Citation for this item
Citation format and information for this document is found at: http://hdl.handle.net/2022/17392

This paper is from:

Dr. Ruth C(lifford) Engs - Presentations, Publications & Research Data Collection.
This collection is found at IUScholarWorks: http://hdl.handle.net/2022/16829
When in the collection and within a category, click on “title” to see all items in alphabetical order.

The Collection
This document is part of a collection that serves two purposes. First, it is a digital archive for a sampling of unpublished documents, presentations, questionnaires and limited publications resulting from over forty years of research. Second, it is a public archive for data on college student drinking patterns on the national and international level collected for over 20 years. Research topics by Dr. Engs have included the exploration of hypotheses concerning the determinants of behaviors such as student drinking patterns; models that have examine the etiology of cycles of prohibition and temperance movements, origins of western European drinking cultures (attitudes and behaviors concerning alcohol) from antiquity, eugenics, Progressive Era, and other social reform movements with moral overtones-Clean Living Movements; biographies of health and social reformers including Upton Sinclair; and oral histories of elderly monks.

Indiana University Archives
Paper manuscripts and material for Dr. Engs can be found in the IUArchives http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?doc.view=entire_text&docId=InU-Ar-VAC0859
LEGISLATION DRINKING NORMS:
THEIR IMPACT ON COLLEGIATE DRINKING

Ruth C. Enge
Indiana University

and

David J. Hanson
State University College, Potsdam

BACKGROUND

College student drinking, legally or illegally, is not a recent occurrence in the United States. As far back as the early 18th century, alcohol was used by students and there were admonitions and strict regulation on the part of authority figures regarding the practice (Kuder, 1976). Regardless of the restrictions in the past, including national prohibition against drinking, students continued to drink. Many studies over the decade have indicated that a large percentage of college students drink (Engs and Hanson, 1987).

Since the early 1970s the drinking age in a number of states has changed, often being lowered, and then raised in the same state within a few years. However, studies over this time period have generally found little difference between the drinking patterns of students who were legal and not legal to drink. (Engs and Hanson, 1986). One reason for lack of differentiation may have been that it was possible for underage students to go to contiguous states to purchase or consume alcohol legally. Because of this, existing statistics concerning the proportion of underage college students who drank illegally may not be accurate. However since July 1987, the minimum purchase age has been 21 in all states. Therefore, it is now possible to collect stronger evidence concerning the drinking patterns of legal compared to underage students.

REACTANCE THEORY

Researchers in the behavioral sciences have found that telling persons not to do something often produces the opposite reaction. People value their sense of freedom and autonomy and like to project an image of self-control (Baer, et al., 1980). Reactance theory suggests that whenever persons believe
their freedom either has or will be threatened, they enter into a reactance motivational state and act to regain control by not complying (Brehm, 1966). Coercion, in particular, leads to the arousing of reactance, which tends to reduce compliance (Brehm and Brehm, 1981).

Evidence that people act so as to promote their sense of control comes from experimental studies showing that attempts to restrict autonomy are often counter-productive (Brehm and Brehm 1981). For example, a study by Worchel and his colleagues (1975) found that censoring or limiting the availability of pornography heightened its appeal. Similarly, Mazis (1975) found that banning phosphate detergents increased the desire to use the product.

HYPOTHESIS

Because drinking is typically part of the college experience and that it is now illegal for college students under age 21 to purchase alcohol in any state, it is hypothesized that reactance motivation has been aroused among underage college students leading to exhibit higher levels of both (1) quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption, and (2) more drinking problems compared to collegians of legal purchase age.

METHODS

Instrument

An anonymous pre-coded instrument, The Student Alcohol Questionnaire (Engs, 1975), which has been used by hundreds of researchers over the past 15 years, was used. It has demonstrated an internal consistency reliability of .79 and includes demographic items, questions regarding the consumption of various alcoholic beverages, and 17 items concerning possible negative consequences of drinking. The instructions on the instrument explained the voluntary nature of participation in the study as approved by the authors' respective Human Subjects Review Committees.
Sample

A quota sample of 55 colleges and universities was selected to cooperate in data collection during the 1987-88 academic year. A sample of students was drawn from in-class administration in survey type sociology, health or physical education courses which had a high probability of containing students from every academic major and class year. The response rate exceeded 98% and the demographic composition of the resulting sample of 3,375 students closely approximates that of students attending baccalaureate institutions of higher learning in the United States.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed groups for drinking patterns and by chi square using the SPSS cross tabulation method and by t test. The .01 level of significance was selected.

RESULTS

A significantly higher proportion of underage students were drinkers (81.2%) compared to students of legal age (75.3%). Additionally, a significantly higher proportion of underage students were heavy drinkers (24.0%) than are those of legal age (15.3%). (See Table 1.)

Significantly more drinking problems were also reported by underage than legal age drinkers. (See Table 2.) Thus the hypothesis was supported.
REFERENCES


Engs, R.C. (1975). *The Student Alcohol Questionnaire*, Bloomington, IN.


Table 1  Drinking patterns of all students by age group in percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drinking age</th>
<th>Under 21 (N - 1,987)</th>
<th>21 and over (N - 1,388)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstainer</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequent Drinker</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Drinker</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Drinker</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate/Heavy Drinker</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Drinker</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .001

**NOTE:**  **ABSTAINER**, drinks less than once a year or not at all; **INFREQUENT DRINKER**, drinks more than once a year but less than once a month; **LIGHT DRINKER**, drinks at least once a month but not more than 1 to 3 drinks at any one sitting; **MODERATE DRINKER**, drinks at least once a month with no more than 3 to 4 drinks, or at least once a week with no more than 3 to 4 drinks, or at least once a week with no more than 1 to 2 drinks, at any one sitting; **MODERATE/HEAVY DRINKER**, drinks 3 to 4 drinks at least once a week or drinks 5 or more drinks at least once a month or drinks 5 or more drinks at least once a month; and **HEAVY DRINKER**, drinks six or more drinks at any one sitting more than once a week.
Table 2  Comparison between Underage and Legal Drinkers in the
Number of Problems Experienced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 21</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 plus</td>
<td>1388</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .01