Drinking High Amounts of Alcohol as a Short-Term Mating Strategy: The Impact of Short-Term Mating Motivations on Young Adults’ Drinking Behavior

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Abstract
Previous research indicates that drinking large quantities of alcohol could function as a short-term mating strategy for young adults in mating situations. However, no study investigated whether this is actually the case. Therefore, in this article, the link between short-term mating motivations and drinking high amounts of alcohol is tested. First, a survey study \((N = 345)\) confirmed that young adults who engage in binge drinking are more short-term oriented in their mating strategy than young adults who never engage in binge drinking. Also, the more short-term-oriented young adults were in their mating strategy, the more often binge drinking behavior was conducted. In addition, an experimental study \((N = 229)\) empirically verified that short-term mating motivations increase young adults’ drinking behavior, more so than long-term mating motivations. Results of the experiment clearly showed that young men and young women are triggered to drink more alcoholic beverages in a short-term mating situation compared to a long-term mating situation. Furthermore, the mating situation also affected young adults’ perception of drinking behavior. Young adults in a short-term mating context perceived a higher amount of alcoholic beverages as heavy drinking compared to peers in a long-term mating context. These findings confirm that a high alcohol consumption functions as a short-term mating strategy for both young men and young women. Insights gained from this article might be of interest to institutions aimed at targeting youth alcohol (ab)use.

Keywords
short-term mating strategy, sexual signaling, drinking alcohol, young adults, risk-taking behavior, binge drinking

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Drinking alcohol is harmful to one’s health. As drinking high amounts of alcohol causes intoxication, it impairs people’s physical coordination, consciousness, cognition, affect, and behavior. Consequently, drinking high volumes of alcohol often leads to (severe) injuries but also leads to sickness, alcohol poisoning, or even coma (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2010; World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). Additionally, because of the toxic effects on organs and body tissue, repeated heavy alcohol use is linked to more than 200 diseases, depending on both the volume of alcohol consumed and the drinking pattern (Rehm, Taylor, & Room, 2006; WHO, 2014). Recent studies even show that the alleged health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption are nonexistent (Chikritzhs et al., 2015; Stockwell et al., 2016).

Despite these negative consequences, drinking alcohol (measured as lifetime alcohol use and past month alcohol use) is largely present among young adults (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015; Poelen, Scholte, Engels, Boomsma, & Willemsen, 2005; Rosiers et al., 2014). In addition, binge drinking (i.e., drinking high amounts of alcohol in a limited period of time) peaks during young adulthood (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015; Johnston, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2012; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Corresponding with other risk-taking behavior (Nell, 2002), this might indicate that

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there are underlying motivations and benefits that surpass the risk for injuries and alcohol-related harm.

Research shows that there is a strong relationship between drinking alcohol and engaging in short-term sexual relations (e.g., Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Lindgren, Pantalone, Lewis, & George, 2009). In addition, recent studies suggest that the high prevalence of heavy alcohol consumption among young adults might be (partially) explained because risky drinking could function as a short-term mating strategy (Vince, 2016a, 2016b). Accordingly, a high alcohol consumption might be engaged in by sexually unrestricted young adults as a signal in mating situations. However, to date, no research investigated whether drinking high amounts of alcohol is actually used by young adults as a short-term mating strategy. Therefore, in this article, two studies are conducted. The first study verifies that binge drinking is related to young adults’ level of sexual unrestrictedness. The second study empirically investigates if short-term mating motivations trigger young adults’ drinking behavior. The goal of this study is to contribute to the large area of research focusing on youngsters’ drinking motivations (e.g., Cooper, Frone, Russel, & Muder, 1995; Cooper, 1994; Cooper et al., 2008; Diep, Tan, Knibbe, & De Vries, 2016; Kuntsche et al., 2014; Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006; Read, Wood, Kahler, Maddock, & Palfai, 2003; Wahesh, Lewis, Wyrick, & Ackerman, 2015; Wardell, Rambandani, & Hendershot, 2016; White, Anderson, Ray, & Mun, 2016) by investigating if indeed drinking high amounts of alcohol functions as a short-term mating strategy for young adults.

**Human Sexuality and Risky Courtship Behavior**

Human sexuality ranges from an unrestricted short-term oriented mating strategy to a more restricted, long-term-oriented sexuality (Geary, 2006; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Due to differences in minimum parental investment and fertility, women are generally more long-term oriented, whereas men often follow a more sexually unrestricted mating orientation (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Trivers, 1972). However, depending on personal characteristics (e.g., attractiveness) and environmental characteristics (e.g., level of uncertainty), other mating strategies can be beneficial for both men and women (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

Men and women also search for different traits in short-term and long-term mating partners. Accordingly, both sexes engage in conspicuous signaling behavior to demonstrate qualities, depending on the other sex’ mating preferences and the sexual strategy that is being followed (Geary, 2006; Saad, 2013). Research shows that this includes risk-taking behavior. For instance, when searching for a short-term mating partner, high-quality genes are a priority for women (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002; Li & Kenrick, 2006). Corresponding with this mating preference, physical risk-taking (e.g., in traffic, skateboarding, etc.) increases in the presence of women and even mere female cues (e.g., pictures of women; Frankenhaus, Dotsch, Karremans, & Wigboldus, 2010; Greitemeyer, Kastenmüller, & Fischer, 2013; Pawlowski, Atwal, & Dunbar, 2008; Ronay & Hippel, 2010). In addition, physical risk-taking also enhances male desirability, especially when it concerns short-term mating (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Kelly & Dunbar, 2001; Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011). For long-term mating, risk avoiders are found more attractive (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011; Wilke, Hutchinson, Todd, & Kruger, 2006), except when the risky behavior is more moderate. Indeed, moderate risk-taking allows the displaying of qualities without potential negative outcomes for the partner and family (Farthing, 2007).

