

Feature

Alcohol and Private Higher Education A Literature Review

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The focus of this literature review is alcohol use and abuse in higher education, specifically as it is found in private, church-related colleges and universities. As these institutions have similar alcohol abuse patterns and problems as public institutions, this review first explores studies examining populations found in both public and private institutions. The review then shifts to research conducted in private college and university settings.

Perhaps the most widely used drug in the world today is alcohol. Because it is legal and easily obtained, it is unquestionably the most widely abused drug as well. As such, one of many social concerns related to alcohol use is its misuse by adolescents, teenagers, and young adults. Thus, alcohol-related issues have emerged in all levels of education. While much is known regarding alcohol and its side effects, not as much is known about best educational practices designed to prevent alcohol abuse among these populations. As the authors believe that only by understanding the hows and whys of alcohol use and abuse in educational settings can the first steps be taken toward appropriate intervention strategies, what follows is an examination of literature focusing on alcohol use and abuse in private higher educational settings.

SECONDARY ANALYSES OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT ALCOHOL USE

Prendergast (1994) reviewed the research on college students' substance abuse. Although the differences in methodology of surveys created difficulty in discovering the exact extent of substance use, findings indicated that alcohol is the most popular substance used on college campuses, as 90% of students used alcohol at least once a year. Moreover, heavy alcohol use was also prevalent and was associated with serious problems. The author discussed the relationship between substance use and certain variables such as demographic characteristics, personality factors, grade-point average, year in college, college residence, motivation, and attitudes. Prendergast concluded that prevention programs cannot be limited to the college campus, and unless adolescent experimentation is stopped or delayed, more adolescents are apt to develop substance-related problems in the future.

Wechsler (1996) composed a report from the Harvard School of Public Health survey regarding alcohol consumption by college students. More than 17,000 students on 140 campuses nationwide were questioned. Results indicated that 84% of these students reported drinking during the school year, of these, 44% met the criteria as binge drinkers and 19% as frequent binge drinkers. A twelve-step program was suggested to provide a model that colleges could adapt to their own needs.

Presley (1994) wrote an article describing the development and the administration of the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, an assessment tool designed to assist universities in obtaining accurate information about the effectiveness of their substance-abuse-prevention programs. The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey is a self-report instrument which investigates the nature, scope, and consequences of college students' alcohol and drug use. Approximately half a million students have completed the survey on 800 campuses. Main findings indicate that the average number of drinks consumed per week by students across the nation's colleges

and universities is five. The survey also indicated substantial numbers of students engaged in binge drinking had negative effects and adverse consequences as a result. Some regional differences were outlined.

Coughlin (1994) summarized recent research on the pattern of college-student alcohol and other drug use. This study reported that, according to some statistical comparisons, 41% of college students get drunk versus 34% of their non-college counterparts. Other comparisons follow. Annually, students spent \$4.2 billion on alcohol. This is more than the collective cost of operating campus libraries, scholarships, and fellowships in the United States. Moreover, the same number of college students will die of alcohol-related causes as will earn masters' and doctoral degrees. Traditional-age college students (ages 18 to 22) are at greater risk of alcohol and drug use. The risk of becoming alcoholic for the adult children of alcoholics is far greater than the general college population. The students who arrive on campus already alcohol or drug addicted are at a much higher risk of continued problems. The study also found that women are at higher risk of mental and physical damaging effects, both immediate and long term. Collectively, it was estimated that probably more than 50% of the student population is at risk for alcohol and drug abuse. The author concluded that the problem is so large that it requires collaboration between institutions of higher education and the communities in which they are located.

COLLEGE STUDENT ALCOHOL USE AT MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS

Wiley and others (1997) used the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to assess 1,408 college students from 23 colleges and universities regarding alcohol use and other risk behaviors. The survey was done by telephone, and almost 90% of the students reported alcohol use, males (91%) and females (87%). For 66.1% of males and 75.9% of females, the first drink was reported at age 15 or older. Survey findings indicated that many college students used alcohol and practiced other negative activities by the time they reached the college campus. The

author concluded that health-education programs at the college level should focus primarily on risk-reduction activities and support positive health behaviors.

Meilman and others (1997) used the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey to measure the average weekly alcohol consumption among American college students. From a sample of 44,433 students at 105 campuses, the responses showed that most students consumed little or no alcohol on an average weekly basis. Students at two-year colleges reported no alcoholic drinks consumed per week. Only 38% of the students at four-year colleges reported no consumption of alcohol per week. An average of 15 drinks or more consumed per week were reported by approximately 10% of the students. The authors concluded that these data can be useful in clinical interventions and in educational programs.

