

world of moral and ethical ambivalence with confidence and a sense of responsibility.

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#### DRINKING IN COLLEGE AND ALCOHOL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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*An examination of alcohol use and abuse patterns of college students is presented. The author proposes the implementation of alcohol education programs on campuses and suggests that the student development administrator may play a key role in educating students about and preventing the development of alcohol-related problems.*

The situation on college and university campuses regarding the use of alcohol needs even greater attention and understanding than it is currently receiving. A number of studies have reported on the incidence of alcohol consumption on campus indicating anywhere from 71-96% of students using alcohol at least once a year, with close to 50% drinking at least once a week (Kraft, 1977). The effects of such usage can be assessed in many ways, taking into account personal, social, and environmental consequences. Higher education has been remiss in dealing with this concern (Oliaro, 1977). Yet, higher education has a unique and great opportunity to use this phenomenon to contribute to the total development of its college students.

North (1977) describes the root of this opportunity in this manner:

The majority of college students, while legally classified as adults, are entering the developmental stages of early adulthood and are further establishing independence, autonomy, values and self-discipline as part of the process. Experimenting with alcohol is one of the behaviors commonly associated with this age group. Some abuses often observed are excessive consumption, use of alcohol as a means of socialization, strong peer pressure on others to drink, loud boisterous behavior, occasional disruptions and damage, and, on some occasions, harrassment, intimidation, and physical conflict with other people. (p. 5)

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Unfortunately, as is true with the adult population, some students get into trouble as a result of drinking.

This paper is an overview of some of the issues involved in understanding and dealing with drinking on campus. After a somewhat cursory treatment of the role of alcohol usage in American society, adolescent and college student drinking attitudes and behaviors will be examined. Finally, an exploration of the importance and use of alcohol education programs on campus will highlight how colleges and universities can get actively involved in the prevention of alcohol-related problems through the educational mission of the institution. It is the growing interest in alcohol education and awareness programs that is the most significant change in the field of alcohol studies in the last decade (Ingalls, 1978). It is my contention that higher education must address these concerns and that alcohol education fits directly into goals of higher education in general.

#### **Alcohol Use in America**

Much has been written about the use of alcohol as a beverage and the effects that it has on individuals and society. Alcohol and alcoholic beverages have been used from the earliest periods of recorded history. "Alcohol use patterns are so deeply ingrained in the mores and history of Western culture" (Tongue, 1976, p. 197). Yet, there has always been apparent conflict in the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages in the use of alcohol as a beverage. It is the awareness of the consequences of its usage that has been the focus of much concern in the literature. Terms such as "alcoholism," "alcohol abuse," and "problem drinking" have all received considerable attention and are the subjects of investigation by numerous researchers (Jessor and Jessor, 1975; Maddox and McCall, 1964; Donovan and Jessor, 1978; and Walker, Jasinska, and Carnes, 1978).

Information about alcohol abuse as one of our nation's major health concerns has increased, according to Oliaro (1976). Shaw, Cartwright, Spratley, and Harwin (1978) have pointed out that most people who drink alcohol "remain ignorant of its effects except for the more obvious physical and physiological sensation" (p. 19). Drinkers' analyses of the effects of alcohol often come from a combination of the myths prevalent during their particular time period and culture along with their personal experiences. Yet, alcohol abuse and problem drinking have been identified as areas of concern by researchers, users and non-users of alcohol, as well as by other community members.

#### **Adolescent Drinking**

Although some research has been performed in the area of the drinking behavior of college students, a greater amount of work seems to have been done studying adolescent or teenage drinking. It is worthwhile to examine

these studies for two reasons: (1) an understanding of the dynamics of alcohol use by adolescents may shed light upon and help predict future behavior when such students are of college age; and (2) an understanding of the issues involved will assist in the planning and implementation of alcohol education and abuse-prevention programs for adolescents and college students alike.