As women are generally more long-term oriented in their sexuality, they are often demanding of a long courtship before consenting to sex. However, sexually unrestricted men benefit from small mating efforts (Buss, 2007). Therefore, men following a short-term mating strategy search for cues indicating sexual willingness and rapid sexual consent (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate, 2000). Research suggests that women with a short-term oriented mating strategy use signaling strategies analogous to men—such as engaging in risky behavior—to indicate that they are also more masculine and (therefore) more unrestricted in their sexuality (Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011). Corresponding with this line of reasoning, studies show that sexually unrestricted women are indeed perceived to be more masculine (Campbell et al., 2009; Clark, 2004; Mikach & Bailey, 1999; Scarbrough & Johnston, 2005). Moreover, also in women, high risk-taking is considered more attractive in short-term mating contexts than being a risk avoider (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011), especially when it concerns physical and social risk-takers (Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011). For long-term mating, risk avoiders are preferred, except when the physical risk contains altruistic motives (Farthing, 2005).

**Alcohol Use as Courtship Behavior**

Given the physical risks inherent to drinking large amounts of alcohol, drinking behavior could be used by young adults to signal desirable traits to the opposite sex, especially in short-term mating situations. Several studies indicate that this is the case for both young men and young women.

According to a large amount of studies, there is a strong link between consuming alcohol and engaging in casual sexual behavior (Cooper, 2002, 2006; Grello et al., 2006; Lindgren et al., 2009; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Turchik, Garske, Probst, & Irvin, 2010). In addition, research shows a positive correlation between drinking alcohol and having a short-term-oriented mating strategy, both when looking at drinking frequency and average drinking behavior (Vince, 2016a, 2016b). Also studies on drinking games confirm that a higher alcohol consumption is linked to being more sexually unrestricted, in both young men and young women (Hone & McCullough, 2015; Hone, Carter, & McCullough, 2013).

Similarly, research indicates that young men and women who are actively dating drink more alcohol, both weekly as on social occasions, compared to young adults who are in a
steady relationship or not dating at all (Devos-Comby, Daniel, & Lange, 2013; Pedersen, Lee, Larimer, & Neighbors, 2009). Also, when wanting to make an attractive impression in social situations, both sexes drink more alcoholic beverages (O’Grady, Harman, Gleason, & Wilson, 2012). According to some studies, young adults even report having sexual motivations to drink alcohol in the company of others (Lindgren et al., 2009) and to play drinking games (Johnson & Sheets, 2004).

In addition, research on the attractiveness of alcohol drinkers shows that pictures of youngsters who have consumed a moderate amount of alcohol are considered more attractive than when the person in the picture is completely sober (Van Den Abbeele, Penton-Voak, Attwood, Stephen, & Munafo, 2015). As this study of Van Den Abbeele, Penton-Voak, Attwood, Stephen, & Munafo (2015) only assesses the general attractiveness, without making a distinction between short-term and long-term desirability, the attractiveness benefit is no longer present when having consumed a high dose of alcohol. Similarly, a person reporting using alcohol in a risky manner is not considered attractive as a potential long-term partner (Farthing, 2005). However, research differentiating between young adults’ short-term and long-term attractiveness shows that heavy drinking behavior does bring attractiveness benefits to young men and women in short-term mating contexts, while clearly harming a young adult’s long-term desirability (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b). This confirms the literature on risk-taking, showing that high risk-taking is attractive only in short-term mating contexts, whereas moderate risk-taking is also considered desirable in a long-term mating partner (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Farthing, 2005, 2007; Sylwester & Pawlowski, 2011).

Finally, studies show that alcohol consumption serves as a cue for a short-term oriented mating orientation. Both men and women who drink alcohol are perceived as being more sexually available and interested in sexual encounters compared to peers who do not drink (Abbey, 2002; Koukounas, Djokic, & Miller, 2015). Moreover, young adults who engage in frequent drinking behavior are perceived as having a more unrestricted sexuality compared to occasional drinkers and abstainers, due to a higher perceived riskiness (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b).

Based on the above research, recent studies suggest that risky drinking behavior could function as a short-term mating strategy for young adults (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b). Accordingly, in actual mating situations, young adults following a short-term mating strategy might drink high amounts of alcohol as a signal to the opposite sex. However, to date, no research investigated if a high alcohol consumption is actually used by young adult as a mating strategy in short-term mating contexts.

**Current Research**

Previous research showed a clear link between drinking alcohol and having an unrestricted sexuality (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b). However, studies focusing on heavy episodic drinking behavior and mating strategies are limited to drinking games contexts (Hone & McCullough, 2015; Hone et al., 2013). Therefore, as an additional verification of the link between drinking high amounts of alcohol on an occasion and a short-term mating orientation, an online survey was conducted on binge drinking behavior. In this survey, we expect binge drinkers to be more short-term oriented in their mating strategy compared to peers who do not engage in binge drinking behavior (Hypothesis 1). In addition, we predict that the more short-term oriented binge drinkers are in their mating orientation, the more they engage in binge drinking behavior. Accordingly, a positive correlation is expected between binge drinkers’ level of sexual unrestrictedness and the amount of binge drinking behavior (Hypothesis 2).

A second study empirically investigated if short-term mating motivations trigger young adults’ alcohol consumption. More specifically, based on both risk-taking and alcohol consumption literature, we hypothesize that young men and women will be willing to consume more alcoholic beverages in a short-term mating context than in a long-term mating context (Hypothesis 3). Also, facilitating the consumption of high amounts of alcohol, we expect that a short-term mating motivation will affect young men and women’s perception of heavy drinking behavior. A higher amount of alcoholic beverages will be perceived as heavy in a short-term mating situation, compared to a long-term mating situation (Hypothesis 4). Finally, we hypothesize that both the self-reported consumption of alcoholic beverages and the perception of heavy drinking will be positively mediated by the extent to which young adults are motivated to pursue a short-term mating relationship (Hypothesis 5). The more young men and women are interested in casual sexual encounters, the more a short-term mating situation will increase young adults’ willingness to drink and their heavy drinking perception. To verify these hypotheses, two studies were conducted.

**Study 1: The Sexual Unrestrictedness of Binge Drinkers**

**Design**

Previous survey studies (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b) already measured the link between young adults’ mating orientation and their general drinking behavior. To confirm that consuming large quantities of alcohol on a specific occasion is also related to having a short-term mating orientation in both young men and women, a survey study on binge drinking behavior was conducted.

