Risky Business: How Self-Monitoring and Gender Relate to the Participation in Risky and Unsafe Behaviors in College Students

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between gender, self-monitoring and risk taking behavior. Studies on gender differences and risky behavior have shown that women perceive certain behaviors as being more risky than men do, and that men are more likely to take risks than women as a result of perceived gender norms. The current study predicts that males who are high self-monitors, and are more susceptible to behave in accordance with the male norm of being a risk taker, will be more likely to partake in risky behaviors than low self-monitor males. Additionally, it is predicted that high self-monitor females, who are likely to reflect the female norm of being low risk takers, will be less likely to partake in risk behavior than low self-monitor females. Data from 158 Union College students was collected and assessed for self-monitoring levels, personality types and risk-taking behaviors. Areas of risk taking behavior included alcohol use, drug use, promiscuity, unsafe sex and drunk driving. The findings are discussed as well as the potential limitations of the study and ideas for future research.

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Risk taking as a form of human behavior has been studied and interpreted in a number of different ways. Most generally, and in the case of this research, risky behavior can be identified as any act that involves the performance of actions that could lead to known negative consequences (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999). What will be stressed in this research is that actions considered to be "risky" would mostly likely result in a distressing outcome, such as excessive drinking or drug use, unprotected and excessive sex, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Actions that are less likely to produce a more negative outcome, such as speaking up in class or wearing a bold outfit, would not constitute a risky behavior.

Risk Taking

There are several forms of risky behaviors that are of interest. The first behavior will be sexual risk and promiscuity. This kind of behavior includes having unprotected sex and having multiple sex partners within a short period of time (Hoyle, Fejfar & Miller, 2000; Snyder, Simpson an Gangestad, 1986). Behaviors such as this could lead to unfortunate outcomes such as pregnancy, and the contracting of a sexually transmitted disease (Kincaid, Jones, Gonzalez, Payne & DeVellis, 2012). The second behavior that will be assessed will be alcohol use. The Core Report (2011) showed that about 45% of college age students reported binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks at a time) in the past two weeks. Binge drinking is considered risky because the out comes of such behavior could be detrimental to one's health, promotes behaviors like drunk driving and

unprotected sexual behavior, and can hinder one's performance in school (Hingson, Heeren, Zakocs, Kopstein & Wechsler, 2002; from Lewis & Clemens, 2008; Core Institute, 2011). Drug use and experimentation is another risky behavior. In the Core Report (2011), about 32% of college students had reported using marijuana in the past year, and 11% reported using other illegal drugs. Drug use is considered a risky behavior due to the physical and mental health problems it can cause (Core Institute, 2011). The final risky behavior being considered is criminal behavior such as drunk driving. These acts are of interest due to the fact that they are common among college age students (Pharo et al., 2011).

The question now becomes who is prone to participating in risky behaviors? There are several factors that could explain why some are more likely to participating in risky behaviors than others. The first factor is personality type. Research has found support for the idea that personality traits such as sensation seeking can be linked to participation in risky behavior (Bell, Schoenrock & O'Neal, 2000) Specific research has shown that individuals with high levels of sensation seeking and a tendency for making impulsive decisions are more likely to participate in risky sexual behaviors such as participating in casual sex, having multiple sex partners, and having unprotected sex (Hoyle, Fejfar & Miller, 2000).

The second factor that relates to the element of personality types is age. The age group that is most prone to risky behavior are adolescents, ranging from 13 to 22 years of age (Pharo et al., 2011). The risky behaviors noted for being involved in physical incidences and injuries in adolescents include unsafe drinking, driving, drug use, smoking, and sexual behavior. A study by Pharo et al., (2011), assessed how personality

characteristics could predict what factors lead adolescents to be more risky. The five characteristics that were of interest were impulsivity, sensation seeking, sociability, aggression, and hostility. The participants in this study aged from 13 to 22 years of age, and they were asked to complete measures for risk taking behaviors and the five personality traits. The results found that the personality traits of impulsivity, sensation seeking, aggression, and sociability were related to higher levels of risky behavior. This provides empirical evidence that certain personality traits of adolescent individuals may influence the amount of risky behaviors they partake in.

The third factor that predicts to one's propensity for risk is gender. Overall, research has shown that males are more likely to take risks than females especially in situations that involved competition and a reward between winners and losers (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999). In the CORE report of 2011, the following statistics showed that on average, males were more likely to participate in these risky behaviors. Out of 50,505 surveys completely, 24.3% of males currently used marijuana compared to 14.7% of females who were using. Additional, 8.1% of males had used other illegal drugs compared to 5.3% of females, and 24% of males had driven a car under the influence compared to 16.9% of females.