One of the most frequently cited references in the literature regarding adolescent drinking is Jessor and Jessor's (1975) study entitled "Adolescent Development and the Onset of Drinking." In this study, the authors examined the initiation into drinking as part of adolescent development by analyzing aspects of personality, social, and behavioral change. It was concluded that:

There are orderly relations between the onset of drinking and a set of sociopsychological attributes which antedate its occurrence. Those attributes, constituting a pattern of readiness to begin drinking, are also related in a significant way to the time of onset—the greater the readiness, the earlier the onset; further, variation in the time of onset is related to developmental change in those attributes, and finally, the onset of drinking in turn seems to influence these attributes in a way that brings them ultimately into greater congruence with the new status of the drinker. (p. 48)

This approach to the understanding of adolescent drinking has contributed greatly to the identification of the reasons for drinking. Jessor and Jessor (1975) have asserted that because alcohol is symbolically associated with adult status, the initiation of drinking behavior should be seen as a significant event that reflects and patterns adolescent development.

Problem drinking, according to Donovan and Jessor (1978), can be described on the basis of consumption of alcohol to the point of drunkenness and on the negative interpersonal and social consequences or problems associated with drunkenness. They have indicated that problem drinkers placed less value on academic achievement, greater value on independence, especially relative to achievement, and were less intolerant of deviance, less religiously oriented, and placed more emphasis on the positive aspects of drinking than did non-problem drinkers. Problem drinkers were more influenced by friends than parents, and the opposite was true for non-problem drinkers. Finally, problem drinkers were reportedly more involved in other general deviant behaviors and in marijuana use, were less involved with church, and earned lower grades than non-problem drinkers.

Walker, et al. (1978) have warned that the increased use of alcohol by teenagers in the United States is becoming a serious problem. Their study

reported that, according to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 63% of boys and 54% of girls have taken at least one drink by the 9th grade, and 14% of American high school seniors are intoxicated at least once a week. One of the major conclusions of this research points out that "parental attitudes toward adolescent drinking seems not only to affect teenage drinking patterns but is also considered to be the best predictor of adolescent drinking" (Walker, et al., 1978, p. 52). The implications of these findings suggest that alcohol usage must be considered in relation to an individual's development to be able to identify those who may develop alcohol-related problems.

### College Student Drinking

Many students are 17 or 18 years old at the time of initial entry into an institution of higher education. The developmental period that is most often referred to when discussing this group may be called "adolescence," "late adolescence," or "early adulthood." Without examining the developmental tasks that confront these students during their college years, it is suggested that alcohol affects, either directly or indirectly, an individual's development. It is important to examine the research regarding the drinking patterns and alcohol abusive behavior of college students before discussing what might be used to deal with it.

According to Ewing (1977), ideas about college drinking practices are largely based upon personal impressions and alleged reputations. Smart (1976) has referred to problems in defining the term "college drinking." Yet, more and more college campuses are finding that alcohol is the preferred drug of students, and many problems are associated with its usage (Ingalls, 1978). A landmark study was published in 1953 by Straus and Bacon entitled *Drinking in College* and, although the authors asserted that there really was no such thing as "college drinking," they could identify patterns and characteristics of drinking behaviors exhibited and reported by college students.

Many researchers have cited Straus and Bacon's study as a basis of comparison or to identify changes over a period of time, and it would be useful to understand something about their undertaking. Their survey dealt with the customs and attitudes toward drinking of 15,747 male and female students in 27 American colleges. Their book was addressed to the special needs of educators and administrators who dealt with the immediate contingencies raised by student drinking. Although the authors have pointed out that their sample population was not representative of general student populations because it contained a disproportionate number of Jewish and Mormon students, they have set the trend for studying the drinking attitudes and behaviors of college students.

Numerous studies have been made since the Straus and Bacon work to assess drinking in college. The importance of these studies is recognized in that they provide medical authorities and educators with concrete data regarding college student drinking and alcohol abuse so that constructive steps might be taken of a preventative and curative nature (Penn, 1974).

A twenty year follow-up study to Straus and Bacon's work was undertaken by Fillmore (1975) to determine the relationship between specific drinking behaviors in early adulthood and in middle age. It was stated that this study supported earlier findings that problem drinking in early adulthood is a significant predictor of problem drinking in middle age for both men and women.

In general, most studies indicate that alcoholism is not too apparent at the college level, whereas problems associated with drinking are prevalent (Ewing, 1972). A recent article reports on the changes in drinking patterns of college students and quotes Henry Wechsler, director of the Medical Foundation of Boston, as stating: "Approximately 95% of college students are drinkers with few differences among classes or between sexes" (p. 3). This indicates a dramatic increase since the Straus and Bacon (1953) study in which 80% of college men and 61% of college women were drinkers. In a study reported by Engs, DeCoster, Larson, and McPheron (1976), 87% of over 4000 students surveyed indicated past and present use of alcohol. Estimates vary from study to study and, even now, there is not a good estimate of the percentage of drinkers in college.