In order to separate myths and facts about alcohol use on American college campuses, Presley and others (1994) used the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey and analyzed responses from 58,000 students. Data from this survey were used to examine six frequent beliefs. It was determined that they are myths rather than facts. In brief, those myths are as follows: consequences of college drinking are minimal, drinking is an important part of college life, women drink less than men, everyone drinks to excess, small institutions can shield students from alcohol and drugs, and little can be done to change things. The article concludes by making some suggestions for students and administrators, with strategies for acknowledging the alcohol and drug abuse.

A national sample of over 12,000 university students from every state was the population for the study by Engs and others (1996) to determine drinking problems and patterns. Administering the Student Alcohol Questionnaire, the authors found that 72% of students consumed alcohol at least once a year, and 20.6% were heavy drinkers. Major findings indicated that the students who were most at risk for heavier drinking and who presented a higher incidence of problems related to drinking were whites, males, Catholics, the nonreligious, those with low grade-point average, fraternity or sorority members, individuals from colleges in the Northeast, private college students, colleges in small communities with an enrollment under

10,000 students. The authors concluded that those planning campus alcohol-and-drug-prevention programs need to consider demographic variables. It seems prudent to concentrate efforts for those groups at most risk of alcohol abuse rather than conducting massive and indiscriminate efforts toward all university students.

Fisher and others (1989) examined the relationship between stated occupation goals and attitudes toward alcohol and other drugs. The authors used the Substance Abuse Attitude Survey (SAAS) to assess attitudes toward substance use, focusing on three main factors: stereotypes of moralism, treatment, and permissiveness. A sample of 598 college students was obtained from classes in teacher education, criminal justice, psychology, business, social and health resources, and agriculture. Findings show that 91% of all students indicated they consume alcohol, and 5.3% of them drank on a daily basis. From this sample, 40% of the students indicated that they planned to enter teaching occupations. Significant differences were found in the use of alcohol between the prospective teachers and other anticipated occupation groups. This result can be seen in either a neutral or negative way: on one hand, pre-service teachers didn't report using alcohol any more than other students; on the other hand, their reported level of use might be viewed as excessive because their job will include the implementation of alcohol-and-drug-prevention programs. Considering that these pre-service teachers will be working with young people on a daily basis, for whom they are supposed to be models, the authors concluded that, regarding the stereotypes and moralism, prospective teachers had a less favorable attitude than those who will be working in social services.

COLLEGE STUDENT ALCOHOL USE AT INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Using an extensive battery of questionnaires, Schall and others (1991) surveyed 160 university dormitory residents regarding their alcohol use, social influences, attitudes and beliefs about alcohol, personality characteristics, and demographic information. Students

were interviewed twice, with a period of two years between the two interviews. Regression analysis demonstrated that the single best predictor of alcohol consumption by males was the disinhibition subscale of the Sensation Seeking Scale, while the best predictors in females were coping or reported positive personal effects. Reported influence of living arrangements affected alcohol consumption.

A questionnaire package was administered by Karwacki and Bradley (1996) to a sample of 218 undergraduate students from the University of Montana who voluntarily participated in a survey concerning coping and drinking motives. This study examined associations between coping responses, drinking motivations, expectations of meeting social and academic goals, an alcoholic family, measures of college students' quantity/frequency of alcohol use, and social complications of alcohol use. The findings support the social-learning theories that view psychological and learning factors as important components in the acquisition and maintenance of substance use. Results indicated positive associations between "emotion-focused" forms of coping such as detachment and the criterion measures, while there was no significant association between "problem-focused coping" and quantity/frequency of alcohol use or drinking complications. Moreover, positive correlations were noted between drinking motives, goal-attainment expectancies, family-model measures, and the criterion measures. The authors concluded that positive social-drinking motives and coping by seeking social support were related to possible protective factors. They also concluded that addressing the social-learning processes that predispose alcohol-use behavior seems important to the reduction college-aged student alcohol use.

Based on the concept of social bond, Cherry (1991) developed psychosocial scales to measure alcohol use among college seniors in a small semi-rural college. Three of these scales measured Tolerance of Minor Deviance, Perceived Parental Approval of Teenage Drinking, and Drinking Standards. Seven in ten students returned the questionnaire. Their responses indicated 91% of males and 91% of females reported infrequent use of alcohol, drinking slightly more than three to five drinks per occasion and less than once a week. Responses indicated they got drunk less than once a month. The

author concluded that the causal effect on present alcohol use had the following results: the scale Perceived Parental Approval of Teenage Drinking had a moderate direct and indirect effect on drinking frequency, the scale Drinking Standards had a total causal effect, and the scale Tolerance of Minor Deviance had the strongest total causal effect.