Research by Byrnes et al. (1999) assessed the theories on gender and risk and provided additional support for the idea that woman are less risky than men. Their research involved combined 135 different studies pertaining to gender and risk taking. They were each categorizing in terms of their self-report measurements, observed measurements and hypothetical choice measurements (participants had to choose between two imaginary options and rate the amount of risk they would tolerate in that

situation). The overall results confirmed the prediction that woman were less likely to take risks than men. It also showed that woman assess behaviors as being more risky than men do.

The theories that Byrnes et al., (1999) found that influenced these results were based on Kelling, Zirkes, and Myerowitz (1976) theory that socially, risk taking is a highly valued masculine tendency. In general, it motivates high levels of risk taking across contexts in men. Theories of Wilson and Daily (1985) were also mentioned and they suggested that risk taking is part of male psychology that developed due to the competitiveness of primate societies. According to this view, competition forces dominant individuals to engage in risk taking to gain their positions of power.

Research has suggested that gender expectations impact the risk taking behavior of both genders. A study done by Huselid and Cooper (1992) assessed the gender differences among teenagers with regards to alcohol use and abuse. The researchers focused on how peoples gender roles and attributes reflected their drinking habits. Huselid and Cooper (1992) assessed the drinking patterns of 1,077 adolescents between the ages of 13-19 in Buffalo, NY. Assessments were made through interviews and the gender role measures were obtained through a 10-item scale. The results showed that males and females were just as likely to have drunk alcohol. Males, however, drank more often, more heavily, and had experiences more alcohol-related problems than females. The results also showed that males who reported having a high masculine gender role association partook in higher levels of alcohol drinking as a way to control their emotions. These results suggest that with regards to alcohol usage, men are more likely to

take this behavior to a “riskier” level than women are, and that men are more likely to associate this behavior as being consistent with desired behavior for a masculine male.

Huselid and Cooper’s (1992) study leads into additional research for the findings as to what specific gender roles are influencing men and women’s risk taking behavior. A study done by Prentice and Carranza (2002) reviewed how the gender types of modern college students relate to the traditional ideals for each gender from the 1970s. Traditional feminine characteristics included being affectionate, compassionate, loyal, soft-spoken, tender, understanding and not using harsh language. Masculine characteristics included being aggressive, assertive, ambitious, competitive, dominant, and willing to take risks. The researchers had the participant’s rate and rank a list of adjectives as being either masculine or feminine characteristics. The results showed that participants upheld norms for traditional stereotypes on gender. This suggests that the opinion that males uphold qualities of risk taking and competitiveness is still common among young adults today. Furthermore it suggests that the female traits of tenderness and being soft-spoken are still prevalent today.

In terms of drug use, research has also suggested that males tend to have higher involvement than women. A study by McCabe et al. (2011) looked at the gender difference in drug use and abuse among undergraduate college students. A sample of 4,580 students completed a web-based questionnaire, which included several substance use measures. The results showed that males were more likely to report drug use and abuse than females. The drugs that were most prevalent was marijuana, cocaine, and psychedelic drugs. This research further strengthens the idea that males are higher risk takers in terms of drug use.

Another study that assessed the difference in risk taking among young adults was a study conducted by Bal Yilmaz, Kavlak and Unsal Atan (2010). Their study focused on the sexual activity and contraceptive usage of Turkish university students in relation to gender differences. The research was conducted with 1000 students, with 500 students of each gender. The results were not only consistent with the idea that males participate in sex at an earlier age then females, but also they were also less likely to use contraception in their most recent sexual intercourse. Males tended to have had their first sexual experience at age 16, and females at age 18. Additionally, about 11% more males failed to use contraception than females. This research shows that not only are males more sexually active then females, they also practice safe sex less often than females, suggesting that male's sexual behavior is more risky than females.

The last study to be addressed on gender differences had to do with the prevalence of drunk driving for adolescent teens. Research by Marelich, Berger, McKenna, and Robert (2000) examined the gender difference in alcohol-impaired driving as well as difference in attitudes and perceptions of such behavior. The research was conducted using telephone survey interviews. The results showed not only that males were more likely to drink and drive, but also that women were more likely to embrace values of preventing such behavior than men were. This suggests that males partake more in the behavior of drunk driving, and that they care less about implementing preventative change for the problem.

