



Residential Status and Drinking Habits in College Students

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INTRODUCTION

•Heavy alcohol use is common in college students and can lead to risky behaviors (e.g. driving while intoxicated, engaging in unprotected sex) and increased negative consequences (Courtney & Polich, 2009; Read, Merrill, Kahler, & Strong, 2007; Vik, Carrello, Tate, & Field, 2000; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, & Moeykens, 1994; Wechsler, Moeykens, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995; Wechsler & Nelson, 2008).

•One form of heavy drinking is binge drinking, which is the consecutive consumption of at least four/five alcoholic drinks for women/men respectively in a two hour period or less (NIAAA, 2004).

•Heavy drinking habits can be influenced by social and environmental factors.
•Different residential situations contain different social and environmental factors that may influence the drinking habits of college students.

Social Factors

•Increased peer contact, such as living with peers, has been found to increase the risk of heavy alcohol use in college students (Baer, 1994; Wechsler et al., 1995).
•Increased parental contact, influence, and monitoring have been found to be protective factors against heavy alcohol use in college students (Fairlie, Wood, & Laird, 2011; Kuo, Adlaf, Lee, Gliksmann, Demers, & Wechsler, 2002; Turrissi, Weirisma, & Hughes, 2000; Wood, Read, Mitchells, & Brand, 2004).

Environmental Factors

•Presence of supervision, whether parental or non-parental (i.e. Resident Assistant or Hall Director) may result in a decreased risk for heavy alcohol use.
•Absence of supervision, such as in an on- or off-campus apartment with friends, may result in an increased risk for heavy alcohol use.

•Previous studies on college alcohol use have measured residential status, but did not look into the differences in alcohol use and habits despite the implications of its influence on drinking habits.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Objective

•The current study investigated the potential differences in drinking habits (such as typical quantity or drinks per week, typical frequency of drinking per week, and typical frequency of binge drinking for the past six months) between full-time undergraduate students living in different residential situations available to them.

- Those different residential situations included:
 - Residence Halls (on-campus with supervision)
 - On-campus apartments/Greek housing (on-campus without supervision)
 - Off-campus apartments/houses without family (off-campus without supervision)
 - Off-campus with family (off-campus with supervision)

A-priori Hypotheses

1. Students living on-campus with supervision (in Residence Halls) will have fewer drinking occasions and will consume higher amounts of alcohol per episode than students living in any other residential situation.
2. Students living on-campus without supervision (on-campus apartments or Greek housing) will consume more moderate amounts of alcohol per episode. They will consume higher amounts of alcohol per episode than students living off-campus with supervision (at home with family), and lower amounts of alcohol per episode than students living on-campus with supervision (Residence Halls).
3. Students living off-campus with supervision (at home with family) will drink on fewer occasions per week and will consume lower amounts of alcohol per episode than students living in any other residential situation.

METHOD: Procedure

•Participants from an ongoing study completed two separate sessions.

- In the first session they filled out self-report measures for their current residential situation, age, gender, and ethnicity.
- In the second session they filled out self-report measures for their typical quantity and frequency of drinking and typical frequency of binge drinking for the past six months.

METHOD: Participants

Demographics

- 50.7% female (n =292)
- Mean age: 19.59 years
- Ethnicity:
 - 70.2% White (n=205), 11.6% Black (n=34), 8.9% Asian (n=26), 6.5% Hispanic/Latino (n=19), 4.5% Other (n=13), 2.4% Multiracial (n=7), 1% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (n=3)
- Frequencies of Residential Statuses:

| Residential Situation | Number of Participants Living in Situation | Percent of Sample |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Residence Hall | 125 | 42.8 |
| On Campus Apartment/Greek Housing | 30 | 10.3 |
| Home (with family) | 47 | 16.1 |
| Apartment or House (without family) | 90 | 30.8 |

METHOD: Drinking Measures

Drinking Habits

•All questions regarding drinking amounts were preceded with a reminder of the definitions for one standard drink: one beer is 12oz., one wine cooler is 12 oz., one glass of wine is 5 oz., and one shot of liquor is 1.25 oz.

- For self-reported alcohol use, participants answered questions regarding typical drinking frequency in the past 180 days (6 months) with one of the following choices:
 - “Less than 6 times in the past 6 months”
 - “About once a month”
 - “Once or twice a week”
 - “Three to four times a week”
 - “Nearly every day”
 - “Every day”

•Participants self-reported the typical number of drinks (quantity) they usually had per drinking occasion during the past 180 days (6 months) with answer choices ranging from “Less than one standard drink” to “Nine or more total standard drinks”.

- Participants also self-reported typical binge drinking frequencies for the past six months by answering with the following choices:
 - “Didn’t drink five or more drinks in the last 180 days”
 - “Once in the last 180 days”
 - “2-3 times in the last 180 days”
 - “Once or twice a week”
 - “3-4 times a week”
 - “5-6 times a week”
 - “Nearly every day”
 - “Every day”

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

•The study included only participants that had data for both sessions. Participants with missing data or who were ineligible for the second session were dropped from our analyses.

•One-way ANOVAs were conducted to compare the means for typical drinking frequency, typical drinking quantity, and typical binge drinking frequency for the past six months individually with residential situation.

- No significant findings were found during data analysis, even when accounting for the possible covariance of age, gender, and GPA.

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

•Results from data analysis did not show significant findings, and thus, did not support any of the a priori hypotheses.

•Self-reported typical drinking frequency and quantity and typical frequency of binge drinking in the past six months had similar outcomes for all of the residential situations and did not show significant differences between them after statistical analyses.

Limitations

•The small sample size limited the statistical power of the data and a data set with a larger sample size may have the potential to provide more significant findings during analyses.

•The limited depth of the self-report measures regarding the alcohol use of the participants did not fully capture the participants’ actual drinking habits, but instead averaged them over the past six months.

•This data was taken from an ongoing study that selected participants who had reported drinking within the past 3 months prior to participating in the study, so results cannot be generalized to populations that also include non-drinkers.

•The participants in this study were selected from a large Northeastern university, and the results may not be generalizable to universities from other geographical regions.

•This sample was also predominately white, and results cannot be generalized to regions of more diverse ethnicities.

Future Directions

•Future studies could investigate the factors that may cause the drinking habits of these different residential situations to be similar, despite the differences in social relationships and amount of supervision for the different living situations.

•Future studies could continue to investigate the possible differences in drinking habits between students living in different residential situations and use measures that better indicate participants’ actual drinking habits.

•Future studies could continue to investigate the differences in alcohol use between students in the different residential situations by using a larger sample size, while also including light or non-drinkers in the sample.