**Respondents**

A total of 345 young adults between the age of 18 and 26 completed the questionnaire, with a mean age of 21.26 years ($SD = 1.85$). Of this sample, 45.5% were male and 54.5% female. Twenty-two percent of the respondents ($n = 77$) reported to occasionally engage in binge drinking behavior. More specifically, both men ($n = 41$) and women ($n = 36$)
indicated engaging in binge drinking 3–5 times in the past 30 days. However, on average, men reported binge drinking 1 or 2 times a week, whereas women’s binge drinking behavior was limited to 2 or 3 times a month. All 77 binge drinkers in the sample indicated having a heterosexual orientation. In Belgium, alcohol can be legally sold to youngsters from 16 years on. Only when selling liquor, the age limit rises to 18 years (www.health.belgium.be), making all participants legal alcohol consumers.

**Measures**

The questionnaire started with a short introduction, explaining that the following definition applied to the questions regarding binge drinking. (“By binge drinking, we mean drinking high amounts of alcohol in a short period of time. Drinking five or more alcoholic drinks in 2 hours’ time is considered binge drinking behavior.”) Subsequently, respondents were asked whether they occasionally engaged in binge drinking behavior. Those who indicated engaging in the excessive drinking behavior were asked about the frequency of their binge drinking (“Think back to the last 30 days. On how many days have you engaged in binge drinking behavior?”). Answers were given on a 7-point scale with fixed categories, ranging from “not a single day” to “all days.” A following question assessed the average binge drinking behavior (“How often do you engage in binge drinking behavior?”). A scale with nine categories was presented (Less than 1 day per year, 1–5 days per year, 6–11 days per year, 1 day per month, 2–3 days per month, 1 or 2 days per week, 3 or 4 days per week, almost every day, and daily).

To assess respondents’ mating orientation, respondents filled in the Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory SOI-R scale (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) containing nine questions: Three questions focused on a person’s attitude toward unrestricted sex (e.g., I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying “casual” sex with different partners.), the three following questions addressed a person’s sexual desire (e.g., How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship?), whereas the three final questions focused on past behavioral experiences (e.g., With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse on one and only one occasion?). A higher score on the SOI-R indicated a higher level of sexual unrestrictedness. Young adults’ level of sexual unrestrictedness was also measured by means of the short-term mating orientation scale (STMO) scale and long-term mating orientation (LTMO) scale (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The STMO consists of 10 statements (e.g., I can imagine myself enjoying a brief sexual encounter with someone I find very attractive.), whereas the LTMO contains seven statements (e.g., I would like to have a romantic relationship that lasts forever.). All statements were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (I completely disagree) to 7 (I completely agree). All scales had a high internal consistency ($\alpha_{\text{SOI-R}} = .85; \alpha_{\text{STMO}} = .90; \alpha_{\text{LTMO}} = .78$).

**Results**

**The Mating Orientation of Binge Drinkers (Hypothesis 1)**

To verify if young men and young women who drink high amounts of alcohol are more unrestricted in their sexuality compared to those peers who do not engage in binge drinking, 3 two-way, full factorial, univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted (i.e., for all three scales). SOI-R, STMO, and LTMO served as dependent variables, whereas being a binge drinker or not and the participants’ sex functioned as the independent variables.

Results showed a significant main effect of sex of the participants for the SOI-R, $F(1, 341) = 42.31, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .110$, STMO, $F(1, 341) = 38.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .102$, and LTMO, $F(1, 341) = 11.79, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .033$. On all three scales, men indicated being more sexually unrestricted than women. More specifically, men ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.25$) scored higher on the SOI-R than women ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.15$), and men ($M = 4.20, SD = 1.16$) scored higher on the STMO than women ($M = 3.22, SD = 1.21$). Women ($M = 4.45, SD = 0.59$), on the other hand, had a higher score on the LTMO compared to men ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.61$).

In addition, results showed significant main effects of being a binge drinker on both the SOI-R, $F(1, 341) = 17.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .048$, and the STMO, $F(1, 341) = 10.89, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .031$, with a slightly nonsignificant main effect for LTMO, $F(1, 341) = 3.67, p = .056, \eta_p^2 = .011$. As expected, results showed that binge drinkers ($M = 4.03, SD = 1.35$) scored significantly higher on the SOI-R compared to peers who do not engage in heavy episodic drinking ($M = 3.31, SD = 1.24$). Similarly, binge drinkers ($M = 4.13, SD = 1.16$) had higher short-term oriented mating tendencies on the STMO scale than peers who do not drink heavily ($M = 3.53, SD = 1.28$). Finally, binge drinkers ($M = 4.22, SD = 0.56$) indicated being slightly less long-term oriented in their sexuality than nonbinge drinkers ($M = 4.39, SD = 0.61$) on the LTMO. No significant interaction effects between binge drinking and the sex of the participants were present for all three mating orientation scales, $F_{\text{SOI-R}}(1, 341) = 0.02, p = .885, \eta_p^2 < .001; F_{\text{STMO}}(1, 341) = 0.00, p = .961, \eta_p^2 < .001; F_{\text{LTMO}}(1, 341) = 2.67, p = .103, \eta_p^2 = .008$.

**The Correlation Between Binge Drinking Behavior and the Level of Sexual Unrestrictedness (Hypothesis 2)**

In addition, one-tailed correlations between binge drinking behavior (both the frequency and the average binge drinking behavior) and the respondents’ level of sexual unrestrictedness were conducted. Given the ordinal nature of the binge drinking scales, Spearman’s correlations were used. Results are interpreted based on both significance level ($p$ value), and whether the 95% confidence intervals [CIs] exclude 0 (Field, 2013).

Results (see Table 1) showed clear positive correlations between average binge drinking and binge drinking frequency and SOI-R. Similar positive correlations were found for the binge drinking measures and the STMO. No significant
correlations were present for the LTMO. Subsequently, a split file was conducted on sex of the participants (see Table 1). For men, Spearman’s correlations showed a clear positive correlation between the binge drinking measures (both average binge drinking and binge drinking frequency) and SOI-R, yet no significant correlations with STMO or LTMO. For young women, on the other hand, a significant positive correlation was present between the two binge drinking measures and STMO, but not for SOI-R. Also a significant positive correlation was present between LTMO and binge drinking frequency, but the 95% CI included zero. Accordingly, a higher level of sexual unrestrictedness is linked to more binge drinking behavior among young adults. This positive correlation is present via the SOI-R in men, and via the STMO in women, both when looking at binge drinking frequency and average binge drinking.