It has been established that there are common behaviors exhibited by young adults that are dangerous and unsafe. More specifically, alcohol use, drug us, sex practices and drunk driving have been seen to be prevalent issues for young adults. Additionally, there

seems to be a distinction between how males and females view these behaviors and in the amount that the two genders perform these behaviors. This leads into the focus for the current study, which aims to assess how these gender differences relate to self-monitoring behaviors. The self-monitoring theory may provide answers as to why males tend to be more risky than females.

Self-Monitoring

The theory of self-monitoring was developed about four decades ago (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). The fundamental principle of the theory suggests that people have a concern for their self-presentation and have the ability to change and control their expressive behavior in accordance with their desired public appearances (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). People who learn that their expressions are perceived as being socially inappropriate or lacking may monitor their expressive behavior and self-presentation (Snyder, 1974). Individuals who are more receptive to these social norms and control their behaviors accordingly, are know as high self-monitors. These individuals are highly responsive to social and interpersonal cues of what is and is not appropriate behavior. Individuals who do no control their expressive behavior and do not have as great a concern for how appropriate their behavior is in a given situation, are know as low self-monitors. For these people, expressive behaviors are more likely to reflect ones own inner attitudes, emotions and opinions (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). A person's self-monitoring level can be measured by completing the self-monitoring scale that was developed by Snyder and Gangestad (1986).

There have been multitudes of studies on how people's self-monitoring levels predict their social interactions, behaviors, and opinions (Snyder & Gangestad, 1982). A study by Snyder and Gangestad (1982) questioned how individuals chose their socials situations. There were two investigations where people were presented with a social scenario and had to decide whether they would partake in the situation. For the first scenario, participants were told that this situation would required them to behave in an outgoing and extraverted way. The researchers found that high self-monitors were more willing to enter this scenario when more information on the situation was provided for them. The willingness of the low self-monitors however, was a direct reflection of how they related to being outgoing and extraverted. In the second investigation, participants were assigned a certain situations and were asked how the situations would have to change for them to be more willing to partake in the situation. The descriptions of the high self-monitors had more specific characteristic depictions, and the low self-monitors would change the scenario to fit their own predispositions.

Snyder and Gangestad (1982) research adds significant value to the theories of self-monitoring. It is understood that high self-monitors can change their behavior based on the situation they are in, and based on how others may be behaving or acting. Additional research by DeBono (1987) assessed how self-monitoring is related to attitude change and persuasion. DeBono predicted that high self-monitors, when presented with a pro and con argument, would recall the messages considered to be "social-adjustive", meaning it explains how socially appropriate an attitude would be in a social situation. Additionally, it was predicted that low self-monitors would better recall the pro and con messages that have a value-expressive message, meaning that the argument could be

associated with one's inner values rather than social norms. The results were consistent with the hypotheses and showed that high self-monitors remembered the arguments associated with social appropriateness better, while low self-monitors remembered the arguments relevant to inner opinions better. This research suggests that self-monitoring is involved in the changing and shaping of attitudes, where high's are more concerned with the social appropriateness of their attitudes, and low's are more concerned with personal values and beliefs.

Both Snyder and Gangestad (1982) and DeBono's (1987) research shows how self-monitoring can affect people's behaviors and attitudes. This relationship play into the research on risk taking that has show a correlation between the risky behaviors and attitudes of different kinds of self-monitors. A study by Snyder, Simpson and Gangestad (1986) evaluated how people's self-monitoring levels could relate to peoples attitudes towards sexual relations. Through behavioral and attitudinal surveys, it was revealed that high self-monitors had a more unrestricted orientation with regards to sexual orientation. This means they reported having engaged with a larger number of sex partners in the past year, have had one night stands, had sex partners with whom they were not psychologically close with and predicted that they would have more sexual encounters in the future. Low self-monitors on the other hand had more reserved sexual behaviors and reported having fewer sexual partners, had few to none one night stands, and felt that they had a psychological relationship with their sexual partners. This reveals that high self-monitors are likely to have more risky sexual behaviors as apposed to low self-monitors.

In relation to Snyder et al.'s (1986) study, research by Seal and Agostinelli (1994) found that high self-monitors in addition to having more sex partners are more likely to partake in unsafe sex. Through various questionairs, Seal and Agostinelli (1994) found that participants who scored higher on the self-monitoring scale were also more likely to not use condoms during sexual intercourse, despite having knowledge that having unprotected sex could lead to the transition of HIV and unwanted pregnancies. This strengthens the theory that high self-monitors have a propensity for risky sexual behavior.

