Residential Status and Drinking Habits in College Students

Megan H. Fitzgerald & Jennifer P. Read, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, State University of New York at Buffalo

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, Downall, & 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 (NIAAAA, 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 (Bier, 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, Aral, Lee, Glickman, Demers, & Wechsler, 2002; Terrisi, Weiss, & 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.

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:
  - 76.2% 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Situation</th>
<th>Number of Participants Living in Situation</th>
<th>Percent of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence Hall</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Campus Apartment/Greek Housing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home (with family)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment or House (without family)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 12 oz., 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"

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