As the average binge drinking scale (cf. measures) consists of nine categories with different time frames, additional analyses were conducted to verify that the different time frames caused no bias in the correlation analyses. First, the average drinking scale was rescaled to represent days drinking per month as time frame. Accordingly, 1 (less than 1 day per year) became 0.083333 (1/12 months), 2 (1–5 days per year) became 0.25 (3/12 months), 3 (6–11 days per year) became 0.708333 (8.5/12 months), 4 (1 day per month) remained 1, 5 (2–3 days per month) became 2.5, 6 (1 or 2 days per week) stayed 6 (1.5 × 4 weeks), 7 (3 or 4 days per week) became 14 (3.5 × 4 weeks), 8 (almost every day) became 22.5 (0.75 × 30 days), and 9 (daily) became 30.

Next, Pearson’s correlation analyses were conducted on the complete sample. Results confirmed the Spearman’s correlations, showing positive correlations between average binge drinking and SOI-R, r(77) = .33, p = .002, 95% CI [.133, .506], and STMO, r(77) = .29, p = .005, 95% CI [.108, .457]. The correlation with LTMO was nonsignificant, r(77) = -.11, p = .180, 95% CI [.000, .110]. A split file on sex of the participants showed no differences between the two sexes: For young men, there were no significant correlations between average binge drinking and SOI-R, r(41) = .26, p = .051, 95% CI [.018, .537], STMO, r(41) = .17, p = .140, 95% CI [.066, .398], or LTMO, r(41) = -.043, p = .396, 95% CI [.340, .248]. Also for young women, there were no correlations between average binge drinking and SOI-R, r(36) = .22, p = .10, 95% CI [.109, .532], STMO, r(36) = .23, p = .087, 95% CI [.080, .538], and LTMO, r(36) = .17, p = .161, 95% CI [.246, .537].

Discussion

In this survey, we confirmed the relation between drinking high amounts of alcohol and having a short-term mating orientation. As expected, binge drinkers were sexually more unrestricted compared to peers who did not engage in drinking large quantities of alcohol in a single session. Additionally, in both young men and women, the level of sexual unrestrictedness rose as the amount of binge drinking increased and vice versa. This was especially the case when looking at binge drinking frequency. However, verifying the link between drinking high amounts of alcohol and young adults’ sexual strategy does not suffice to state that this behavior functions as a short-term mating strategy. Therefore, a second study empirically investigated if short-term mating motivations increase young adults’ drinking behavior.

Study 2: The Impact of Short-term Mating on Young Adults’ Drinking Behavior

Design and Participants

A 2 (sex) × 2 (short-term mating prime, long-term mating prime) between-subjects design was used to verify the impact of mating motivations on young adults’ alcohol consumption. To activate a specific motivation, a guided visualization task was used, combining priming scenarios with empathy questions. Using priming to activate short-term and long-term mating motivations is based on both risk-taking and conspicuous consumption literature (Greitemeyer et al., 2013; Sundie et al., 2011). A visualization task was chosen as priming technique because it has proven useful in manipulating emotions and motivations in previous similar research (Maner, Gailliot, Rouby, & Miller, 2007; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). Young adults who drink alcohol were contacted to take part in the online experiment. Given the heterosexual perspective in the mating scenarios, participants with a homosexual orientation were not taken into account, as well as respondents with largely incomplete questionnaires. Also participants who did not complete the visualization task were removed from the dataset, as well as nondrinkers. No subjects were excluded based on the manipulation check. As a consequence, our final sample consisted of 229 young adults between the age of 18 and 27 years old (M = 21.18, SD = 1.49), of which 32.3% were male (n = 74) and 67.7% (n = 155) female. In Belgium,

Table 1. The Correlation Between Binge Drinking and the Level of Sexual Unrestrictedness.

|                  | Average Binge Drinking | Binge Drinking Frequency |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
|                  | rs df p    95% CI     | rs df p    95% CI     |
| All participants |                        |                          |
| SOI-R            | .38 77 <.001 [.179, .549] | .35 77 .001 [.131, .538] |
| STMO             | .33 77 .002 [.109, .532]  | .30 77 .005 [.073, .505] |
| LTMO             | -.14 77 .119 [−.347, .089] | −.12 77 .151 [−.329, .106] |
| Male participants|                        |                          |
| SOI-R            | .32 41 .021 [.005, .569]  | .31 41 .023 [.011, .585] |
| STMO             | .16 41 .160 [−.143, .450] | .16 41 .152 [−.153, .466] |
| LTMO             | -.17 41 .147 [−.484, .149] | −.22 41 .083 [−.668, .069] |
| Female participants|                      |                          |
| SOI-R            | .24 36 .084 [−.111, .560] | .17 36 .168 [−.214, .526] |
| STMO             | .36 36 .015 [.029, .652]  | .33 36 .026 [.014, .597] |
| LTMO             | .19 36 .131 [−.166, .502] | .33 36 .025 [−.303, .628] |

Note. SOI-R = Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory; LTMO = long-term mating orientation; STMO = short-term mating orientation.
the legal drinking age is 18 for spirits and 16 for all other alcohol (www.health.belgium.be).

Materials

Prim ing methodology. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two between-subject conditions: (1) short-term mating and (2) long-term mating. In each condition, participants were asked to read a short priming story of circa 300 words. Each story consisted of four parts, in which the respondent read a brief description about a situation, followed by a question asking to write down (briefly) how they would envision the situation. More specifically, a first question asked the participants to describe the attractive opposite-sex person in the story. Participants were instructed to keep that person in mind when reading the rest of the story. The following questions assessed how the participants would feel in that specific situation.

Participants in the short-term mating condition read a story in which they were single, yet only interested in casual relationships. Then, on a Friday evening, the main character makes eye contact with a beautiful man or woman in a bar. He or she tells you that he or she is traveling through Europe. The main character hopes that something more will happen that night. The long-term mating condition tells a similar story, but here the participants were instructed to envision that they were single and searching for a committed relationship. On a Friday evening, they recognize an attractive man or woman at the bar they know from the past, and for whom they used to have romantic feelings. The main character addresses him or her and they start talking. The main character feels that they really understand each other and wants to spend more time together. To ensure that the priming scenarios elicited the right motivations and feelings, two pretest studies were conducted.