Hanson (1974) has provided a review of the literature on drinking attitudes and behaviors and states that his findings support the following hypotheses about the incidence of drinking:

- (1) that it is higher among males than females;
- (2) that it is positively associated with socio-economic status;
- (3) that it is positively associated with college year;
- (4) that it is associated with both religious affiliation and religious participation;
- (5) that it is positively associated with incidence of parental drinking;
- (6) that it is positively associated with parental attitudes toward drinking;
- (7) that, at an early age, it is greatest among Jews, lower among Catholics, and lowest among Protestants;
- (8) that it is associated with increased incidence of drinking among friends; and
- (9) that it is positively associated with urbanity of residence. (p. 7)

In a later study performed by the same researcher, changes in the drinking attitudes and behaviors over a five year period, at 17 colleges and universities were reported (Hanson, 1977). Regarding one aspect of the study, which involved 1,579 students from the 1974 (old) study and 1,504 students in the later (new) study, a comparable range of 11 and 14%, respectively, reported that their drinking had caused them trouble with

family, friends, school authorities, police/law, or in a job. The influence of peers increased in the later study, while the double standard, or differential in incidence between males and females, disappeared. This latter finding is supported in many other studies, showing the increase in female drinkers and female problem drinkers on campus.

Looney (1976) attempted to identify some variables regarding alcohol use on campus to identify those specific groups which will hurt themselves or others by drinking. A sample population of 1,260 students was asked to indicate their attitudes toward alcohol consumption: 7% stated that "drinking is never a good thing;" 28% stated that "it's nobody's business how much anyone drinks as long as he or she doesn't both anyone;" 46% stated that "an occasional drink is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with grades or responsibilities." In terms of reasons given for drinking, 65% said they enjoyed the taste of alcohol, 57% drank for sociability, 35% drank to get high, 35% drank to relieve fatigue or tension, and 20% reported drinking to get drunk. The author suggests that this kind of information helps to identify areas of concern regarding alcohol use by college students.

#### **Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems**

Bacon (1978) considers the most important kind of prevention to be that which is aimed toward a mass or societal phenomenon. In the case of alcohol, the target is widespread. Most college officials, according to Ingalls (1978), would agree that abusive behavior brought about directly or indirectly by drinking is a problem on all campuses. College administrators should be particularly sensitive to opportunities for prevention programs.

Nystrom (1974) has provided an overview of the research on alcohol abuse and has discussed three levels involved in the prevention of alcohol problems. Primary prevention is aimed at the elimination of etiological factors with specific prophylaxis directed toward reviewing the average consumption of alcohol and/or altering drinking habits. Secondary preventions, early diagnoses and treatment, are feasible since the development of alcohol-related problems takes place over a period of time. Tertiary preventions are aimed at limiting the defect and at rehabilitative efforts.

#### **Alcohol Education Programs**

A well-developed alcohol education program should be able to operate on all of the levels cited by Nystrom (1974). Milgram's (1976) analysis of the history of alcohol education programs may assist in conceptualizing how far such programs have come since their inception. Back in the 1800's, alcohol education was limited to addressing the dangerous uses of alcohol. This has traditionally been referred to as the "evils of alcohol approach," and was the only approach used prior to the 1930's. In the middle of the 1930's, the concept of alcoholism was introduced into the programs in a

purely scientific manner. According to Milgram (1976), "a change in the philosophy of alcohol education can be noted in the '50s, during which time the Joint Committee on Health Problems in Education noted that school alcohol education played a vital role in prevention, sharing the role with home and church" (p. 3). In the 1960's, the objective approach to alcohol education seemed to be firmly established and alcohol education "was stressed as a means of encouraging a responsible attitude toward alcohol use" (Milgram, 1976, p. 10).