ALCOHOL-USE STUDIES AT PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Stone (1983) examined alcohol use by students at a private, coeducational college in rural New England. Using a 20% random sample of students, the author received a 70% response rate to a 110-item questionnaire. Findings indicated that 95.7% of the respondents considered themselves drinkers, with more than two-thirds of all students drinking as often as once or twice a week. Males drank more often and in greater quantities than their female counterparts, although more men than women defined themselves as abstainers. Reasons given for using alcohol were essentially the same for both men and women, and the primary sites for drinking, in general, were reported to be fraternities and sororities. Stone concluded that nearly one-tenth of the women and one-fifth or more of the men were heavily involved with alcohol, although there were no indications of pathological involvement. Even so, the author noted that students seemed receptive to the college effort regarding alcohol concerns, for one-third voluntarily attended the alcohol-education program, nearly half would seek help for a drinking problem from a college health service, and nearly two-thirds gave permission for follow-up contact for future alcohol research.

A study by Fennig (1989) sought to show the usefulness of Bandura's concept of self-efficacy in describing alcohol-consumption patterns. Fennig used the Situational Confidence Questionnaire and the Student Alcohol Questionnaire to examine the relationship between expectations of efficacy resisting drinking in high-risk situations, type of drinker, and the number and kinds of drinking-

related problems encountered. Fennig's study also tested the effectiveness of three levels of self-efficacy training, mastery (individual skills practice), modeling (live examples), and lecture (verbal persuasion) experiences, on confidence-resisting drinking in unpleasant emotional situations. Each condition was administered for an hour a day, over four days in one week of a health-education course taught at a private college. Findings showed significant variations by Quantity-Frequency type of drinker. The questionnaire measured eight high-risk drinking situations. Infrequent and light drinkers reported the most confidence across all situations. Heavy drinkers reported lower confidence in resisting drinking than most other classifications of drinkers. The author noted that all six types of drinkers reported their lowest levels of confidence to resist drinking occurred in positive social situations. On the other hand, students experiencing recent problems related to their alcohol use were considerably less confident in their ability to resist drinking in all eight situations. The author also observed that knowledge about alcohol subjects increased substantially in all three treatment groups.

A total of 454 students at Lincoln Memorial University, a small private college in Harrogate, Tennessee, responded to a questionnaire in which Noah (1988) sought to facilitate the formulation of a curriculum framework for an alcohol-education program at that university. Major findings drawn from the analysis of student responses were: (1) The percentage of abstainers from drinking beer decreased between ages 18 and 22 and increased again among the 25-year-olds, while the percentage of liquor abstainers continued to decrease after age 22 through 25. (2) A large percentage of the students were heavy drinkers of beer at ages 21, 22, and 23, but not of wine and liquor consumption. (3) The wine drinkers, for all ages, were the fewest among moderate and heavy drinkers. (4) Those who drank less and less frequently reported higher grade-point averages. (5) An inverse relationship exists between acknowledged drinking and the reported importance of religion. (6) Alcohol consumption for all kinds of beverages was lower among students residing off-campus than among those living in dormitories. (7) Male students reported lower rates of abstinence from beer and liquor consumption than females, and females were more likely to drink

wine. (8) Few patterns emerged on drinking behavior related to term in school. (9) The most frequently reported alcohol-related problems were vomiting, hangover, drinking and driving, attending classes after drinking, and dating. (10) Few students had a high score on alcohol knowledge, and the majority didn't answer half the items correctly.

Taylor (1982) examined the relationship between levels of alcohol use and selected variables. A sample of 300 sophomore, junior, and senior college students from a private urban university responded to a five-part questionnaire which analyzed quantity and frequency of alcohol use, results experienced from heavy drinking, and alcohol knowledge. Statistical analysis of the data showed significant differences between light, moderate, and heavy drinkers from scores related to alcohol use, age at first drink, reasons for first drink, control over drinking behavior, and the sex of the student. Data not subjected to statistical testing demonstrated a number of alcohol-related behavioral consequences, including the impact of alcohol on students' driving, academics, and social relationships.

In order to examine the relationship between attitudes and self-reported alcohol use, Edmundson (1990) did a survey to measure the following four facets of students' attitudes toward alcohol use: the amount of alcohol consumed in one sitting, the frequency of drinking, the area of life impacted by drinking, and the positive or negative consequences of drinking. The anonymous survey was completed by a sample of 1,049 college students from public and private universities. Statistical analysis indicated the high reliability of the survey instrument utilized and confirmed the existence of the four hypothesized facets which showed a direct relationship between attitudes and alcohol consumption. The author concluded that those findings supported the idea that efforts to change students' attitudes may also change their behavior.

Weitz (1991) researched the relationship between the consumption of alcohol for selected college students and five self-reported independent variables: grade-point average, knowledge about alcohol, self-esteem, family alcohol history, and participation in alcohol-education programs. Moreover, the study examined the relationship between the consumption of alcohol and other factors

like class standing and gender. The research used self-reported data from undergraduate students at two private universities, similar in size, mission, and educational philosophy, collected by way of a questionnaire in which the responses were analyzed by calculating Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients (Pearson's r). The study demonstrated a significant relationship regarding the degree of compliance with the goals of preventing and reducing alcohol and drug use. He also examined whether the impact of campus-based prevention programs is great enough to produce a desired reduction in alcohol and drug use of college students.

