



January 2018

# Alcohol-Related Regret Among Undergraduate Students

Samantha Jo Feroni

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ALCOHOL-RELATED REGRET AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota, 2016  
Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota, 2016

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

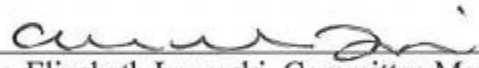
Grand Forks, North Dakota

May  
2018

This thesis, submitted by Samantha Jo Feroni in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



Dr. Daphne Pedersen, Committee Chair

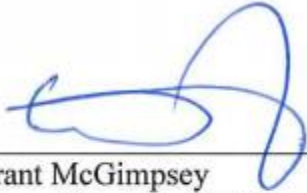


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This thesis is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.



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May 1, 2018

Date

## PERMISSION

Title Alcohol-Related Regret among Undergraduate Students  
Department Sociology  
Degree Master of Arts

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Samantha Feroni  
04/25/2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Elizabeth Legerski and Dr. Justin Berg for being a part of committee. I have appreciated their guidance, recommendations, and motivation during the course of my thesis. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Daphne Pedersen, my committee chair, for her endless dedication, reassurance, advice, and wisdom throughout my thesis and years spent at UND. In spite of everyone's busy schedules, I always felt the support that I needed, for that I am grateful. This accomplishment is not mine alone, I could have not done without the encouragement that I have received from my committee.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for the infinite amount of support and love that I have received. I am truly appreciative of my parents for their years of support and encouragement that has allowed me to come this far in my academic career.

## ABSTRACT

College alcohol use remains a major public health concern, particularly on campuses in the Midwest. Heavy drinking has been linked to a number of deleterious consequences, ranging from poor academic performance and early school exit to injury or death. Many of the negative consequences linked to alcohol use carry with the possibility of regret. The purpose of this study is to explore the types of alcohol-related regret, any gender and class level differences in regret, and whether students become hesitant to drink alcohol after such a regret occurs. Data used for the study came from semi structured interviews with undergraduates enrolled at the University of North Dakota ( $N = 16$ ). This study shows that relational regret is the most commonly reported regret among both men and women, and among students of all class levels. Half of the participants reported being hesitant to drink in the future after their regret.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Statement of the Problem and Research Focus*

Underage and college drinking are a substantial concern across the United States. Sixty percent of students between the ages of 18 to 22 report drinking alcohol in the last month, and two-thirds of these drinkers engage in binge drinking (NIAAA, 2016a). At most colleges drinking has become a ritual and a norm for students, no matter their age. Students typically begin college already having some experience with alcohol. However, certain aspects of the college lifestyle facilitate drinking, such as unstructured time, the availability of alcohol, limited interaction with parents, and inconsistent enforcement of underage drinking laws (NIAAA, 2015). Increased alcohol use during college can bring serious and lasting consequences. College drinking not only affects students, but also their families and the college community as a whole. Researchers have estimated that each year about 1,825 students between the age of 18 to 24 die from alcohol-related incidents. Assault rates are also very high for college students. About 696,000 students between the ages of 18 to 24 have been assaulted by another student who has been drinking. Roughly 97,000 students have experienced an alcohol-related sexual assault (NIAAA, 2015). For many, alcohol use, especially when it is heavy, can lead to a number of consequences including feelings of regret.



The current study examines alcohol-related regret among college students in North Dakota, a state that is known for heavy alcohol use. A 2013 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking, showed that 59.1 percent of 18 to 20 year olds residing in North Dakota reported drinking within the past 30 days. During a 2014 study at the University of North Dakota, 71.5 percent of students reported drinking within the last 30 days (American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, 2014). Binge drinking among students, especially in North Dakota, has been an issue of concern. Those aged 18 to 25 are at the highest risk for binge drinking and North Dakota ranks first in the nation in binge drinking among youth 12 to 20 years old (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009).

In addition to region, there are other factors associated with college alcohol use. According to research, the profile of college alcohol use shows greater use among males, those with college-educated parents, business majors, fraternity members, those involved in athletics, those who started drinking in high school, and most importantly individuals who view the party scene as a very important part of college (Vander Ven, 2013). Students drink for many different reasons, including social anxiety, depression, stress, starting a new academic year, celebrations, or just because (Norberg, Norton, Olivier, & Zvolensky, 2010; Vander Ven, 2013). Even though there doesn't have to be a reason for college students to drink, a cause for celebration means students are even more likely to drink heavily. Birthdays, sporting events, and midterms being over are all reasons that students give for having a few more drinks than they normally would (Moser, Pearson, Hustad, & Borsari, 2014; Vander Ven, 2013; Zambonanga, Pearce, Kenney, Ham, Woods, & Borsari, 2014) One of the most dangerous drinking experiences often occurs

on a student's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Many students have the goal of drinking as much as possible and getting as many free drinks as possible. For example, Vander Ven (2013) shared the story of James, a nineteen year old male, who was on a mission to drink heavily because it was his birthday. He decided he should drink all day until the clock struck midnight and his birthday was over. Of 469 students that were interviewed by Vander Ven, ten percent of all stories involved birthday drinking scenarios. While both male and female college students drink in positive situations and for self-enhancing motives, women are more likely to report drinking in negative situations and to cope with aversive emotions. For instance, women are more likely to use alcohol when they are going through a breakup or if a sad event has occurred (Norberg et al., 2010).

When consuming alcohol one's inhibitions are lowered, therefore individuals are more likely to do things that they wouldn't normally do. For instance, students may be more social and talk to people they wouldn't normally talk to. On the other hand, reduced inhibitions can lead to more serious and negative outcomes. Students can experience many negative consequences or problems as a result of drinking, one being regret. "Regret is a negative emotion involving self-blame, experienced when a person reviews past events and imagines that things could have turned out differently given other choices" (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002, pg. 213). Regret may result from both inaction and action, and may be general or specific in nature. For example, regret may result from failing to do something (e.g., not studying for an exam), and it may stem from a specific action such as arguing with a roommate. It may also be generalized, such as failing college courses. The experience of regret also varies in length, ranging from short to long term. Alcohol-related regret is a minimally studied topic.

### *Current Study*

The goal of this study is to explore the experience of alcohol-related regret among undergraduate students. To explore alcohol-related regret, I conducted interviews with 16 University of North Dakota undergraduate students. Because little research focuses on alcohol-related regret among college students, the results of this study can be used to help determine situations that are more likely to lead to regret, identify who is more likely to feel regret, and the most common type of regret that college students experience when drinking. University officials can use the results of this research, for example, to develop a public health campaign to inform students of the regretful consequences of drinking, whether they be emotional, physical, or academic.

### *Organization of Thesis*

This chapter provided an overview of college drinking and its relation to negative outcomes, including regret. The following chapter, Chapter Two, will cover scholarly literature on college drinking as well as experiences of regret. Chapter Three provides information about the research method that was utilized for this study. In the fourth chapter, findings from the data analysis are presented. Chapter Five contains a discussion of the results in light of the scholarly literature that was provided in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study examines the relationship between alcohol use among undergraduate college students and their feelings of regret. In this chapter, relevant literature will be reviewed.

#### *College Alcohol Use*

Alcohol use among college students, and those in the Midwest in particular, remains a major public health concern (Kanney et al., 2013). This study will focus solely on University of North Dakota (UND) students, approximately 71.5 percent of whom are estimated to have used alcohol within the last month (American College Health Association- National College Health Assessment, 2014). UND has been known for its heavy alcohol use, but rates of use appear to be decreasing. Nationwide, 60 percent of students between the ages of 18 to 22 report drinking alcohol in the last month, and two-thirds of these students engage in binge drinking (NIAAA, 2016). In 2014, 33.7%, or an estimated 5,118 UND students, engaged in binge drinking during the previous two weeks. This was slightly lower than the national average, and much lower than the percentage of students in 2000: 59.6% (American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, 2000, 2014).

Every year since 1992, the Princeton Review has published the *Best Colleges Book*, based on a student survey of colleges. Many different aspects of universities are ranked, including GPA, acceptance rate, professor accessibility, town life, and much more. On average, 125 to 350 students are interviewed per campus. The survey includes more than 80 questions covering the student, the school's administration, other students on campus, and life at school. The goal of the survey and the unique ranking system is to educate students and parents, giving them "behind the scenes" information about U.S. colleges. In 2009, the University of North Dakota was ranked fifteenth for "students that down the most liquor" and No. 18 among top party schools. Note that most of the questions asked refer to student perceptions of the school. In 2017, UND did not make the list for top rankings in any category involving alcohol or the party scene. On the Princeton Review's website, a student states that at UND, "We drink to stay warm and not go crazy" (Princeton Review, 2017).

In addition to region, alcohol use varies by gender as well. Findings tell us that men drink more, and more heavily than women do (Harrell & Karim, 2008). Since men often drink more, it is assumed that they will then experience higher levels of blood alcohol concentrations (BACS). Recent studies have revealed that women are reaching equivalent BACS or even higher BACS than men, even though women drink less alcohol (Hustad & Carey, 2005). This could be due to body size, composition, and metabolism (Mumenthaler, Taylor, O'Hara, & Yesavage, 1999). In addition to concern about heavy drinking, this new gender parity in alcoholism is a public health concern (Harrell & Karim, 2008).

## *Reasons Why College Students Drink Alcohol*

Many previous studies have looked at the reasons why college students choose to drink alcohol. These reasons can be positive or negative; positive reasons for drinking are usually social in nature (e.g., talking to someone you normally wouldn't have felt comfortable approaching) (Capron & Schmidt, 2012). Most college drinking takes place in social contexts. Students typically drink while out with others, and this can lead to new friendships, or even romantic relationships (Lee et al., 2010). Positive reasons to drink can perpetuate future alcohol use through their connection to beliefs and expectations. If a student has positive expectancies, such as believing it will be fun to go out and drink, or, if while being intoxicated, a student asked someone out, future drinking is more likely (Lee, Maggs, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2011). If the student has negative expectancies, such as believing they will get into trouble if they drink, then they will drink less (Smith & Goldman, 1994). Expectancies correlate significantly with drinking behavior. Smith and Goldman (1994) found that expectancies for social and physical pleasure and for social assertiveness proved important for all drinkers, and increased expectancy for sexual and aggressive behavior was found in heavier drinkers.

In addition to positive reasons for drinking, students also drink because they are bored. Many students claim that the main reason they drink is because there is nothing else to do (Princeton Review, 2017). Typically in the Midwest, and at smaller universities where there might not be many other activities to choose from, college drinking is the most popular activity (Princeton Review, 2017). Students may also drink as a result of depression: being overwhelmed and away from friends and family leads some students to

sink into a depression, and drinking provides an escape (Buckner, Schmidt, & Eggleston, 2006).

Recently, a great deal of attention has been paid to social anxiety as potential reason that college students drink. Social anxiety may increase the risk of alcohol-related problems in this population (Buckner, Schmidt, & Eggleston, 2006). Some studies have found that even though social anxiety is negatively related to the frequency and quantity of drinking, it is associated with an increased risk of experiencing adverse consequences from consuming alcohol (Buckner, Schmidt, & Eggleston, 2006; Ham, Bonin, & Hope, 2007). A study by Norberg et al. (2010) focused on gender as a factor to determine who may more likely to drink due to social anxiety issues. The study showed that women experience social anxiety at a higher frequency and more intensely compared to men, therefore social anxiety disorder and alcohol use disorders co-occur more among women than men. Norberg et al. concluded that even though both male and female college students frequently reported drinking in positive situations and for enhancement motives, women were more likely to report drinking in negative situations and to cope with aversive emotions. Thus, men who suffer from social anxiety will drink less than women with social anxiety. The women who do drink more will also be more likely to experience negative consequences due to the fact that they tend to drink to cope with unpleasant situations (Norberg, Norton, Olivier, & Zvolensky, 2010).

In addition to personal motivations for drinking, the college context sets the stage for alcohol use. Although the majority of students come to college already having some experience with alcohol, certain aspects of college life, such as unstructured time, the widespread availability of alcohol, inconsistent enforcement of underage drinking laws,

and limited interactions with parents and other adults, can intensify alcohol use (NIAAA, 2015). The first six weeks of a college freshman's year are the most vulnerable time for heavy drinking and alcohol-related consequences (NIAAA, 2015). Research has shown that compared to other students, freshman students typically consume the most alcohol. Freshmen are especially vulnerable to peer pressure due to expectations and social pressure faced during the first part of the academic year (NIAAA, 2015), and the need to fit in can lead students to drink. As students get older their drinking slowly starts to diminish and by the time they graduate, heavy binge drinking is often a thing of the past (Vander Ven, 2013). As students age they learn when and how to use alcohol, and are therefore less likely to abuse it (Nelson, 2003).

### *Consequences of Drinking*

Lowering of inhibitions is one potential reason for why alcohol use may lead to unexpected consequences. When a college student consumes alcohol, they may behave in a way that they would not otherwise. According to the Vander Ven (2013), "intoxication transforms social relations because it allows people to behave more freely than they normally would" (pg. 54). An inhibition is a mechanism that restrains an individual from acting purely on their desires. Those who drink more lose more inhibitions, therefore they may act irrationally. In some cases, lowering of inhibitions can lead to positive outcomes, such as a shy person who is able to talk with and meet new people.

