**Define the Problem:** This study is worthwhile because it will illuminate the reasons why males and females drink alcohol. By discovering the reasons behind alcohol consumption, it will be easier to help teenagers break the habit of drinking. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), 74.3% of high school students nationwide have had one or more drinks of alcohol during their lifetime (www.samhsa.gov). As can be seen, underage alcohol consumption is an increasingly large problem. The interactionist theory applies to underage drinking because the consumption of alcohol is how teenagers respond to everyday situations. Once the reasons behind these responses are diagnosed, the proper precautions and aid can be taken to help teenagers overcome their reliance on alcohol.

**Review of Literature:**

The Partnership for a Drug Free America released new data in 2009 that suggested teenage girls in the grades 9through 12 are now drinking more than boys. Researchers believe this is because of the recent manufacture of products devoted to making drinking easier and tastier, such as the sugar-laden beverages known as alco-pops that are oriented towards young females. The data shows that girls are more likely to consume alcohol as a way to avoid problems and relieve stress. On the other hand, boys have been shown to use alcohol as a social lubricant, a way to make socializing easier. Leslie Walker, M.D., director of adolescent medicine at Seattle Children’s Hospital, says that teen girls are more likely to be attuned to their feelings than boys, and are therefore more sensitive to emotional stress, neurologically. Male brains do not develop this maturity until later in life. Combined with relaxed attitudes and easier access to alcohol, this increased sensitivity may explain the difference in motives for drinking in teens (www.newsweek.com).  
 According to Kashmira Lad, the following are causes of teenage drinking:

influence caused by alcoholic parents, it’s considered to be cool, escapism, problems in love life, and addiction towards drinking. One of the most common reasons why teens drink is because they have grown up watching their parents rely on the bottle; the behavior of parents has a significant effect on the mind of teens. When teenagers belong to a particular group in high school, they adopt drinking as a status symbol of belonging to the ‘in’ group. For many, teenage alcoholism is a means of escapism. A lot of teens do it to just try something new; they enjoy the state of ‘bliss’ felt after drinking that causes their senses to blur. Problems in relationships often lead one to be demoralized and teens tend to drink to forget their worries. Drinking may start out as a rare habit that begins on weekends, but can very easily become a daily addiction (www.buzzle.com).  
 The Recovery Network has reported the cause of teenage drinking to be the result of many factors. They may do it because they want to socially fit in, they like the way alcohol makes them feel, or they want to feel more grown up. Teens with family members having problems with alcohol are at the biggest risk for developing serious alcohol abuse problems. Additional causes of adolescent drinking are to experiment, socialize, test limits, belong to a peer group, genetic influence, and to deal with problems. Teenage females are more likely than boys to experience depression, eating disorders, or sexual abuse, which all increase the risk for alcohol abuse. Personal surveys have shown that girls admit to using alcohol to improve mood, increase confidence, reduce tension, cope with problems, and lose inhibitions. Teenage males are more likely to use alcohol based on their desire to experience getting drunk or enhance their social status, unlike females who generally use it to relieve stress. It takes less alcohol to get a female drunk compared to a male, and females generally experience worse consequences such as the increased risk of pregnancy and breast cancer (www.drug-alcohol-addiction-recovery.com).   
 Ninety percent of teens do not think drinking alcohol is worth the consequences it can cause, such as cancer, impairment, and poor judgment, according to a survey conducted by KRC research. The top fears teenagers have of drinking alcohol are getting in trouble with the law, getting suspended or expelled from school, the adults in their lives finding out, and not being able to participate in school sports or clubs. 71% of teens agree that teenage girls have more to lose than teen boys when under the influence of drinking alcohol (pregnancy, more impaired, breast cancer). Of those that agree, 76% were girls and 67% were boys. The majority of teens surveyed said that they drink about as often as their friends, hinting that friends unknowingly impact individuals with peer pressure to consume alcohol (radicalparenting.com).  
 As stated by the century council website, 51% of today’s youth say neither they nor their friends drink. Among reasons why teens drink, 41% say to have a good time, 30% say to celebrate, 28% say to get drunk, and 21% say they drink alcohol to relax or de-stress. In conjunction with the KRC research survey, 90% of teenagers also report that drinking is not worth the consequences. Female teens ages 15-17 are more likely than their male peers to agree that drinking is not worth the consequences it can cause: 97% girls and 88% boys. 52% of teenagers cited that the threat of punishment would deter them enough to definitely discontinue their drinking habits and 25% said that they would probably stop consuming alcohol (centurycouncil.org).  
**Hypothesis:**

Teenage males consume alcohol in order to fit in with peers, while teenage females consume alcohol to forget their troubles and relieve stress.

**Conducting the Survey:**

The survey was distributed to 100 teenagers. Of the 100 handed out, 100 were returned. 51 recipients were males and 49 were females. Six surveys had to be disregarded due to the surveys where individuals circled multiple answers where the question specifically asked for only one circled answer. The tested individuals consisted of seven 14 year-olds, ten 15 year-olds, twenty-nine 16 year-olds, thirty-nine 17 year-olds, nine 18 year-olds. It was dispersed within the limits of Marengo Community High School, in the small town of Marengo, Illinois. Possible chances for error are due to the surveys that had to be thrown out because of multiple answers being circled. These removed surveys take away from data that could have been collected and factored into the survey’s percentage ratios.