Manipulation pretest 1. Pretest 1 explored whether a sexual strategy prime can alter young adults’ sociosexual orientation, using a 2 (sex; between subject) × 2 (test session; control vs. experimental; within subject) × 2 (short-term mating prime vs. long-term mating prime; between subject) mixed-subjects experimental design. Forty-five young adults between the age of 20 and 27 (M = 22.11, SD = 1.17, 38% male, 62% female) took part in the experiment. Each participant completed two testing sessions. In the first testing session, participants were asked to fill in the STMO and LTMO scale (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). In the second, experimental session, the same participants were asked to read one of the two priming scenarios (short-term mating or long-term mating), followed by the STMO and LTMO. The second session took place one day after the first session. STMO and LTMO were measured on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (I completely disagree) to 9 (I completely agree). The STMO and LTMO had sufficient internal consistency in both testing sessions (αSTMO1 = .87, αLTMO1 = .80, αSTMO2 = .90, αLTMO2 = .94). Both testing sessions were filled in on a paper questionnaire.

To verify if young adults’ level of sexual unrestrictedness rose in the short-term mating prime condition, a two-way mixed ANOVA was conducted. STMO1 (first session) and STMO2 (second session) were used as the variables of the within-subjects factor “STMO,” with priming version as between-subjects factor. Results showed a significant interaction between STMO and priming version, F(1, 43) = 5.81, p = .020, ηp² = .119. When reading the short-term mating prime, participants scored higher on the STMO2 (M = 5.03, SD = 1.64) than the STMO1 (M = 4.61, SD = 1.23; p = .050). In the long-term mating prime condition, there were no significant differences between STMO1 (M = 4.36, SD = 1.50) and STMO2 (M = 4.10, SD = 1.64; p = .178).

Additionally, a second two-way mixed ANOVA was conducted to verify whether mating primes affected young adults’ LTMO. LTMO1 and LTMO2 were used as the within-subjects factor “LTMO,” with priming version as between-subjects factor. Results found no significant interaction between LTMO and priming version, F(1, 43) = 1.16, p = .288, ηp² = .026. Yet, pairwise comparisons did show that participants who read a long-term mating prime scored higher on LTMO2 (M = 7.83, SD = 1.00) than LTMO1 (M = 7.40, SD = 1.51; p = .010). No such differences were found between LTMO1 (M = 7.56, SD = 1.29) and LTMO2 (M = 7.73, SD = 0.87; p = .306) in the short-term mating prime condition.

Manipulations pretest 2. A second online manipulation pretest was conducted, using a different sample. Here also, a 2 (sex; between subject) × 2 (test session; control vs. experimental; within subject) × 2 (short-term mating prime vs. long-term mating prime; between subject) mixed-subjects experimental design was used. In total, 123 young adults between 18 and 27 years old (M = 21.35, SD = 1.33) took part, of which 21% male and 79% female.

When starting the online experiment, each participant was asked to fill in their sex, age, and relationship status (in a relationship or single). Next, a short scale measured participants’ sociosexual orientation, using the attitudinal items of the SOI-R (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Young adults were asked to indicate their level of sexual unrestrictedness on three questions (e.g., Sex without love is OK.), followed by a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (I completely disagree) to 7 (I completely agree). A higher score indicated a higher level of sexual unrestrictedness. Subsequently, participants read one of the two primes, either the short-term mating prime or long-term mating prime, with visualization questions.

To ensure that the visualization task elicited the right feelings, participants were asked to indicate which emotions they felt after reading the scenario. A list of seven emotions was presented: (1) sexual arousal, (2) sexual desire, (3) romantic feelings, (4) amorousness, (5) enthusiasm, (6) guilt, and (7) confusion. Guilt and confusion were added to the list of emotions to verify whether a mating prime does not lead to negative emotions when conflicting with the own mating strategy. Additionally, a second question assessed to what extent the scenario elicited the following motivations: (8) making an attractive impression, (9) pursuing a short-term relationship, affair or one-night stand with someone you are interested in, (10) pursuing a romantic, long-term
Both the scales had sufficient internal consistency (participants were asked to fill in the SOI-R for the second time. M when reading a long-term mating prime. \( M \) indicated that young adults’ level of sexual unrestrictedness was randomized. Answers were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Subsequently, participants were asked to fill in the SOI-R for the second time. Both the scales had sufficient internal consistency (\( \eta^2_{SOI-R1} = .70 \) and \( \eta^2_{SOI-R2} = .76 \)).

To verify if the mating prime affected the participants’ level of sexual unrestrictedness, a two-way mixed ANOVA was conducted. SOI-R1 (testing session) and SOI-R2 (experimental session) formed the within-subjects factor “SOI-R,” priming version was the between-subjects factor. Results showed a significant interaction between SOI-R and priming version, \( F(1, 121) = 5.96, p = .016, \eta^2_p = .047 \). Pairwise comparisons indicated that young adults’ level of sexual unrestrictedness rose significantly between the testing session (M = 3.99, SD = 1.37) and experimental session (M = 4.33, SD = 1.36) when reading a long-term mating prime (p < .001). There was no significant difference in young adults’ sexual orientation when reading a long-term mating prime (M_{SOI-R1} = 4.28, SD_{SOI-R1} = 1.50; M_{SOI-R2} = 4.32, SD_{SOI-R1} = 1.48; p = .62). Additional three-way mixed ANOVAs also confirmed that nor the sex of the participants, \( F(1, 119) = 0.02, p = .902, \eta^2_p < .001 \), nor their relationship status, \( F(1, 119) = 2.04, p = .156, \eta^2_p = .017 \), affected the impact of the priming scenarios on their socio-sexual orientation.