The use of alcohol carries with it the possibility of positive consequences such as meeting new friends, forming new relationships, and having fun. When alcohol use is heavy, however, there is the potential for many negative consequences. Some of these consequences include being hung over, spending too much money, getting in trouble with



the law, having an unwanted sexual encounter, and getting into a verbal or physical fight, among others (Oswalt, Cameron, & Koob, 2005; Vander Ven, 2013; Wechsler, 2002). Excessive exposure to alcohol during development can cause cardiovascular problems, memory loss, loss of concentration, depression, and death (Hunter & Francescutti, 2013). In 2015, 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 died from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including over consumption and motor-vehicle crashes (NIAAA, 2015). Binge drinking is especially risky for students because they are at a crucial stage of development. The brain further develops even after childhood. Those who are in their young twenties are still learning how to safely interact in a new environment with new peers (Hunter & Francescutti, 2013).

Studies have shown us that there are gender differences in alcohol-related problems, and men typically report more consequences from alcohol use than women (Perkin, 2002). Men drink more, and more heavily than women do (Harrell & Karim, 2008). Men report having more antisocial behaviors; these consist of fighting, damaging property while drinking, and attending school while drunk. Women on the other hand report more self-related problems such as drinking after promising not to (Sugarman, Demartini, & Carey, 2009).

One of the most common consequences of college alcohol use is negative academic outcomes. About one in four college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing coursework, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall (NIAAA, 2015). A recent study examined alcohol use and academic performance using a nationally representative survey of college students. The results showed a negative relationship between GPA and both (a)

the amount of alcohol consumed the last time a student partied/socialized, and (b) past 2-week heavy episodic drinking occurrences (Piazza-Gardner, Barry, & Merianos, 2016). Perhaps related to academic outcomes, those who participate in heavy episodic drinking have a 10% reduction in odds of employment upon graduation (Bamberger et al., 2017).

Negative consequences associated with alcohol use all carry with them the possibility of regret. Regret is recognized as a negative emotion involving self-blame; this emotion can be experienced when a person remembers previous events or occurrences that didn't turn out the way they had planned due to the choices they made (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002). Although college drinking may allow students to act more freely and not care what others think, it can also lead to acts that are later regretted (Vander Ven, 2013).

#### *Alcohol-Related Regret*

Regret is a commonly experienced emotion (Vander Ven, 2013). In the general public one can regret something as small as not getting to work on time, or something as great as getting in trouble with the law. Among college students, most research focuses on sexual regret. This is regret related to having a sexual encounter with someone with whom a person feels they should not have. Even though this is the most commonly researched type of regret, it is not the most commonly reported. In previous work by Wechsler and colleagues in 2002, students more commonly reported regret related to forgetting events or not remembering what they did the night before because of alcohol use, whereas sexual outcomes were not as frequently reported (pg. 210).

While sexual regret is not the most commonly reported form, it may be associated with the most negative feelings. Regret about romantic relationships is especially

common in younger adults, who experience more relationship change and turmoil than do older adults (Jokisarri, 2003). Seventy-two percent of sexually-active college students reported regretting at least one instance in which they engaged in sexual activity (Oswalt, Cameron, & Koob, 2005). College environments have become associated with sexual encounters among students, known as hookups. A hookup is a “sexual encounter, usually lasting only on night, between two people who are strangers or brief acquaintances” (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000, pg. 2). Hooking up is seldom a planned act, typically it happens without expectations. Paul et al. (2000) discovered that 78% of students have participated in a hookup at least once during their college years. Thirty-five percent of those students who engage in a hookup often describe their feelings as “regretful or disappointed.” Other responses were “good or happy” (27%) and satisfied (20%) (Paul et al., 2000). Women students are more likely to regret a hookup, whereas men are more likely to feel satisfied.

While college students often regret instances relating to academics or romance, research focusing on the general public shows that regret and the decision to limit drinking can be the result of decreased physical and mental health. When individuals drink too much they may hurt themselves then decide to decrease their drinking (Davies, Conroy, Winstock, & Ferris, 2017). Older individuals often regret situations in which they have forgotten what happened while they were intoxicated, or when they felt embarrassed (Davies et al. 2017).

In 2003, Jokisaari conducted a study looking at participants’ regret, age, and subjective well-being. One hundred and seventy-six participants aged 19 to 82 were questioned for this study. Participants were asked, “When people look into their past,

they sometimes feel that something could have been done in a different way. Some things or goals might have been left unfulfilled, or some things or goals should have been fulfilled. One can call these kinds of thoughts regrets. What kind of regrets do you have in your life (what would you have wanted to leave undone or what would you have wanted to do?)” (pg. 4). The results showed that the participants most frequently mentioned regrets that were related to education (30%). Some other common sources of regret involved work (16%), family (10%), and relationships (9%). Although these situations of regret were not necessarily related to alcohol consumption, the results showed that individuals’ regret was associated with their subjective well-being. When looking at life satisfaction, those with a greater number of regrets reported less satisfaction with life.

Most of the previous literature that was conducted was quantitative in nature. By conducting semi-structured interviews I am allowing my participants to clearly tell their stories. Qualitative work allows myself to explore the reported regret in greater depth and detail. By using open-ended questions, participants have greater control of the interviews and the opportunity to share the amount and type of information that they feel is right. This also allowed me to probe when appropriate in order to gain more insight. The benefits of using semi-structured interviews ensure that specific topics are covered, but there is still the ability to ask more questions and receive more information. When conducting interviews, it is easy to clear up any information that might be unclear when it is first because I wasn’t able to do follow up interviews with participants, it was important to clearly record the information at the time of the interview.

### *Research Questions*

Based on existing research I propose three exploratory research questions related to college students' alcohol-related regret. Past literature has shown that academic regret is commonly reported by students, as well as regret tied to forgetting or blacking out. Yet, most research focuses on sexual regret. I want to see if University of North Dakota (UND) students give similar reports. The first research question asks:

RQ1: What are common types of regrets reported by UND students?

According to research, men report engaging in more antisocial behaviors, including fighting, damaging property while drinking, and attending school while drunk. Women, on the other hand, report more individual problems such as drinking after promising not to (Sugarman, Demartini, & Carey, 2009). Research has shown that compared to other students, freshman students typically consume the most alcohol. Freshmen are especially vulnerable to peer pressure due to expectations and social pressure faced during the first part of the academic year (NIAAA, 2015), and the need to fit in can lead students to drink. These findings help form my second research question:

RQ2: What, if any, are gender or class level differences in the types of regret that UND students experience?

