

**A COMPARISON OF SELF-REPORTED ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION  
AMONG RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT AUSTIN PEAY  
STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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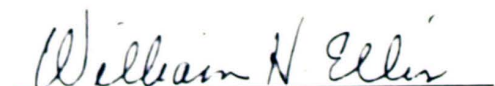
  
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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Graduate and Research Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

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by  
Roger G. Dickson  
April, 1994

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the amount of self-reported alcohol consumed by full-time traditional Austin Peay State University resident students versus traditional age Austin Peay State University non-resident students who are enrolled full-time. Furthermore, the study was to determine if there was a difference in self-reported alcohol consumption between these two groups. The results were obtained from the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey conducted by the Office of alcohol and Drug Prevention at Austin Peay State University in the Fall of 1992. Three hundred and nineteen respondents composed the working data base for this study. Of the 319 respondents, 118 (37%) lived on campus while 177 (55%) lived off campus.

The results of this study indicate that there is a difference in self-reported alcohol consumption between resident students versus non-resident students. Therefore, recommendations are made concerning the continuation of the institutions effort to assist this ever increasing, high risk population of students-both residents and non-residents.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Alcohol abuse is a major public health problem. Young adults are particularly vulnerable to its consequences given their developmental affinity for risk-taking behavior. The prevalence of drinking and driving in young adults is more than double that in the general population. Accidents, homicide and suicide are the leading causes of mortality in this age group and alcohol is a major contributing factor in a third to half of all cases (Smith, Collins, Kreisberg, Volpicelli, and Alterman, 1987). Misuse of alcohol and other drugs by our nation's youth in the last 25 years has come to be considered a major societal problem. According to a summary of the 1974 and 1978 national surveys conducted by Rachel, Maisto and Guess (1981) for the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the prevalence of alcohol misuse involves as many as 1.1 million young people. Johnston, O'Malley and Bachman (1988) stated that 80% of college-age students surveyed reported having used alcohol within the last month (Presley, Meilman, and Lysterla, 1993). Further studies have found that approximately 75% to 95% of the nation's college students consume alcohol (Williams and Knox, 1987).

The university community is a microcosmic society with many of the pressures and problems of the outside world. As in the outside world, alcohol consumption is being acknowledged as a serious campus problem. Concern over the



consumption of alcohol by undergraduates is continually growing. University officials have attempted a variety of approaches in an effort to reduce excessive drinking by college students, especially when that drinking occurs in university dormitories or affiliated organizations and therefore may involve liability (Schall, Kemeny, and Maltzman, 1991). National trends show the use of alcohol remains high on college campuses. Using the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test, Seay and Beck (1984) classified 25% of a student population as problem drinkers (Engwall and Goldstein, (1990). Alcohol abuse has been well-documented and recognized as a leading threat to the academic, social and physical well-being of college students (Linkenbach and Hutt, 1991; Goodale, 1986; Hill & Bugen, 1979; Saltz & Elandt, 1986). Over the past decade numerous studies have been conducted which looked at the alcohol consumption levels of the student athlete population, the Greek population and, in recent years, the male/female populations. To date, little research has been conducted using the specific variable of living arrangements when defining the college students alcohol consumption levels. Schall, Weede and Maltzman (1991) reported significant differences in alcohol consumption when examining the living arrangements of the students.

It is this author's concern that with a student population of approximately 1300 students living in campus

housing at Austin Peay State University, there may be resident students who have special needs. This concern is enhanced by the fact that there have been deaths of resident students involving drinking and driving incidents within the past five years. In addition to deaths, there have been official reports, averaging two injuries per month, of resident students who were under the influence of alcohol, several official reports of injuries to resident students who were under the influence of alcohol outside the university and several unofficial reports of resident students who were involved in some type of alcohol related incident on a weekly basis (F. J. Mills, personal communication, January 19, 1994). These resident students may be high risk individuals who are in need of some type of assessment, intervention, alcohol education, and treatment.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

Alcohol has been a source of both enjoyment and harm since the beginning of recorded history. It has been used to celebrate ritual and tradition, ease tension and generate social interaction, restore and preserve physical and emotional well being, and provide relief from feelings of worry, boredom or inferiority. Unfortunately, there is also a long chronicle of the harm and destruction from the irresponsible use of alcohol that has affected individuals and society (Goodale, 1986).