In addition, a two-way mixed ANOVA with all seven emotions as within-subjects variables was conducted. Priming version functioned as between-subjects factor. Results showed a significant interaction effect between the emotions and priming version, \( F(3.51, 425) = 6.02, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .047 \). As the assumption of sphericity was violated (p < .001), the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was used (\( \eta^2_{Greenhouse-Geisser} = .59 \)). Pairwise comparisons (see Table 2) further clarified that sexual arousal was significantly higher in the short-term mating condition (p = .004), whereas amorousness was higher in the long-term mating condition (p = .020). Romantic feelings were also slightly higher when reading a long-term mating prime (p = .093). As intended, the level of desire (p = .631) and enthusiasm (p = .856) did not differ significantly between the two priming conditions. Also, the priming conditions did not significantly differ in the extent to which participants felt confused (p = .435). Young adults did feel significantly more guilty in a short-term mating condition than a long-term mating condition (p = .020). However, both scores remained relatively low. Even more, guilt was the emotion the least present in both conditions. There were also no significant three-way interactions with sex, \( F(3.48, 414.47) = 0.76, p = .535, \eta^2_p = .006 \); Greenhouse-Geisser correction, or relationship status, \( F(3.48, 414) = 0.42, p = .767, \eta^2_p = .004 \); Greenhouse-Geisser correction. Accordingly, the elicited emotions in the two mating contexts did not differ between young men and young women. Moreover, also relationship status did not affect the extent to which emotions were aroused in the two mating conditions, even in the case of guilt and confusion.

Similarly, a two-way mixed ANOVA with all four motivations as within-subjects factor and priming version as between-subjects factor was conducted. Results indicated a significant interaction effect between the motivations and priming version, using the Huynh-Feldt correction (\( \eta^2_{Greenhouse-Geisser} = .79 \), \( F(2.42, 293.25) = 6.96, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .054 \). Pairwise comparisons of the interaction effect (see Table 2) showed that there were no significant differences between the two mating conditions in the extent to which participants wanted to make an attractive impression (p = .846), felt like having fun (p = .766), or wanted to pursue a short-term relationship (p = .118). Participants in the short-term mating condition were significantly more motivated to pursue a short-term relationship (p = .001). Here also, there was no significant interaction with sex, \( F(2.46, 292.14) = 0.72, p = .513, \eta^2_p = .006 \); Huynh-Feldt correction, or relationship status, \( F(2.37, 281.57) = 0.04, p = .973, \eta^2_p < .001 \); Huynh-Feldt correction. Based on the two manipulation pretests, we decided to use the two mating scenarios in the visualization task, to elicit short-term and long-term mating motivations.

### Alcohol measures.
To assess the drinking behavior of young adults in short-term and long-term mating situations, participants were instructed to imagine spending the evening in the bar, as described in the priming scenario. Subsequently, they were asked to indicate the maximum amount of alcoholic drinks that they would drink in a period of 2 hr time. A second series of questions assessed respondents’ perceptions concerning drinking behavior. More specifically, it was asked which amount of alcoholic drinks they considered as heavy drinking, in a period of 2 hr. For both men and women separately, participants were instructed to fill in a number between 0 and 20 for the amount of alcoholic drinks they would drink in a period of 2 hr time. A second manipulation of heavy drinking behavior was conducted. SOI-R1 (testing session) and SOI-R2 (experimental session) formed the within-subjects factor “SOI-R,” priming version was the between-subjects factor. Results showed a significant interaction between SOI-R and priming version, \( F(3.51, 425) = 6.02, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .047 \).

### Sexual strategy.
To measure participants’ mating orientation, the three attitudinal items of the SOI-R were used (cf. manipulations pretest 2, \( \alpha = .73 \)).
Figure 1. Elicited motivations depending on the mating condition.

Manipulation check. To ensure that the priming scenario’s elicited the right motivations in the actual experiment, the second question from pretest 2 was reused as manipulation check. This question assessed to what extent the scenario elicited the following motivations: (a) making an attractive impression, (b) pursuing a short-term relationship, affair or one-night stand with someone you are interested in, (c) pursuing a romantic, long-term relationship with someone you are interested in, and (d) enjoying yourself, having fun. Answers were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Procedure

Participants agreeing to take part in the experiment were randomly assigned to one of the two priming conditions. First, participants were asked about their sex, age, sexual orientation, and whether they drank alcohol. This was followed by the SOI-R. Subsequently, participants read the priming scenario with visualization questions, and filled in the manipulation check, followed by the measures of alcohol consumption.

Results

Manipulation Check

To verify the functioning of the priming scenarios in the experiment, a three-way mixed ANOVA was conducted. Sex and priming version functioned as the between-subjects factor, the four motivations as within-subjects factor. Results showed a significant interaction effect between priming version and the motivations, $F(2.61, 588.16) = 21.06, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .086$. The three-way interaction with priming version and sex was slightly nonsignificant, $F(2.61, 588.16) = 2.33, p = .082, \eta^2_p = .010$. As the assumption of sphericity was violated ($p < .001$; $\epsilon_{\text{Greenhouse-Geisser}} = .85$), a Huynh-Feldt correction was used.

Pairwise comparisons (see Figure 1) indicated that the participants in the two mating conditions did not differ in their motivation to make an attractive impression ($p = .178$) or their motivation to have fun ($p = .351$). However, young adults were more motivated to pursue a short-term relationship in the short-term mating condition ($p < .001$), and more motivated to pursue a romantic relationship in the long-term mating condition ($p = .003$).

The Impact of Short-Term Mating on the Amount of Alcoholic Drinks (Hypothesis 3)

To verify if short-term mating intentions increase the amount of alcoholic beverages that male and female young adults want to consume, a three-way interaction moderation analysis was conducted, using Model 3 of the PROCESS procedure of Hayes (2013; http://www.afhayes.com). A three-way interaction was chosen to include the sociosexual orientation (measured by SOI-R) of the participants as a moderating variable in the analyses, next to sex. Maximum amount of alcoholic beverages consumed functioned as the outcome variable $Y$, priming version as the independent variable $X$. Both sex of the participants (M) and their sociosexual orientation (W) served as moderating variables. Results found no significant three-way interaction between priming version, sex and SOI-R, $B = -.31, SE = .69, t(220) = -.45, p = .66$, on the maximum amount of alcoholic beverages consumed.