Lastly, students can experience many different forms of regret, some more serious than others. Studies have shown that if the student has negative expectancies, such as believing they will get into trouble when they drink, then they will drink less (Smith & Goldman, 1994). Others have reported that no matter the outcome, students are still able to justify a night of heavy drinking if they had a good time and future drinking is not

affected (Vander Ven, 2013). With these conflicting findings, I propose my third, and final research question:

RQ3: To what extent will students who experience alcohol-related regret respond by reducing future drinking?

### *Summary*

This chapter reviewed literature related to students' alcohol use that could lead to feelings of regret. There are many different types of regret, and college students and the general public experience different forms. Regret is an important topic of study because of its association with life satisfaction. The current study examines University of North Dakota students' experiences with alcohol-related regret. The following chapter, Chapter Three, will detail the research method utilized in the study of alcohol-related regret among undergraduate students at UND.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### *Research Design*

This thesis explores college students' alcohol use and their related regrets. The research design used was an exploratory qualitative study. In-depth open ended interviews were conducted using a semi-structured protocol with undergraduate students at the University of North Dakota. IRB approval was obtained. This process is described in greater detail in the current chapter.

#### *Sample and Setting*

Data for this study were taken from face to face interviews. A non-random convenience, quota, and snowball sample of students representing a variety of undergraduate majors was obtained. The study was announced via word of mouth and flyers, shared during Soc. 110 discussion groups and posted around the campus in buildings where students typically have classes, in order to reach potential participants. The flyers that were posted clearly stated the purpose of the study. On the flyer it was advertised that I was seeking undergraduates for a research study on alcohol use and regret. The participants were informed on the flyer that there would be personal interviews with a student researcher, and they were to last about 1 hour. In exchange for their time and their story, they would be gifted a \$20 Amazon gift card. Snowball

sampling and referrals were also used to recruit participants. For instance, some of those who participated in the study referred their friends who also had stories to share.

Interviews took place in various locations on campus including coffee shops, unoccupied classrooms, unoccupied conference rooms, as well as the Memorial Union. A few interviews took place at the participant's place of residence. An attempt was made to interview equal numbers of college men and women to allow for a comparison of alcohol-related regret by gender.

A total of 16 interviews were conducted with undergraduate students. Eight respondents were female and eight were male. All of the participants were current undergraduate students at UND at the time of the interviews. Most participants (9) were seniors, one was a junior, three were sophomores, and three were freshmen. The participants' majors included Criminal Justice, Aviation, Business and Elementary Education, among others. Fourteen of the 16 participants lived off campus in apartments with roommates or significant others. Four of the participants were members of Greek life. All of the participants shared a story of a recent regretful situation that was experienced due to heavy drinking. During the episode of alcohol-related regret, a majority (87.5%) of the participants drank more than they typically would.

#### *Context and Interview*

In 2017, according to data from the Project Know Survey, 92.44% of college students living in the Midwestern region on the United States consumed alcohol. The student body of the University of North Dakota is primarily made up of individuals from Minnesota and North Dakota. North Dakota has consistently been ranked as having one of the highest rates of binge drinking. In 2013, the most recent data available, the U.S.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 23.8 percent of the state's adults had enough drinks to qualify as having binged - four on one occasion for women, five for men - at least once in the past month. That was the highest percentage in any state. Minnesota was fifth-highest at 21 percent. The national median was 16.8 percent (Grand Forks Herald, 2015).

In total, 16 undergraduate students were interviewed for this study. All students who were interviewed were enrolled as full time students at the University of North Dakota. Before the interview began, I presented each participant with an informed consent form. I discussed the form, and gave a copy to each participant if they were interested. I informed each participant that the interview was voluntary. If the interviewee felt uncomfortable at any time they had the opportunity to skip a question or end the interview. Interviews took place from February 2017 until December 2017. Interviews lasted between twenty minutes and one hour. The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed.

### *Instrument*

To gather information about drinking and regret, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed (See Appendix A). It included demographic questions, attention to typical drinking habits, and an exploration of negative consequences of alcohol use and feelings of regret. Whether feelings of regret deterred students from future drinking was also examined. Demographic information that was collected included respondent's age, gender, class level, and major. When looking at typical drinking habits, questions addressed the type of alcohol the student was drinking during the regretted experience compared to what they normally drink, as well as who they normally drink with and

where. How much they typically drink was also discussed. Students were then asked to describe what led them to feel regret: who was involved, if they had deviated from their typical drinking habits, and where the event occurred. The students were provided with a definition of regret that was consistently being used during this study. The definition of regret that was used is, “Regret is a negative cognitive emotion involving self-blame, experienced when a person reviews past events and imagines that things could have turned out differently given other choices” (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2002; Zeelenberg Pg 326, 1999).

Most of the previous literature that was conducted was quantitative in nature. By conducting semi-structured interviews I am allowing my participants to clearly tell their stories. Qualitative work allows myself to explore the reported regret in greater depth and detail. By using open-ended questions, participants have greater control of the interviews and the opportunity to share the amount and type of information that they feel is right. This also allowed me to probe when appropriate in order to gain more insight. The benefits of using semi-structured interviews ensure that specific topics are covered, but there is still the ability to ask more questions and receive more information. When conducting interviews, it is easy to clear up any information that might be unclear when it is first because I wasn't able to do follow up interviews with participants, it was important to clearly record the information at the time of the interview.

#### *Analytical Strategy*

The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The transcribed interviews were analyzed to find themes and patterns in the data, similar to content analysis. From the interview transcripts, I summarized responses relation to the six different types of

regret (relational, legal, physical, sexual, financial, and academic), length (short or long term), and specificity (general or specific) of regret that the participants reported. Once the interviews were complete I put all of the data into an Excel document to clearly see the trends among the data. The goal was to identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. Again, examination of transcripts occurred to see if there were any trends that developed, including on the basis of gender, class level, and types of regret. This included organizing the information into a table and determining patterns. The table is presented in Appendix B.

### *Summary*

This chapter provided an explanation of the method, the sample, instrument, and the analytical strategy used in this research. The following chapter, Chapter Four, will discuss the major findings of this research.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Results of this study show that relational regret was the most frequently reported type of regret among UND students. When it came to length, long term regret was the most commonly reported by both men and women and students of all class levels, which has implications that will be later discussed. Although, there were few differences by gender or class level, half of the participants reported they were hesitant and reduced future drinking due to their experience of regret.

