ Middle Class/ Lower Middle Class/ Lower Class

What is your race? White/ Hispanic/ Black/ American Indian/ Asian/Other

(Family Stability)

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Control Variable Measurement:

Matrix/Rating Scale and Numerical Textbox

How many people are in your family? Numerical Textbox

How satisfied am I that...

Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neither, Satisfied, Very Satisfied.

(Dimension 1: Protection)

When I am home, I feel that I am in a safe environment.

(Dimension 2: Communication/ Problem Solving)

My family spends time together during family meals, activities, etc.

My family members talk openly with each other.

Our family solves problems together.

(Dimension 3: Support)

Adults in our family encourage each other to make good decisions.

My family supports and encourages one another's aspirations and goals.

Appendix D

Page 1 of Survey:

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I invite your participation in this survey which should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. Your feedback is important. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. These questions concern the topic of alcohol usage. I do not anticipate that taking this survey will contain any risk or inconvenience to you. Furthermore, your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. All information collected will be used only for my senior thesis at Sacred Heart University and is anonymous. If you have any questions, please ask or contact: Christina Rota at [rotac@mail.sacredheart.edu](mailto:rotac@mail.sacredheart.edu). By clicking START SURVEY, you are verifying that you have read the explanation of the study and that you agree to participate. You also understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.