With regards to risky behaviors such as vehicle-related risk, substance use, sexual risk, safety, social risk, and delinquency, a study by Bell, Schoenrock & O'Neal (2000) looked at how self-monitoring, gender, personality and risky behavior related to one another. The researchers assessed the participants self-monitoring levels, and rated the amount of sensation seeking each participant had. Additionally they assessed how much participants participated in risky behaviors as well as identified to what extent the participants perceive a behavior to be risky. The results showed that individuals who were high self-monitors with high levels of sensation seeking tendencies were more likely to participate in risky behaviors and did not rate risky behaviors as being high in risk. This occurrence was most commonly found in men. Furthermore women were more likely to perceive behaviors as being risky, and were also less likely to have engaged in those behaviors than men. Bell et al., (2000, p.110) theorized that one reason for this split between genders could be due to the fact that there is are greater social consequences for women who participates in risky behaviors, especially for sexual behaviors. Therefore women may have rated the risky behaviors as being more risky due to the social expectation that they should view those behaviors as something to be avoided.

Overall, little is actually known about the relationship between self-monitoring and risk taking (Bell et al., 2000). The aim of this study is to further this research in order to assess how risk taking and self-monitoring is linked. After assessing the research done on the various factors of risk taking, the prediction for the current research is as follows: It is predicted that males who are high self-monitors are more likely to participate in risky behaviors due to the idea that males have social schemas influencing them to take more risks (Bell et al., 2000; Wilson & Daily, 1985; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Woman who are high self-monitors are predicted to be less likely to participate in risk taking due to the idea that women are seen as being soft spoken, perceive behaviors as being more risky, and have less negative consequences as a result of the alcohol usage (Bell et al., 2000; Wilson & Daily, 1985; Huselid and Cooper, 1992). Additionally, it is predicted that characteristics of sensation seeking impulsivity, aggression, and sociability will be positively correlated to high self-monitors who partake in risky behavior.

Methods

Participants

The participants included 158 Union College students. There were 61 males who participated and 97 females. Of the participants, 82 were high self-monitors and 76 were low self-monitors. Participants were recruited either through the FREUD online database or through various psychology courses. Participants were offered either course credit or $4 for their participation.

Materials

Three questionnaires were used and adapted in order to assess the various variables of self-monitoring, social norms, risky behavior, and personality types. Snyder & Gangestad's (1986) 18-item scale was distributed to assess participant's self-monitoring levels. This questionnaire was designed as an adequate measure of self-monitoring assessments (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). The self-monitoring scale asked questions pertaining to one's feelings and behaviors in social environments (e.g. "At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things others will like", or "I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations").

The CORE Alcohol and Drug Survey, Short Form was distributed to measure alcohol and other drug usage, attitudes, and perceptions among college students (Core Institute, 2011). Participants were asked demographic questions, the times they began experimenting with drugs and alcohol (4 items, e.g., "At what age did you first use…"), how much and how often they use certain substances (4 items, e.g., "During the past 30 days on how many days did you have…"), on their perceptions of how often and to what degree their peers participated in the same kinds of behaviors (1 item, e.g., "How often do you think the average student on your campus uses…") and on any consequences or illegal actions they may have been involved in after using a substance ("Please indicate how often you have experienced the following due to your drinking or drug use during the last year…)

To measure participant's involvement in sexual and drunk driving risky behavior, an abbreviated version of Zuckerman and Kuhlman Life Experiences Questionnaire (ZK-LEQ), developed by Zuckerman and Kuhlman (2000) was used. Participants were asked

questions about their degree of involvement in two areas of risky behavior and each question has designated answers pertaining to the frequency or quantity of any given behavior: Safe sexual behavior (3 items, e.g., “When you have had penetrative sexual intercourse, how often do (did) you or your partner(s) use some methods of birth control?”), and drunk driving (3 items, e.g., “How often have you driven after you have had 4 or more drinks?”).

Added to this questionnaire were six items used in Snyder, Simpson and Gangestad (1986) study on self-monitoring and sexual behavior. These questions asked the following: (1) frequency of sex in the past month, "How many times have you had sex in the past 30 days?”; (2) oral-genital sexual experience, "Have you experienced or engaged in oral-genital sex?"; (3) number of lifetime partners, "With how many different partners have you had sex in your lifetime?"; (4) number of partners in the past year, "With how many different partners have you had sex within the past year?"; (5) number of "one night stands," "With how many different partners have you had sex on one and only one occasion?"; (6) concurrent sex with partner other than dating partner, "During the time you have been (or were) dating your (current or most recent) dating partner, have (or did)you engage in sex with anyone else?".