#### *Types of Regret*

There are many different types of regret that a student may experience. These types consist of relational, financial, academic, physical, legal, and the most researched, sexual regret. Even though sexual regret is the most researched type of regret, only one female participant in the sample reported sexual regret. More common was relational regret, reported by 37.5% of the participants. Males and females were equally likely to report this type of regret. Relational regret can be described as feelings of shame and hurt due to harm or alteration in a romantic, friendship, or familial relationship (Zeelenberg, 1999). The following is a story shared by a female senior student that we will call Sally. For the purpose of this study, pseudo-names will be used. Sally was downtown with her

boyfriend on a Saturday night. They had attended a concert earlier in the night, and had been drinking for several hours. Sally consumed more alcohol than she normally would. Once they returned back to her apartment, Sally and her boyfriend got into a fight. Sally does not remember what the fight was about or how it started. She ended up slapping her boyfriend across the face, and said she felt regret right away. She shared with me that, “Right when I felt my hand hit his face, I think I woke up. I didn’t even know what we were fighting about. This was my first time ever getting physical with him.” Sally was afraid that the event would affect her relationship, and believes that it has. She shared that she still thinks about this situation today, and it does make her hesitant to drink alcohol. The reason that it seemed to affect her so much was that she didn’t know she was capable of getting violent with her significant other. It resulted in Sally being more cautious when drinking to ensure that she again use physical violence. Even though this experience affected Sally’s relationship with her boyfriend, they remain together as a couple.

Men also reported relational regret, and were equally likely to report this type. John, a 22 year old senior, shared that when out one night, he and his girlfriend got in an argument about his heavy drinking. The couple was downtown with some friends when the fight began, and John ended up leaving his girlfriend at the bar. He then met up with some other friends, and he stayed out until the bar closed. His girlfriend had to find her own way home. John mentioned that he didn’t remember why he and his girlfriend started fighting; nor did he really remember leaving his girlfriend. This fight has made John hesitant to drink in the future, especially while he is out with his girlfriend, as he fears getting into another fight with her. He still thinks back to that night and is upset

about the amount of alcohol he consumed because he knows a fight would have not occurred if he had not been drinking so heavily.

### *Regrets Related to Action and Inaction*

Along with different types of regret, regret can also come in different forms. Sometimes regret occurs as a result of an action taken; other regrets are related to inaction. In other words, an individual can experience regret because of a behavior that they have engaged in, or one that they did not engage in. The majority (87.5%) of participants reported that they had experienced a regret related to an action. Tyler, a 22 year old senior, shared an experience that can be classified as regret related to action. One Saturday night, Tyler and his friend went out to the bar to have a couple of drinks. They ended up drinking more than they planned. Tyler ended up spending more than four hundred dollars playing blackjack, far more than he normally spent gambling when he was not consuming alcohol. In the following month, Tyler had to save to make up for what he lost that night. Tyler regretted this situation because not only did he know that he shouldn't have gambled so much money, but he also knew financial the loss of those funds would hurt him for a while. Because Tyler is still in college, he knows that he needs to more cautious with his money since he does not work a full time job. Tyler's gambling and the regret that he later felt is a good example of regret as a result of behavioral choices and action.

Although fewer reported regret related to inaction, 12.5% of participants did share that experience. Of the 12.5% who reported having regret related to inaction, all were women. Kourtney, a 20 year old junior, shared a story of her continuous heavy drinking during the week, which led her to skipping classes due to feeling hungover. During the

week, Kourtney prioritized her drinking over her school work. She reported not completing assignments due to having limited time, and not to studying for exams. Kourtney said that she regretted not taking school more seriously at the time, and is still making up for her previous mistakes. The rest of her college career has been spent trying to study harder, take more classes, and attend every class in order to make up for her poor academic performance, as it shapes her transcript and overall GPA. Kourtney's experience of regret is related to inaction. Kourtney regretted that she did not do her school work, which she attributes to past alcohol consumption. Surprisingly, Kourtney is the only individual in the sample who reported having an academic regret.

### *Length of Regret*

How long the regret affects an individual is measured as short term or long term. Some regrets that participants described only led to negative emotions as the event occurred. Others, longer in their effect, were felt days, months, or years after the event happened. Seventy-five percent of the participants reported having a long term alcohol-related regret. Men and women were similar in this regard, and were equally likely to report short term and long term regrets. Rob, a 25 year old freshman, shared that his choice to consume alcohol and then drive resulted in a DUI, and still haunts him today. He lost his license, had to pay fines, and take mandated classes as a result of this incident. As described by Rob, this is a long term regret that he thinks about almost every day and one that has given him a new outlook on life. Rob's drinking habits have changed, and he drinks less than half of the amount he used to drink before the incident.

Only 25 percent of the participants reported short term regret. Kim, a 21 year old senior, shared that she experienced a sexual regret that lasted only a few days. Downtown

with friends, Kim went home with a guy she knew previously, but did not have a relationship with. They met each other a few times in class, but did not have many conversations. Kim engaged in a “hook up” with him when they left the bar. Right away she experienced negative feelings about her sexual encounter but the regret only lasted a few days as Kim soon realized that she could learn from her mistakes. Kim was lucky that this sexual encounter did not turn into something life changing. Kim did not become pregnant, nor get a sexually transmitted disease. However, she does not want to have that experience again, so she is now more cautious about the amount of alcohol she drinks while out with friends. At the same time, she is no longer bothered by her experience.

### *Specificity of Regret*

Regrets can also vary in their specificity, and be general or specific. General regret captures a broad feeling such as wishing one would have done better in college. Specific regret pertains to a certain experience, such as skipping a sociology class during which an exam was given. About 87% of the participants reported specific regrets. Katie, a 19 year old sophomore, shared a specific incident. While drinking with friends on the Fourth of July, Katie received a ticket for “minor in possession.” Katie and her friends were out on a boat, and were stopped by the police. Katie and all her friends were given citations. This is an example of a specific event leading to regret. Regret can also be more generalized. Jake, a 19 year old freshman, shared that he regretted consuming too much alcohol because it often led to a hangover the next day. Jake learned that his drinking resulted in negative outcomes therefore he altered his drinking habits. After a few experiences getting very sick and hung over after heavy drinking, Jake has now learned when enough is enough. Even though some people can look past getting sick the next day



after a night of fun when alcohol was involved, Jake did not think that sickness was worth it. This is an example of a more generalized regret.

### Differences by Gender and Class Level

#### *Gender*

When examining students' regret, there was little difference between men and women. Both men and women shared relational regrets, and were equally likely to report this form. Legal regret was also reported by men and women, though just one woman and one man shared their stories. For financial and physical regret, there were also both men and women who reported these types. Overall, most types of regret were shared by both genders, with relational regret the most constantly reported. One small difference that stood out was the reporting of sexual and academic regret, as women were the only participants to report these types of regret.