As the two-way interactions of moderation analyses are conditional, a two-way univariate ANOVA was used for follow-up, with priming version and sex of the participant as between-subjects factor. Results showed a significant main effect of priming version on the amount of alcoholic drinks, $F(1, 225) = 7.54, p = .007, \eta^2_p = .032$, but no significant Priming X Sex interaction, $F(1, 225) = 0.05, p = .830, \eta^2_p < .001$. Accordingly, both young men and women intended to drink a higher amount of alcoholic beverages in the short-term mating condition ($M = 4.14, SD = 2.38$) than in the long-term mating condition ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.79$).

The Impact of Short-Term Mating on the Perception of Heavy Drinking (Hypothesis 4)

Statistical analyses were similar to Hypothesis 3, with perceived heavy drinking as independent variable in both the three-way interaction (Model 3, PROCESS) and the two-way univariate ANOVA. Separate analyses were performed for perceived heavy drinking in women and perceived heavy drinking in men.

Results showed no significant three-way interaction between priming version, sex, and SOI-R for both perceived heavy drinking in women, $B = -.25, SE = .45, t(220) = -.55, p = .580$, and in men, $B = -.13, SE = .68, t(220) = -.19, p = .853$. Follow-up two-way univariate ANOVAs also showed no significant interaction between priming version and sex of the participants, $F_{\text{Female drinking}}(1, 225) = 1.61, p = .206, \eta^2_p = .007$ and $F_{\text{Male drinking}}(1, 225) = 0.03, p = .854, \eta^2_p < .001$. A significant main effect, on the other hand, was present for male drinking, $F(1, 225) = 3.95, p = .048, \eta^2_p = .017$. For the perception of female heavy drinking, there was only a significant main effect on the .1 significance level, $F(1, 225) = 2.78, p = .097, \eta^2_p = .012$. When performing a follow-up independent t test, significant differences were present for both the
perception of male drinking behavior, \( t(227) = 2.26, p = .025, r = .15 \), and female drinking behavior, \( t(227) = 2.15, p = .032, r = .14 \). For both male and female drinking, participants perceived a higher amount of alcoholic beverages as heavy drinking in the short-term mating condition compared to the long-term mating condition (cf. Figure 2).

**The Mediating Impact of Short-term Mating Motivations on Alcohol Measures (Hypothesis 5)**

To investigate whether the desire to engage in a short-term relationship positively mediates the relation between priming version and the alcohol measures, mediation analyses were conducted, using Model 4 of the PROCESS procedure of Hayes. Bias-corrected bootstrapping (with 5,000 bootstrap samples) was used to generate 95% CIs around the indirect effects of participants’ desire to have a short-term relationship on the amount of alcoholic beverages and on the perceived heavy drinking. Mediation is present when the CIs exclude 0. Number of drinks, perceived heavy drinking for women and perceived heavy drinking for men were used as separate outcome variables, with priming version as independent variable.

Results (see Table 3) revealed a significant positive indirect effect of the short-term mating priming on the amount of alcoholic beverages, via their motivation to pursue a short-term relationship. These findings indicate that in a short-term mating condition, the motivation to have a short-term sexual relationship rises, leading to a willingness to drink a higher amount of alcoholic beverages in a mating situation. Remarkably, no such mediation was found for perception of heavy drinking in women or men.

| Mediator \( (\times \text{Moderator}) \) | Alcohol Measures | \( a \times b \) | SE | LLCI | ULCI |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----|------|------|
| Desire to pursue a short-term relationship (Model 4) | Amount of alcoholic beverages | .349 | .114 | .157 | .611 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for women | .065 | .094 | -.111 | .263 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for men | .138 | .123 | -.091 | .403 |
| Desire to pursue a long-term relationship (Model 4) | Amount of alcoholic beverages | -.117 | .086 | -.322 | .020 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for women | -.108 | .065 | -.264 | -.003 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for men | -.134 | .048 | -.343 | .002 |
| Desire to pursue a short-term relationship \( \times \) Sex (Model 14) | Amount of alcoholic beverages | .180 | .224 | -.255 | .627 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for women | .274 | .186 | -.067 | .664 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for men | -.127 | .249 | -.626 | .356 |
| Desire to pursue a long-term relationship \( \times \) Sex (Model 14) | Amount of alcoholic beverages | .168 | .198 | -.179 | .633 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for women | .019 | .127 | -.224 | .293 |
| | Perceived heavy drinking for men | .216 | .189 | -.098 | .645 |

Note. LLCI = lower level confidence interval; ULCI = upper level confidence interval; SE = standard error; \( a \times b \) = indirect effect of X on Y through M.
*Significant indirect effect.

indirect effects of the desire to pursue a long-term relationship were present.

In addition to these simple mediations, six moderated mediations were conducted, using Model 14, to verify if the mediating effect of short-term mating motivations and long-term mating motivations on the alcohol measures was moderated by sex of the participants. The analysis (5,000 bootstraps; 95% bias-corrected CIs) showed no significant moderated mediations.

**Discussion**

The results of this experimental study showed that a short-term mating condition affects young adults’ drinking behavior and perception. Both young men and young women wanted to consume more alcoholic beverages when being in a short-term mating situation, compared to being in the company of a potentially long-term partner. Also a higher amount of alcoholic beverages...
drinks was perceived as heavy in a short-term mating context, compared to a long-term mating context. Additionally, analyses revealed that the increase in drinking behavior in short-term mating contexts can be assigned to the desire to engage in short-term relationships. This mediating impact was not present in young adults’ perception of heavy drinking.

**General Discussion**

Both risk-taking and alcohol literature indicate that drinking high amounts of alcohol could function as a short-term mating strategy for young adults in mating situations. Therefore, a confirmatory survey study verified that binge drinking behavior is indeed related to having an unrestricted sexuality (Hypotheses 1 and 2). A second experimental study empirically tested whether short-term mating motivations increase young adults’ drinking behavior (Hypotheses 3–5).

Confirming Hypotheses 1 and 2, the first study clearly showed that binge drinkers are more short-term oriented in their sexuality compared to peers who do not engage in binge drinking behavior. Moreover, the more sexually unrestricted young men and young women are in their mating orientation, the more frequently binge drinking is engaged in. These findings correspond with the literature on drinking games, in which high mating efforts are linked with participation and higher drinking behavior in drinking games (Hone & McCullough, 2015; Hone et al., 2013). It also supplements previous research on mating orientation and general drinking behavior (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b), showing a clear link between drinking behavior and having a short-term oriented mating strategy.