Just as history indicates a period of enjoyment and harm, so does the college environment. The college years represent a significant at-risk period for alcohol difficulties because drinking is so extensive in the college environment. According to Dr. Phil W. Meilman of the College of William and Mary (1992), students increase their use of alcohol after arriving on campus and alcohol use results in a significant number of incidents, injuries and tragedies at American colleges and universities. Furthermore, Dr. Meilman indicated that approximately 13% of college-aged men and five percent of college-aged women can actually be diagnosed as alcohol dependent and another 10 percent of men and 6 percent of women in this age group also engage in abusive drinking practices although they are not addicted. Alcohol dependent students reported the following behaviors: "overslept and missed class," "broke school

rules," "cut class," "cheated on exams," "drove a car 80+ miles per hour," and "dropped out of school" (Williams et al., 1987).

Abbey (1991) reports that surveys conducted on college campuses across the country document extensive alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems among college students, indicating that between 75% and 96% of college students report having consumed alcohol during the past year, compared with 68 % of the general population. Abbey (1991) estimates that about 20% of college students are problem drinkers, compared with 10% of the general population.

The college environment is conducive to alcohol use. Alcohol use has been and is a part of the college social scene (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986). An excerpt from a study entitled "College Attitudes Toward Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse" (Miller Brewing Company, 1984) seems to best summarize the importance of alcohol on university campuses from the student perspective (Goodale, 1986).

"Drinking is an extremely important part of the college experience. It is the facilitator that accompanies every meaningful social event and is the sign of a person's well adjusted sociability. It is normal to drink. Those who don't drink are the weird ones. It is a way of establishing yourself socially, creating a niche for yourself in



meeting people, which is the primary adjustment in coming from high school to college. It is a social learning experience in which teenagers learn how to handle alcohol, test their limits and prepare for later roles. It is deeply tied to their emerging masculinity in which they use alcohol to release tension, lose their inhibitions and express pent-up sexual frustration in aggressiveness. Most drinking on campus is viewed as a natural or healthy rebellion. Many students like "getting away with it" and drinking without parent control. They see their drinking as exaggerated in the freshman and sophomore years and tapering off as they become more responsible and get older. For example, "When I declare a major," or "At some point you have to get it together." They expect their drinking to be even more responsible and reduced as they leave the university. This perception has little effect on their current behavior, which they extremely enjoy.

Irresponsible drinking is seen primarily as drunkenness, not alcoholism. It is not a concern to students unless it directly affects them. "The halls stink," "I can't study in the dorm," or "The whole floor gets assessed when a sink gets ripped off the wall,". These statements reflect the

inconvenience of drinking because they see it as "a problem" or "their problem," not concern for the behavior caused by drinking. The people who can't handle it flunk out" (p. 3).

Contemporary college culture includes the consumption of alcohol. Now, as in the past, college life would not be complete without "academics": professors, grades, requirements and a bachelor's degree after four years. In the student's view, college is also about a broadening of experiences that should help one become a better, more open, more liberal and more knowledgeable person. Students understand this broadening of experiences as one of the principle reasons they come to college and it is what they often remember most fondly after they have left. Student's believe that not all this broadening happens through the formal curriculum. They believe what goes on outside the classroom, among the students with no adults around is equally important. And last and far from least, college is about fun, about unique forms of peer-group fun, before, in student conceptions, the grayer actualities of adult life in the real world begin to close in on them. Contemporary college life is pleasure, autonomy outside-the-classroom and an uniquely American undergraduate culture. Contemporary college life includes such easy pleasures as hanging out in a dorm lounge or elsewhere, gossiping, wrestling, having a light or serious discussion with friends, going to dinner,

flirting, visiting other dorms and going out to bars. College life is also about the freedom to enjoy your adolescent pleasures in college independent of adult supervision.

With the end of *in loco parentis* in the 1960s, "college life" became "student life". Students began to "party" for the pure fun of it. They go to parties, scheduled or ad hoc events, which center on loud music and alcohol consumption. Furthermore, these events were conducted in dorm rooms, fraternity houses, and off-campus bars and apartments. Some students referred to alcohol as a "liquor lubricant" for undergraduate partying (Moffatt, 1991).