When focusing on regret related to action or inaction, all of the men reported experiencing regret due to an action that was taken. One of the difference that was observed, was that women were the only ones to report a regret related to inaction. When it came to the length of regret, two men and two women reported short term effects, whereas six men and six women reported long term effects. In terms of specificity, only one woman and one man shared a general regret. The rest reported a specific regret. When focusing on whether their alcohol-related regret has caused them to make changes to their drinking habits, overall, half of participants agreed that their alcohol-related regret made them hesitant to drink in the future. More women than men were hesitant to drink in the future: three out of eight men were hesitant to drink in the future and five out

of eight women were hesitant. This shows that their alcohol-related regret affected their lives so much that they want to make concrete changes to their alcohol use.

Overall, there was little difference between men and women when it came to alcohol related regrets. Most of the participants experienced relational regret, and though just a few women reported sexual and academic regret, none of the men did. Because most of the literature focuses on sexual regret among women, this was not surprising. Throughout the literature, it is noted that men are typically applauded by their friends for having “hook ups” while intoxicated. For women it is frowned upon, and they may be portrayed as victims. When looking if the regret was related to action or inaction, only women shared a regret based on inaction. These experiences consisted of a woman who regretted not doing better in school, by not completing assignments, going to class, and not studying due to alcohol use. The other regret that was related to inaction was experienced by a woman who drank too much the night before her family’s Christmas party. She was hung over and sick the next day, and could not attend the party. Instead, she stayed at home by herself. Her family was very upset with her and this caused a strain in her relationships. At the time, she chose alcohol over her family and made many people upset. She felt regret instantly and since this experience she has not gone out the night before a family event. Finally, when it came to the length of regret, men and women reported experiencing short term and long term regret at the same rate. For specificity, only one woman and one man described a general regret. The rest shared a specific regret. This could be due to the way the interview question was worded. I asked the participants for a specific time that they experienced an alcohol-related regret.

Because of this, most participants may not have thought about a regret that was general in nature.

### *Class Level Differences*

When it comes to difference by class level, it is hard to draw conclusions because there was not an equal number of students interviewed in each class level. Overall, seniors made up a majority (56.25%) of the participants. Unfortunately, only one junior volunteered, and there were three sophomores and three freshmen. There were no clearly identifiable patterns with regard to class level and type of regret. Freshman participants reported having both relational and legal types of regret, and sophomores reported having relational, legal, and physical types of regret. The junior student who participated was the only one who reported an academic regret. With more seniors in the sample, there was more variability among them. Yet, seniors experienced relational and physical regret, much like students of other class levels.

Though very similar to those from other class levels, seniors were the only participants to report having financial and sexual regrets. By combining freshmen and sophomores together and junior and seniors together to form lower classmen and upper classmen, a trend in type of regret is more visible. Upper classmen and lower classmen experienced and reported relational regret at equal rates, but only lower classmen reported legal regret due to alcohol use. Most lower classmen are not of the legal drinking age, and when they choose to drink alcohol, they may get in trouble with the law due to underage drinking.

When looking at whether regret was related to action or inaction, only one senior participant experienced regret based on inaction, while the others all experienced regret based on action. The one junior participant also experienced regret related to action. Lastly, sophomore and freshman participants all experienced action-related regret. Again, by combining the class levels into upper or lower classmen, the results show that those in the upper class levels were the only ones to report short term regrets. When looking at length of regret, seniors reported a mix of both short term and long term regret. Overall, about 67% of seniors shared long term regrets. Among the others, each class level had at least one participant who reported long term regret. Regardless of class level then, long term regret was more commonly reported. For specificity of the regret, it was interesting to see similarities among the sophomore and the freshmen students. All of the freshman and sophomore participants reported having a specific rather than a general regret. The only junior-level participant reported having a general regret. For the seniors, again there was a little variety, but 89% of students in this class level reported having a specific regret. Only upper classmen reported having general regret. Stories among freshman and sophomore (lower classmen) and among sophomore and senior (upper classmen) students were similar in this regard.

### *Summary*

Regret often comes with heavy drinking, and 87.5% of participants reported having consumed more alcohol than normal when they experienced alcohol-related regret. Half of the participants reported that after this experience they rethought their heavy drinking. This group of participants reported they are hesitant to drink in the future, for fear of negative consequences. Out of all the participants, none reported that

they quit drinking altogether. The students in this sample are still consuming alcohol, though many reported drinking less and being mindful about when they drink.

As previously mentioned, there were six different categories of regret that the 16 participants reported. Because the participants were only asked to describe one experience of regret, some may have experienced other regrets as well. Six out of 16 (37.5%) reported relational regret. This was the most common form of regret that was shared, and can affect romantic relationships, friendships, or family relationships. Out of the six individuals, three were men and three were women. For those who described relational regret, most reported long-term consequences. Every participant who reported relational regret also reported that it was a specific instance that they regretted related to action that was taken. Overall then, a majority of participants described relational regret, due to a specific action, and it affected the participant for a long time. When looking at gender, men and women were very similar. The main difference was that one woman reported sexual and academic regret, but no men reported these. There was little variability on the basis of class level, but combining them into lower classmen (freshman and sophomores) and upper classmen (juniors and seniors), a clearer pattern emerged. Whereas an equal proportion of upper and lower classmen experienced relational regret, lower classmen reported legal regret, and upper classmen reported financial and sexual regret.

This chapter provided an explanation of the major findings and trends that were found in the data. The following chapter, Chapter Five, contains a discussion of the results in light of the scholarly literature that was provided in Chapter Two. The discussion will also go over the limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The current study examined alcohol-related regret among college students in North Dakota, a state that is known for heavy alcohol use. This chapter will review the purpose of the study. Previous literature, limitations, and implications of the study are discussed as well as suggestions for future research.

#### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of the current study was to examine alcohol-related regret among college students from the University North Dakota (UND), located in a state that is known for heavy alcohol use (Kanney et al., 2013). According to research, the profile of college alcohol use shows greater use among men, those with college-educated parents, business majors, fraternity members, those involved in athletics, those who started drinking in high school, and most importantly, individuals who view the party scene as a very important part of college (Vander Ven, 2013). With heavy alcohol use, the lowering of one's inhibitions is one potential reason for why alcohol use may lead to unexpected consequences. When a college student consumes alcohol, they may behave in a way that they would not otherwise. According to the Vander Ven (2013), "intoxication transforms social relations because it allows people to behave more freely than they normally

would” (pg. 54). An inhibition is a mechanism that restrains an individual from acting purely on their desires. Those who drink more lose more inhibitions, therefore they may act irrationally. This irrational behavior has the possibility of becoming a regret. The goal of this study was to explore the types of regret reported by students at UND, as well as any differences on the basis of gender or class level, and whether do not it impacted future behavior.

Based on existing research, I proposed three exploratory research questions related to college students’ alcohol-related regret. Past literature has shown that academic regret is commonly reported by students, as well as regret tied to forgetting or blacking out (Vander Van, 2013). Yet, most research focuses on sexual regret. I wanted to see if students from UND gave similar reports. The first research question asked, what are common types of regrets reported by UND students?