In addition to the abbreviated ZK-LEQ, 8 items were added in order to assess the perceived social norms of these risky behaviors. These items were developed by Lewis and Clemons’s (2008) Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) survey, which was adapted from the work of Thombs (1999). The questions were designed to evaluate how people perceive their social references groups in terms of their drinking, drug use, and sexual

behavior (12 items, e.g., “Think of your closest friend on campus who is the opposite sex. How often do you think he or she drinks in a typical week”).

To assess the five main personality types of the participants, the Zukerman and Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire was distributed. This questionnaire determines participant’s scores on these five personality traits: Activity (Act), aggression-hostility (Agg-Host), impulsive neuroticism-anxiety (N-Anx), sensation seeking (ImpSS), and sociability (Sy). Research on risky personality traits has used the ZKPQ, demonstrating that it is a strong five-factor personality questionnaire (Zuckerman, 2008; Pharo et al., 2011). The ZKPQ corroborates with the original ZK-LEQ, and it has been found that individuals who score higher on the ZK-LEQ (those who engage in more risky behavior) score higher on risky personality traits as defined by the ZKPQ (Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000; Pharo et al., 2011).

Procedure

Participants are asked to sit in individual school chairs for the entirety of the study. The study took place in a classroom in the Psychology Department of Union College. All participants were read a brief explanation of the questionnaires they will be asked to fill out. It was explained that the questionnaires involve admitting to the participation of illegal behavior, and that the anonymity of their answers will be insured by requiring each participant to seal their questionnaires in an envelope and to place their envelope in a box. They are told that this will ensure that their answers remain anonymous.

Each participant was then given a packet of questionnaires to complete and a white envelope. They were given roughly 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Once everyone was finished, participants folded their packets and placed them in their envelope. Then the debriefing statement was read which explained the true nature of the experiment. Then participants came to the front of the room, put their envelope in the box, and either collected the required document for attaining class credit for the study, or were given a cash reward of $4 before exiting the room.

Results

A 2 (gender: male or female), by 2 (Self-monitoring level: high or low), between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the responses to the question "How often have you driven after you have had more than one or two drinks". The answers included, "never, rarely, sometimes, often, frequently." The ANOVA revealed that the main effect of gender was significant, F (1)= 12.061, p = .001, but the main effect of self-monitoring was not. The interaction however, was nearly significant with an outcome of F (1,1)= 3.625, p= 0.59.

Another 2 (gender: male or female), by 2 (Self-monitoring level: high or low), between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the responses to the question "With how many different, partners have you had sex in your lifetime." The answers included, "None, 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, and 13 or more." The ANOVA revealed that the main effect of self-monitoring was significant, F (1)=5.056, p= 0.045. The interaction was nearly significant when the participants who answers "none" were omitted from the analysis (They made up 23% percent of the participants). The results of the ANOVA were F (1) = 3.433, p= 0.066.

In order to assess the relationship between self-monitoring and personality types, a bivariate correlation was used. There was a positive correlation between the raw self-monitoring data and participants impulsivity, $r(158)= .155$, p=.052. Additionally there was a positive correlation between the raw self-monitoring data and participants sensation seeking $r(158)= .183$, p=.022, as well as their scalability $r(158)= .242$, $p=.002$.

Discussion

The result of the research did not significantly support the main hypothesis that high self-monitor males are more prone to risk taking than low self-mentoring males, and that high self-monitoring females are less prone to risk taking the low self-monitoring females. There was, however, much support for the findings of past research with regards to certain aspects of risk taking behavior.

Firstly, the were numerous example of high self-monitors being higher risk takers then low self-monitors. In terms of the total number of sex partners, high self-monitors were more likely to have had more sex partners than low self-monitors, ranging from five or more partner (35% for high self-monitors vs. 17% for low self-monitors. This is consistent with the findings of Snyder et al. (1986). Other results supported the findings of Bell et al. (2000). In terms of the amount of weekly alcohol use high self-monitors were more likely to drink at least 3 times a week (46% for highs, and 33% for lows, $p=0.009$). For weekly marijuana use, highs were also more likely to smoke at least once a week (25.6% of highs vs. 11.8% of lows, $p=0.008$). In terms of the use of designer drugs such as ecstasy and MDMA, highs were more likely to have used at least one in the past year (20.7% of highs and 11.8% of lows, p=0.02).