Chase (1991) surveyed 26 small private colleges and universities to accurately describe conditions of the fraternity systems on those campuses. Using a campus questionnaire and a subsequent follow-up interview with administrators and students, the author found that the primary causes for which the faculty had precipitated an action against the fraternity systems were behavioral problems associated with many of the fraternity activities, especially related to the use of alcohol.

The effectiveness of college alcohol-education programs was analyzed in a study of Archibald (1985). He surveyed college administrators and students to identify the alcohol-education programs that are perceived most effective. The participants were college presidents, chief student affairs officers, and students from private, church-related colleges and universities in Texas. The survey instrument evaluated seven college alcohol-education programs: alcohol awareness days or weeks, advertising campaigns, student chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous, student chapters of Al-Anon, student awareness organizations, alcohol-education courses, and alcohol-education units taught in academic courses. Seven drinking factors were used to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs: loneliness, academic pressure, peer pressure, social acceptance, escape from reality, boredom, and rebellion. The author concluded that the rank order of program effectiveness as perceived by administrators was as follows: student chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous, student chapters of Al-Anon, student awareness organizations, alcohol-education courses, alcohol-awareness days or weeks, and advertising campaigns. For the students, the perceived rank order was the same

as the administrators' for the first three findings followed by alcohol-education units taught in academic courses, alcohol-education courses, advertising campaigns, and alcohol-awareness days or weeks. For the administrators, significant differences were found for the following variables: school location, sex, position, and institutional policies. For the students, the variables age and place of residence also showed significant differences.

An exploratory investigation developed by Masters (1993) sought to offer administrative standards for minimizing alcohol-related liability exposures at colleges and universities. This study indicated seven guidelines to minimize those liability risks. The study surveyed the chief student-affairs office at the 29 institutions related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to determine the extent of their alcohol-risk management practices. The author sent two surveys to the 29 deans or vice-presidents of student affairs of those institutions. The first one determined whether alcohol abuse was a problem on ELCA campuses or not, and the second one addressed the risk-management practices and procedures employed on ELCA campuses. Findings showed that the adoption of a continuous preventive-planning program was necessary for minimizing alcohol-related liability risks. In addition, it was found that a non-custodial relationship between the institution and the students was more effective for minimizing alcohol-related liability exposures.

Concerned with 19 negative consequences from alcohol usage by female undergraduates, Robinson (1998) analyzed the 1992 and 1993 United States Department of Education CORE Survey findings and compared them to data he collected in 1996 from 345 male and 548 female students at two Midwestern private liberal arts colleges. Students at these colleges shared similar demographics, perceptions of alcohol usage, and locations for alcohol usage. Findings showed that, except in residence halls where both genders were heavy binge drinkers, females preferred occasional drinking, while males tended to be regular to heavy drinkers. However, even though women were occasional drinkers, they suffered 15 of the 19 negative consequences. Also, male and female predictor models held identical numbers of predictors for those negative consequences.

The author concluded that females suffer the same negative consequences, although they usually use less alcohol than males. Consequently, the same alcohol intervention and prevention programs should be conducted for both male and female college students.

CONCLUSION

One can draw several conclusions from this literature review. First, student abuse of alcohol in colleges and universities is not unique to particular regions of the country or to public institutions of higher learning. It is universal. Thus, alcohol education, intervention, and treatment programs are necessary at all levels of higher education. Second, women do not seem to abuse alcohol as much as men; however, those that do suffer the same negative consequences as men. Third, most institutions seem to recognize the need for reforming alcohol treatment and intervention programs, but no common, successful, across-the-board effort appears foremost at stemming alcohol use and abuse among students. Fourth, successful programs are being used for addressing alcohol abuse, but these appear to be in smaller institutions. Thus, the size of the school may have an effect on administrative treatment of alcohol problems. Fifth, the purpose of this review was not to examine alcohol issues in K-12 systems. However, one has to posit that a significant number of entering-student college and university populations have preexisting alcohol use and abuse patterns. These points raise the question of social culpability. Just who is responsible for addressing the problem of and issues related to alcohol abuse? Parents? Churches? Elementary schools? High schools? Colleges and universities? While all of the above should own some responsibility in educating children and youth to the problems and issues of alcohol abuse, what about the individual? Individuals' responsibilities regarding alcohol use start when they are educated to the issues of alcohol use and abuse. But informing youth does not seem to be enough. Clearly serious efforts at intervention and education need to be implemented at more than just the level of individual institutions.

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