According to research, men report engaging in more antisocial behaviors, including fighting, damaging property while drinking, and attending school while drunk. Women, on the other hand, report more individual problems such as drinking after promising not to (Sugarman, Demartini, & Carey, 2009). These findings helped form my second research question which asked, what, if any, are there gender or class level differences in the types of regret that UND students experience?

Lastly, students can experience many different forms of regret, some more serious than others. Studies have shown that if the student has negative expectancies, such as believing they will get into trouble when they drink, then they will drink less (Smith & Goldman, 1994). Others have reported that no matter the outcome, students are still able to justify a night of heavy drinking if they had a good time and future drinking is not

affected (Vander Ven, 2013). With these conflicting findings, I proposed my third, and final research question which asked, to what extent will students who experience alcohol-related regret respond by reducing future drinking?

During the current study, 16 undergraduate students were interviewed about an experience of alcohol-related regret. There were an equal number of men and women participants representing different class levels, ranging from freshmen to seniors. The participants in this study reported having a range of types of regrets including: relational, academic, sexual, physical, legal, and financial. These regrets ranged in length, some being short term but the majority being long term. Most of the regrets were because of an action that was taken, rather than inaction. Lastly, participants reported whether their regret was specific to a certain event that occurred or if it was more generalized. Most students reported regret due to a specific action. For gender and class level there was little difference in the type of regret the participant reported, but some findings did emerge. Half of the participants did report to be hesitant to drink in the future due to their experience of regret. These findings are reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

### *Previous Literature and Results*

Students can experience many negative consequences or problems as a result of drinking, one being regret. “Regret is a negative emotion involving self-blame, experienced when a person reviews past events and imagines that things could have turned out differently given other choices” (Connolly & Zeelenberg, 2013, pg. 213). My first research question explored what the most common types of regret were. Findings showed that relational regret was the most frequently reported. In Arthur Chickering’s student development theory, it is noted that significant personality development occurs



during the college years, and colleges influence that development—differences in general climate, rules and regulations, student-faculty relationships, curriculum, teaching, and evaluation all make for differential impact (Chickering, Mcdowell, Campagna, & Holtzman, 1969). Part of this development includes not just intellectual and academic growth, by interpersonal awareness as well. One reason that relational regret may have been reported the most often, is because students of this age are still learning to build healthy relationships. Heavy drinking tends to alter people in a way that could disrupt their personality development, causing them to fight or argue with others while intoxicated. In return, relationships may be affected. Most of the empirical studies focus almost exclusively on sexual behavior, although it is not the most commonly reported source of regret (Wechsler et al., 2002). In the current study, only one of the participants reported sexual regret. This could be due to the fact that the participants did not want to share personal information such as that. Furthermore, those with more serious and lasting regrets may not have volunteered for the study. When it came to length, a majority of participants reported that their regret has affected them long term. This is important to note because it appears that these experiences of regret are lasting and typically, students may still think about them of face their effects for a period of time.

The second research question in this study focused on potential gender and class level differences in regret among UND students. Previous literature has shown that both men and women experience alcohol-related regret (Levitt & Cooper, 2010). The literature does suggest potential underlying reasons why the experience of alcohol-related regret may differ on the basis of gender. Literature indicates that men are more likely to take risks (CDC, 2016), externalize negative emotions (Cooper et al., 1992; Pedersen, 2013), and

engage in alcohol-related violence (Wilsnack et al., 2005). Women, in contrast, are more likely to internalize their problems (Cooper et al., 1992), but use alcohol as a remedy for poor relationship quality and experiences (Levitt & Cooper, 2010). The literature shows us that men and women tend to experience alcohol related regret differently. In the current study, men and women shared relational regrets, the most commonly reported regret, at the same rates. This was interesting because both men and women's relational regret pertained to both friendships as well as romantic relationships. Women were the only ones who reported sexual or academic regret. None of the men reported having any regret related to physical fights, which is also interesting based on what the literature tells us. Women were also the only participants who reported regret due to inaction.

There were no clearly identifiable patterns with regard to class level and type of regret. Freshman participants reported having both relational and legal types of regret, and sophomores reported having relational, legal, and physical types of regret. The junior student who participated was the only one who reported an academic regret. With more seniors in the sample, there was more variability among them. Yet, seniors experienced relational and physical regret, much like students of other class levels. Regardless of class level, long term regret was more commonly reported. Overall, about 67% of seniors experienced long term regret. Among the others, each class level had at least one participant who reported long term regret. For specificity of the regret, it was interesting to see similarities among the freshman and sophomore students. All of the freshman and sophomore participants reported having a specific rather than a general regret. The only junior-level participant reported having a general regret. For the seniors, again there was a little variety, but 89% of students in this class level reported having a specific regret.

Only upper classmen reported having general regret. Stories among freshman and sophomore (lower classmen) and among sophomore and senior (upper classmen) students were similar in this regard.

The third and final research question examined whether those who experienced an alcohol related regret reduced their future drinking. Goldman's (1999) alcohol expectancy theory states that "an expectancy is defined as the state of thinking or hoping that something, especially something pleasant, will happen" (p 194). Goldman explained that, "vicarious and direct experiences with drinking and its consequences shape expectancies for alcohol related outcomes" (p. 194). Studies have shown that positive expectancies, the belief that drinking will end in positive outcomes such as sociability and happiness, lead to increased drinking. It has also been found that negative expectancies, the belief that drinking will end in a negative outcome such as unwanted sexual acts or violence, lead to decreased drinking. Expectancies correlate significantly with drinking behavior; expectancies for social and physical pleasure and for social assertiveness proved important for all drinkers, and increased expectancy for sexual and aggressive behavior was found among heavier drinkers (Smith & Goldman, 1994). Alcohol expectancies are strong predictors of drinking behavior among college students. Based on the literature from Goldman, it was expected that the participants would be hesitant to drink in the future. Half of the participants reported that the experience of alcohol-related regret has deterred them from future drinking. Among those who were deterred, five were women and three were men. Many of the participants mentioned that the regret was serious enough to affect their lives, but it was not intense enough to stop them from drinking. Many participants were able to find excuses for why the regret did

not make them hesitant to drink such as, “everyone has regrets”, “it wasn’t that bad”, or “I will get over it.” Many students were able to justify their actions because they enjoyed themselves while out.