In the early seventies and continuing throughout the eighties, most states enacted legislation raising the legal alcohol possession or purchase age. Davis and Reynolds (1990) found that the new purchase law in New York State, raising the legal purchase age of alcohol to 21, impacted a significant portion of students in four year residential colleges because a large number of these students were under age 21. The largest percentage of change involved drinking in students' room or apartments. Following the establishment of the new purchase age, 50.3% of respondents said they drank in their rooms or apartments. This was an increase of 15.6%.

A national survey conducted by Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley (1991) found that college students generally have a



higher prevalence of heavy drinking (five or more drinks in a row) than do people of the same age who do not attend college. This same survey also predicted that, in 1991, only 11% of the college student body would refrain from drinking. In addition, almost four percent of all college students will drink every day in any given month (Eigen and Quinlan, 1991).

Alcohol is the drug of choice on college campuses. Alcohol is commonly available, can be purchased cheaply, has relatively predictable and short-term effects and the dosage can be adjusted to fit a particular need. Alcohol is marketed to college students as a remedy for a range of conditions college students commonly report having: loneliness, fear of rejection, desire to be popular, stress, depression, sexiness, overworked and being under-appreciated. It is no wonder that a significant amount of drinking is done in party settings with drinking to intoxication as an expected norm of behavior (Burns, 1992; and Presley et al., 1993).

Many college students find freedom for the first time when they go to college; it is an adventure waiting there to be experienced. Part of this experience, as illustrated in this literature review, involves the consumption of alcohol (Goodale, 1986). Student abuse of alcohol exists on college campuses. As this literature review reveals, nearly all college students will consume alcohol (Burrell, 1990). This



study assessed the amount of self-reported alcohol consumed by traditional age Austin Peay State University resident students versus traditional age Austin Peay State University non-resident students who are enrolled full-time. The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a difference in self-reported alcohol consumption between full-time enrolled traditional age APSU resident students versus the full-time enrolled traditional age APSU non-resident student. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in self-reported alcohol consumption between full-time enrolled traditional age APSU resident students versus the full-time enrolled traditional age APSU non-resident student.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

Austin Peay State University is a state supported, liberal arts university located in Clarksville, Tennessee. Approximately 1300 students live in residence housing on the main campus. This housing includes family units as well as the more traditional residence halls. Archival data obtained from the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey conducted by the Office of Alcohol and Drug Prevention at Austin Peay State University in the Fall of 1992 was used in this study. This Core instrument was made available by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) funded grant programs. The Core instrument was specifically designed for use with a higher education population.

Administration of the surveys took place during the Fall Semester of 1992 by the Alcohol and Drug Prevention Office. A stratified random sample of APSU students was selected from Monday, Wednesday and Friday classes meeting at 10AM. Course sections were placed in representative colleges and sections used were randomly selected to equate to percentage of students represented in the colleges. Surveys were administered by representatives of the Alcohol and Drug Prevention Office. Once completed, the same representative collected the survey. This method of data collection allowed for both a high return rate and quick completion for building of the data base. Once administration of the survey was completed, the

questionnaires were sent to the University of Minnesota for machine scoring by an optical scanner. A special computer request was submitted to the University of Minnesota by the author of this study to request the processing of the institution's raw data into a computerized statistical report for use with this study. From this survey, the author obtained self reported alcohol consumption rates of full-time traditional age residents versus full-time traditional age non-residents. Confidentiality of the respondents was guaranteed, as the data requested by the author was only in summarized statistical form with no identifying information included.

The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey covers many topical areas. Topical areas that were used to extract candidates for this study are identified as follows. Question two, respondent's age, was used in selecting the traditional age student by extracting from the data all those respondents 18 - 24 years old-inclusive. Question 11, respondent's student status, was used in selecting only those respondents who reported their student status as full time. These two questions served in building the data base. Once the data base was built, respondents were then divided into two separate groups by using question 6 which identified the current residency of the student. One group was identified as on-campus or resident students and the second group was identified as off-campus or non-resident students. Twenty-

four respondents were rejected due to missing observations. Question 15 asks respondents to indicate the average number of drinks they consume a week.

At this point, a frequency distribution table was constructed. Responses recorded were divided into three categories: self-report of zero, one drink, or two or more drinks per week and cross tabulations were performed (see Table 1). Since the number of drinks being self-reported were considered categorical variables (zero, one and two or more) and because there are two groups (resident and non-resident) the chi-square test for independent groups was used to test the null hypothesis.