**Variables:**

Our variables for the survey were ALCOHOL, which is the consumption of anything containing alcohol, and GENDER, which is the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex. PEER PRESSURE is defined as the pressure from one's peers to behave in a manner similar or acceptable to them. ESCAPISM is the avoidance of reality by absorption of the mind in entertainment or in an imaginative activity.

**Analysis of Research:**

According to the survey, 69% of males have consumed alcohol in their lives, compared to 61% of females. 36% of males drink alcohol to socialize and obtain peer acceptance, while only 18% of females do the same. 9% of males consume alcohol due to family matters, 0% because of an addiction, 3% due to their love life, 6% use it for escapism, and 45% said that their reason behind drinking was not listed on the survey’s choices. 11% of females drink alcohol due to family matters, 0% because of an addiction, 25% use it for escapism, 7% due to their love life, and 39% answered that their reason behind drinking was no listed on the survey’s choices. 77% of males conveyed that they did not think drinking alcohol was worth consequences such as liver damage, clouded judgment, and loss of control, while the number read 91% for females. 96% of females agreed that girls have more to lose than boys (takes less alcohol to get drunk, risk of pregnancy, increased risk of breast cancer, more impaired than men) while under the influence. Of those that admitted to consuming alcohol, 48% of males said they make poor decisions while under the influence, compared to 43% of females. 54% of males said that getting in trouble with the law is their worst fear as a consequence of drinking, 25% said it was not being able to participate in school sports or clubs, 4% said it was due to fearing suspensions or expulsion from school, and 2% was having their parents or guardians finding out. In regard to females, 37% said that it was getting in trouble with the law, 24% said it was not being able to participate in school sports or clubs, 11% said it was due to fearing suspensions or expulsion from school, and 28% was having their parents or guardians finding out. 88% of males have admitted to having friends who drink alcohol, while this number is only 76% for females. 93% of females have never pressured a friend to drink alcohol, while this value lowers to 90% for males.

**Report of Findings:**

The data suggests that males primarily drink alcohol to socialize and obtain peer acceptance, while the major cause for alcoholic consumption in females is to provide escapism. This statement supports our hypothesis, since the results matched that of those we predicted. More females than males (91% to 77%) agreed that drinking alcohol is not worth the consequences it can cause, such as liver damage, clouded judgment, and loss of control. This information correlates to data described in the review of literature. Furthermore, our data indicates that more females than males (95% to 73%) think females have more to lose while under the influence of alcohol—takes less to get drunk, risk of pregnancy, increased risk of breast cancer, more impaired than men—which is also in correspondence with the review of literature. For males, 54% said their worst fear as a consequence of drinking alcohol is getting in trouble with the law and 25% said that it was not being able to participate in school sports or clubs. The majority of females (37%) also stated their worst fear as getting in trouble with the law, but their second highest fear (28%) was parents or guardians finding out. This shows the sensitivity and caution presented by females; they believe in more harsh consequences of alcohol and think they have more to lose. In addition, most females utilize alcohol as a stress reliever, while the majority of males use it as a way to socialize and obtain peer acceptance. From this, our data suggests that females need to be relieved of emotional stress in order to decrease their intake of alcohol, and males can decrease their consumption by participating in fewer activities when friends around them are drinking. It is essential to prevent teenage drinking in order to have a healthier and more peaceful world for today’s youth to live in.

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**Appendix A:**

Sarah Olson and Jenna Kunz are testing to discover the reasons why males and females drink alcohol.

**Please circle the answer that best applies**

1. Are you male or female? Male Female
2. How old are you? 14 15 16 17 18
3. Have you ever consumed alcohol? Yes No
4. If yes to question 3, why do you drink alcohol? Please circle only **ONE**
   1. Peer acceptance
   2. Family matters
   3. A way out
   4. Addiction
   5. Love life
   6. Relieve stress
   7. Socialize
   8. None of the above
5. Do you think drinking alcohol is worth the consequences? Yes No  
   (e.g. liver damage, clouded judgment, loss of control)
6. Do you agree that teen girls have more to lose than teen boys when   
   under the influence of alcohol? (e.g. takes less to get drunk, risk of Yes No  
   pregnancy, increased risk of breast cancer, more impaired than men)
7. Do you admit to making bad decisions while under the influence Yes No  
   of alcohol?
8. What is your worst fear as a consequence of drinking alcohol?  
   Please circle the letter of the statement that best applies to you. Choose only **ONE**
   1. Getting in trouble with the law
   2. Not being able to participate in school sports or clubs
   3. Getting suspended or expelled from school
   4. Parents or guardians finding out
9. Do any of your friends drink alcohol? Yes No
10. Have you ever pressured a friend to drink? Yes No