### *Implications*

Those aged 18-25 are at the highest risk for binge drinking (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009) and North Dakota ranks first in the nation in binge drinking for youth aged 12-20 years (Grand Forks Herald, 2015). The negative emotions linked to regret and its associated behaviors have serious implications for the social relationships and mental health of college students, potentially causing them to withdraw from the networks that bind them to the university (Dunne & Katz, 2015). When students have negative experiences while in school, they are more likely to consider dropping out or attending a different university. Students may also experience regret that involved another member of the university. This could also cause them to not want to stay at that specific University. Typically, the relational regrets that were experienced by the participants involved another students who also attended UND. The current study indicates that when drinking heavily, college students may engage in behaviors that negatively impact their relationships.

University officials could use this information to develop a public health campaign to inform students of regretful consequences of binge drinking. The University of North Dakota currently employs the “KNOW” campaign. The Know Your Limit: 0-1-2-3 campaign is used to help inform students about how alcohol works. This campaign attempts to help students stay in control and avoid negative consequences of alcohol use. The campaign has four different programmatic emphases to inform students the risks of

drinking. First, students need to understand when not to drink. This includes major deadlines, such as a test or project coming up, driving after drinking, eating before drinking, etc. Second, students are encouraged to limit themselves to no more than one drink per hour. The body takes just over one hour to process one drink. Drinking faster than this means potentially dealing with more negative consequences. Next, students are informed to limit drinking to no more than two times per week. The body needs two to three days to recover from drinking. Spacing out those nights will help students stay healthy and maintain their memory that is needed to do well in classes. Lastly, the program takes a “slow and steady wins the race” approach, emphasizing no more than three drinks a night. The findings of this study can be used to inform students about the negative consequences of drinking, particularly for their relationships. When students hear actual experiences shared by students at their own university, they might be more likely to embrace the KNOW campaign. It is important to note that a majority of the participants reported long term effects resulting from their regret. Sharing this information with students letting them know negative consequences can affect them for a long time, could help emphasize the seriousness of potential consequences of alcohol use. My findings could provide insight for both UND faculty and staff, and students.

#### *Limitations*

There are limitations to every study. The first limitation of this study is the focus on a single university in the Midwest. If the sample had been drawn from a university in the South or Northeast, for example, the results may have differed. Because the Midwest is known for heavy drinking, experiences of alcohol related regret may be more likely for these participants. Another limitation of the study is that the sample is small. A small

sample limits the ability to compare and generalize the data. With only 16 participants, it is hard to generalize these conclusions. Another limitation is due to the method used. In the study interviews, participants may not have honestly reported their feelings of regret. People do not typically enjoy sharing embarrassing stories about themselves with other people, especially someone whom they do not know. However, the addition of qualitative work to study of alcohol related regret is a significant contribution of the current study. Lastly, those who had experienced a very serious regret may not have volunteered to participate in the study. Those who have experienced regret that is serious in nature may be too embarrassed to share their feelings and experiences or may still be learning to cope.

#### *Future Research*

Future research may be designed to address the limitations that were identified in this study. To learn about students' more serious and influential alcohol-related regrets, an online survey would be more beneficial. People might be more open in sharing their feelings of regret when it is anonymous, compared to asking them about regret during a personal interview. The personal interviews were helpful in that they allowed students to clearly tell their stories. In the future if I were to conduct this research again I would allow the participants to tell me about any alcohol related regret they have experienced, rather than the most recent. Future research that compares universities would also be useful. The types of alcohol-related regret could differ across universities and regions. Increasing the sample size would allow researchers to hear more stories, potentially increasing the variation among responds, especially on the basis of gender and class level.

## *Conclusion*

Overall, relational regret was the most common type of regret reported by UND students. Regardless of gender or class level, many university students experience alcohol-related regret when engaging in heavy drinking. Regret is connected to heavy drinking, and most participants were drinking more than usual when their regret occurred. Even though it is clear that alcohol has an affect on one's likelihood experiencing of regret, only half of the participants reported that they have altered their drinking habits. These long-term regrets are important for students' well-being and have implications for universities, as networks bond students to the campus and help retain them.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
  - a. Age
  - b. Gender
  - c. Class level
  - d. Student Organizations
  - e. Living Arrangement (on or off campus)
  - f. Transfer Student
  - g. Years at UND
2. Can you tell me about your “typical” drinking habits?
  - a. What do you drink?
  - b. How many drinks?
  - c. Where do you typically drink?
  - d. With whom?
  - e. When? (during the week, the weekend)
  - f. How often? ( How many days a week)
  - g. Why? (Just because, with dinner, to celebrate, etc...)

After I ask about their drinking habits I then ask the participant if they are aware of the definition of regret. I inform the participants of the definition of regret given by Connolly and Zeelenberg (2002) “Regret is a negative emotion involving self-blame, experienced when a person reviews past events and imagines that things could have turned out differently given other choices” (p. 213).

3. Was there a recent time that have experienced “regret” as a result of your heavy drinking? Please tell me about that time. What happened?
  - a. Context: Where, who, when, why
4. What have the outcomes of this situation been for you?
  - a. Short-term and long-term impacts?
5. How often do you think about this situation or its outcome?
  - a. What sort of things prompt your thoughts?
6. Have you told anyone about this situation or its outcome?
  - a. Who have you told?
  - b. How did it come up in conversation?
  - c. How much did you disclose?
  - d. Do many people know, or just a few?
7. Did this experience of regret reduce your future drinking?
8. What else do you think would be important for me to know in understanding your experience of regret?



## APPENDIX B

Table 1

Table 1. *Participant Demographics and Alcohol Related Regret* (N = 16)

Participant	Gender	Class Level	Normal Amount of Alcohol Consumed	Category of Regret	Type of Regret	Length of Regret	Specificity of Regret	Hesitant to Drink in the Future
1	Female	Senior	More	Relational	Action	Short	Specific	No
2	Male	Senior	Normal	Financial	Action	Short	Specific	No
3	Female	Senior	More	Financial	Action	Long	Specific	Yes
4	Female	Senior	More	Relational	Inaction	Long	Specific	No
5	Female	Senior	More	Medical	Action	Long	Specific	No
6	Female	Senior	More	Sexual	Action	Short	Specific	Yes
7	Female	Junior	More	Academic	Inaction	Long	General	Yes
8	Male	Senior	More	Relational	Action	Long	Specific	Yes
9	Female	Sophomore	More	Relational	Action	Long	Specific	Yes
10	Male	Sophomore	More	Medical	Action	Long	Specific	No
11	Male	Freshman	More	Relational	Action	Short	Specific	No
12	Male	Freshman	More	Relational	Action	Long	Specific	No
13	Male	Freshman	More	Legal	Action	Long	Specific	Yes
14	Male	Senior	More	Medical	Action	Long	General	Yes
15	Male	Senior	More	Financial	Action	Long	Specific	No
16	Female	Sophomore	Normal	Legal	Action	Long	Specific	Yes

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