TABLE 1. Frequency Distribution Table

# OF DRINKS PER WEEK	RESIDENT/ EXPECTED OBSERVATION	NON-RESIDENT/ EXPECTED OBSERVATION	TOTALS
0	68/61.4	86/92.4	154
1	17/17.2	26/25.8	43
2 OR MORE	33/39.20	65/58.80	98
TOTALS	118	177	295



## CHAPTER 4

### Results

The findings of this study generally agree with those reported in the literature review concerning the use of alcohol among college students. Specifically, this study reviewed data regarding the effect of APSU residency on self-reported alcohol consumption. The findings of this study report chi square = 17.3 (df = 1,  $p < .05$ ). The critical value is 5.99.

The survey population (N=352) yielded a working data base (N=319) when selected based on age and status of enrollment requirements established at the beginning of this study. Three hundred and nineteen (91%) respondents were between the ages of 18-24 and enrolled as a full-time student. This corresponds with the overall student population of Austin Peay State University where the majority of students are in the 18-24 years age range and are enrolled as full-time students.

Of the 319 respondents, 118 (37%) lived on campus while 177 (55%) lived off campus. Twenty-four (8%) respondents were rejected as they did not indicate their living arrangements. This result reflects the housing arrangements of the total student population of 4,500, approximately 1300 of whom live in university housing.

Twenty-seven percent of the non-resident respondents answered zero when reporting the average number of drinks they consume per week as compared to 21% of the resident

respondents. Only 8% of non-resident students reported a consumption level of one drink, while 5% of resident students reported one drink. Twenty percent of the non-resident respondents reported consumption levels of two or more drinks per week as compared to 10% of the resident students.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

Alcohol is considered the drug of choice for the American college student by many of the authors cited in the literature review. With ample studies and surveys available for review, it is commonly accepted that approximately 75% to 95% of the nation's college students will consume alcohol. National trends show the use of alcohol remains high on college campuses. With little information available on consumption of alcohol by college resident students compared to college non-residents students, the author chose to investigate this designated population.

This study was designed to determine if there was a difference in the amount of alcohol consumed by full-time traditional age Austin Peay State University (APSU) resident students versus full-time traditional age Austin Peay State University non-resident students. Since chi square was significant; therefore, this study does not support the null hypothesis. Furthermore, 30% of non-resident students reported consumption of alcohol as compared to only 16% of resident students.

The results of this study reject the hypothesis that there is no difference in self-reported alcohol consumption between full-time enrolled traditional age APSU resident students versus full-time enrolled traditional age non-resident students. As expected, based on the literature review and the author's professional experience at APSU, the

results of this study indicates that Austin Peay State University does have college students-both resident and non-resident-whom are consuming alcohol. In addition, the results of this study identified 5% of resident students and 13% of non-resident students whose self-reported alcohol consumption exceeded five or more drinks per week. As determined in the literature review, this is considered heavy drinking.

These results alone should be given consideration by this institution in its efforts to assist this ever increasing, high risk population of students-both residents and non-residents. It is the author's opinion that this study will be beneficial, when combined with other published studies, to support the continuation of the comprehensive alcohol and drug prevention education program on the campus of Austin Peay State University. Furthermore, it is suggested the information in this study should immediately be incorporated into the decision making process for current programming and educational programs offered on campus.

Alcohol research as a whole has provided the foundation of knowledge on which an understanding of key issues regarding causes, prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse and alcoholism is built. A replication of this study would need to take place over the next several years to determine if such educational programs, such as the program at Austin



Peay State University, can significantly reduce drinking behavior and the negative consequences of drinking.

Although the null hypothesis was not supported by this study, there may have been other factors which influenced the observed value of chi square rather than just self-reports by the respondents. One factor may have been the lack of power of our analyses due to the relatively small number of students in the different living arrangements. Another factor may have been the great variability of consumption. Finally, information regarding consumption level was based on student self-reports. These reports, although confidential, may have been conservative estimates by the students.

In conclusion, there appear to be students, both resident and non-resident, who are in need of assistance based on their self-reported alcohol consumption. Although it is outside the scope of this study, it is hoped this study will serve as a beneficial document for the support of the current Alcohol and Drug Prevention Program here at Austin Peay State University.

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