Another new finding showed a significant difference between high and low self-monitors in term of getting in trouble with the police, residence halls or other college authorities due to alcohol or drug use. Highs were more than twice as likely than lows to have gotten in trouble with some authoritative figures in the past year (40% of highs vs. 17% of lows, p=0.028). This finding is a new addition to the research on self-monitoring and risk taking behavior.

In addition to the effect of self-monitoring and risk taking, there were several effects of gender and risk taking that were also consistent with Byrnes et al. (1999) Huselid and Cooper (1992), McCabe et al. (2011) and Marelich et al.'s (2000) research that suggests that overall, males are more risky in the behaviors of alcohol use, drug use, and drinking and driving. For the weekly use of alcohol, males were more likely than females of have five or more drinking in a sitting more than three times in two weeks (44.3% males vs. 27.8% females, p=0.01). Additionally, males were more likely than females to use marijuana at least once a week (25% males vs. 13% females, p=0.52). Males were also twice as likely then females to have used hallucinogens such as LCD and PCP (males 16.39% vs. females 6%, p=0.039). Finally, males were more than twice as likely to have driven after the consumption of at least one alcoholic beverage than females (44% males vs. 13% females, p=0.000). These findings are extremely consistent with the research that suggests that in general, males are more prone to risk taking than females.

Lastly, the analysis of different personality types, self-monitoring and risk taking were also consistent with past research done Bell et al. (2000) and Hoyle et al. (2000). Overall, participants who had higher scores of self-monitoring also had high impulsivity,

sensation seeking, and sociability scores. This suggests that there is a relationship between individuals who are high self-monitors and other personality types.

There were specific limitations to this study however, which may have had an effect on the outcome of the data. Firstly, although the ratio of high self-monitor and low self-monitors was fairly even (51.9% to 48.1%), there were significantly less low self-monitor males (11% of all participants, 29.5% of all male participants). This imbalance in the self-monitoring levels of the males may have contributed to the effects that proved to be insignificant (18 out of 61 males were low self-monitors).

Secondly, 50% of all participants were first year students. A number of variables showed that grade was a significant factor in predicting risky behavior. In terms of the amount of drinks consumed weekly, the number of sexual partners, number of sexual partners on one occasion, drunk driving, and drug use across the board, juniors and seniors had higher scores of risk taking. For example, the average number of drinks a week was 15 for the upperclassmen (juniors and seniors), and the average number of sex partners was 5-8. Underclassmen (freshman and sophomores), however, had an average of 7 drinks a week, and 1-4 sex partners. This suggests that overall, upperclassmen showed more risk taking behavior in general than the upperclassmen. The correlations between these factors were all significant. Therefore, had the age of the participants been more even, there would have been higher levels of risk taking in general, allowing the data to accurately reflect the behaviors of the entire school.

Thirdly, it is probable to assume that students on campus who are extremely high-risk takers would not be motivated to participate in this study. About 61% percent of participants completed the study for course credit. This suggests that many students

interested in earning credit towards their grade were coming to participate in the study. Additionally, the mean average for the participants was a B+, showing that successful students were taking this study. This suggests that students with less involvement in their schoolwork would be less likely to sign up and complete psychology studies. Those individuals could be presumed to be higher risk takers. If more high-risk takers had participated in this study, more information on risk takers could have been added to the data.

There are several factor of the study that could have been changed in order to insure more significant results. Firstly, the language used in some of questions were sometime unclear. Phrases like “method of birth control” may have been unclear for some participants. This was evident since many people who said they did not use any method of birth control also answered that they always use condoms. The phases could have been clearer if a better definition of “birth control” was provided. Another change could be the recruitment method for participants. Finding a way to recruit more upperclassman and male students would have ensured a better balance of participants across all age groups and genders. Future research could assess the factor that peer pressure has on the risk taking behavior of high self-monitors as it relates to high self-monitors adaptability to different social situations. Other factors such as being a member of a Greek organization and age groups above 21 could have been used to assess other influences of risk taking.

The current study provided significant support for the idea that males and high risk-takers are more likely to partake in certain risky behaviors. Additionally, there was support for the idea that impulsive, sensation seeking and social individuals are higher

self-monitors. This relationship can be related to the idea that high self-monitors are less likely to use internal thoughts, feelings and attitudes as guides for their behavior than are low self-monitors. Thus, high self-monitors' behaviors would be less likely to be rationally driven, and more likely to be impulsively driven by situational influences. (Seal & Agostinelli, 1994).

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