Furthermore, the experiment indicated that in a short-term mating context, young adults are triggered to consume a higher number of alcoholic beverages compared to a long-term mating context. Mediation analyses also confirmed that being motivated to engage in a short-term mating relationship (like a one-night stand or an affair) increases young men’s and women’s drinking behavior. These findings indicate that young adults actually use a high alcohol consumption as a short-mating strategy.

Moreover, also the perception of young men and women changed, as a higher number of alcoholic beverages was perceived as heavy drinking in a short-term mating condition. Possibly, this shift in perceived heavy drinking enables and even stimulates young adults into drinking higher amounts of alcohol when being in a short-term mating situation. Remarkably, follow-up mediation analyses could not confirm that a higher motivation to pursue a short-term sexual relationship was linked to a perception of higher amounts of alcohol consumption as heavy. The mediation analyses did find that the more young adults were motivated to pursue a long-term relationship, the sooner women’s drinking was perceived as heavy. The level of romantic motivation did not affect the perception of men’s drinking behavior. Accordingly, more research is necessary to clarify why a short-term mating context affects young adults’ perception of heavy drinking.

Additionally, it would also be interesting to investigate why short-term mating motivations trigger young adults’ willingness to drink more alcoholic beverages. As a short-term mating context, in which you interact with an attractive person of the opposite sex (who also shows interest in you), increases (heterosexual) young adults’ drinking behavior, results suggest that both young men and young women use alcohol consumption to enhance their attractiveness. This corresponds with studies showing that frequent drinking behavior increases young adults’ short-term attractiveness while harming their desirability as a long-term romantic partner (Vincke, 2016a, 2016b). Also the literature on risk-taking suggests that high risk-taking behavior is engaged in to signal qualities to potential short-term mating partners (Bassett & Moss, 2004; Sylwester & Pawłowski, 2011).

However, it remains unclear which mate qualities are being signaled by drinking high amounts of alcohol. For instance, as heavy drinking behavior can be considered physically risky, research could verify if drinking behavior could be used to signal certain physical qualities. However, as drinking alcohol is still considered typical masculine behavior (de Visser & McDonnell, 2012; de Visser & Smith, 2007; Holmila & Raitasalo, 2005; Rolfe, Orford, & Dalton, 2009), alcohol use could also be considered social risk-taking for women, engaging in nonconformist behavior that can damage one’s reputation (Sylwester & Pawłowski, 2011). As drinking alcohol also has financial consequences (price of beverage, amount of money spent on one occasion), it would also be interesting to investigate if these other aspects also function as elements of a specific mating strategy. For instance, spending a lot of money on drinks could function as conspicuous consumption to indicate resources.

As all individuals already have a particular sociosexual orientation, using a priming methodology to activate short-term mating and long-term mating motivations could be considered a limitation of this article. However, two manipulation pretests confirmed that a mating prime can alter young adults’ mindsets in a predictable manner, independent of their sex or current relationship status. In addition, a manipulation check in the actual experiment also confirmed that the participants in the two conditions did not differ in their desire to make an attractive impression or have a pleasant time, yet they did differ in their motivation to pursue a short-term or long-term relationship. We also took into account the sociosexual orientation of the participants (filled in prior to the manipulation) in both conditions as a moderator in all statistical analyses. The fact that there was no moderating impact indicates that the participants were capable of empathizing with another mating orientation than their actual mating strategy. However, studying the impact of short-term mating motivations on young adults’ drinking behavior in more natural circumstances could be beneficial.

Also, in the first study, binge drinking behavior was defined to the participants as drinking five alcoholic beverages in 2 hr time. For reasons of simplicity, no distinction was made between male and female drinking behavior. However, many
binge drinking definitions make this distinction. For instance, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), binge drinking is engaged in when drinking five or more alcoholic drinks (men) or four or more alcoholic drinks (women) in a period of 2-hr time (2015). The lower number of drinks for women is based on physiological differences, leading to higher blood alcohol levels compared to men when drinking similar quantities (Courtney & Polich, 2009; Mancinelli, Vitali, & Ceccanti, 2009). Future research should take this distinction into account. In addition, as these binge drinking definitions are based on standard alcoholic drinks, containing a fix amount of pure alcohol, future survey studies would also benefit from including a definition of a standard alcoholic drink.

Finally, the findings of this article could be used in social marketing campaigns targeting youth alcohol (ab)use. As young adults appear to use a high alcohol consumption as a short-term mating strategy in mating situations, it could be advantageous to address the expected benefits of heavy drinking. Accordingly, it might be beneficial to convince young adults that drinking high amounts of alcohol is not attractive, even for a short-term sexual encounter. Studies already showed that a positive drinker image is linked to an increased (future) alcohol consumption (Blanton, Gibbons, Gerrard, Conger, & Smith, 1997; Gerrard et al., 2002; Spijkerman, van den Eijnden, Vitale, & Engels, 2004). Therefore, future studies could verify whether lowering the short-term attractiveness of heavy episodic drinking decreases sexually unrestricted young adults’ intention to drink high amounts of alcohol when pursuing a short-term relationship. Moreover, if high alcohol quantities are used as a short-term mating strategy by young adults’ because of its risk-taking nature, emphasizing the risks of drinking high amounts of alcohol in social marketing campaigns might be the wrong approach. Instead of functioning as a warning, this might encourage young adults to use drinking in short-term mating situations.

**Conclusion**

This article is part of a series of studies verifying if alcohol use can be considered a short-term mating strategy of young adults. The first study confirmed that there is a strong relationship between drinking high amounts of alcohol and pursuing a short-term mating strategy. The second study showed that short-term mating motivations trigger both young men and young women to increase their drinking behavior. Also young adults’ perception of what can be considered heavy drinking is affected in a short-term mating context, making them more acceptant toward drinking high amounts of alcoholic beverages. Given the prevalence and harmfulness of drinking high amounts of alcohol, these findings are of interest to social marketing professionals and institutions. By giving insight in less obvious drinking motivations, youth drinking behavior can be addressed more effectively.

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