Several attempts have been made at providing an adequate definition of alcohol education as it exists in the 1970's. Craig (1978) has offered a very representative one by stating that it is:

... information about alcohol and alcohol problems . . . It is information as to what alcohol is, the various forms it takes, what it does, who drinks it and why. It is information about the physical, social, and emotional consequences of drinking alcohol. Finally, it concerns that aspect of alcohol consumption that becomes a problem of addiction called alcoholism. (p. 38)

Alcohol education is an essential part of the prevention of alcohol problems and alcoholism. In 1974, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism—Division of Prevention set out to learn what colleges and universities were doing to prevent alcohol problems among students. It also attempted to generate interest in organizing campus alcohol abuse prevention programs. This undertaking was called the "University 50 Plus 12 Project," because it started with 62 schools, although an additional one was later added. According to Kraft (1977), the aim of the project was to:

(1) gather information about drinking practices and attitudes on campus and about existing programs and needs in this area; (2) to disseminate information about alcohol, alcohol use, and alcohol abuse; and (3) to encourage the university to focus on the issue of alcohol use and abuse, and to stimulate new education and communication efforts. (p. 150)

In assessing the campus alcohol situation, it was reported that most campuses had problems related to alcohol use, especially drunkenness and a variety of harmful consequences of drunken behaviors. "Problems frequently cited are drunken driving, accidental injuries such as cuts or sprains, property damage, disrupted relationships, and poor attendance at certain classes, e.g. Monday morning" (Kraft, 1977, pp. 150-151).

As a result of this project, many institutions began to develop alcohol education, alcohol awareness, and/or alcohol abuse prevention programs. Engs (1978) conducted a survey of students at some of the institutions involved in the "University 50 Plus 12 Project" to determine their

knowledge about alcohol. The Student Alcohol Questionnaire, developed by Engs in 1975, was used and the results obtained confirmed her hypothesis that college students possess little knowledge about alcohol and its effects. As examples, 81% of the students surveyed did not know that the legal definition of intoxication in most states is 0.1% blood alcohol level; and approximately 32% of those surveyed subscribed to the myth that alcohol is a stimulant. The author suggests that gathering information about students' knowledge about alcohol and its effects, as well as behavior, is important in the planning of any alcohol education program.

Donovan (1977) has asserted that "surveys of individual campuses are perhaps the most effective, if not the most economical way to assess the proper content for an alcohol education program" (p. 5). Yet, Hochhauser (1978) has suggested that "such programs will not be maximally effective unless they become available to more individuals who may develop drug abuse problems, not merely those easily surveyed" (p. 24). Thus, concern must be focused on the design of such programs to suit the needs and desires of college students.

Bushey (1975) identified the six major components of a model education program by listing its purposes as follows:

- (1) to increase an individual's knowledge about drugs; (2) to affect an individual's attitudes toward the personal consumption of drugs; (3) to alter an individual's drug use behavior; (4) to increase an individual's participation in alternatives; (5) to enhance an individual's ability to clarify his or her own values; and (6) to improve an individual's self-concept. (p. 5)

Engs, et al. (1976) have reported on the Alcohol Education Task Force at Indiana University and its attempt to build a comprehensive alcohol education program. The Task Force established five criteria when it began:

- (1) the program must contain materials that are factually accurate regarding alcoholic beverages and alcohol use; (2) the program must emphasize responsible drinking behaviors rather than advocating abstinence; (3) the program should include a cognitive base and then move toward affective considerations; (4) the program must be designed so that it could be presented by para-professionals without the necessity to have professional consultants in attendance; and (5) the program must be constructed in a way that is intellectually and socially acceptable to young adults. (p. 438)

The result of the efforts of the Task Force was an alcohol education program that consisted of four major parts: (1) a film entitled "Booze and Yous;" (2) a series of values clarification exercises; (3) the Student Alcohol Questionnaire; and (4) a group leadership training manual.

Doucet, et al. (1978) have written about the need for alcohol education programs, yet emphasize that it is crucial that they be built upon educational theory, just as any other curriculum material should be. Attention must be given to the development of such programs to insure that they be most effective. Russell (1974) has summarized the essence of alcohol education programs by stating that, if they are effective, they help "to solve alcohol problems, mostly by preventing problems from developing. The assumption underlying this pragmatic rationale is that educational experiences increase knowledge, help to change, modify, or reinforce attitudes and feelings, and eventually all this will affect behavior" (p. 606). Ultimately, the desired outcome is no, or a minimal amount of, alcohol-related problems.

#### **The Role of the Student Personnel Administrator**

While the use of other popular drugs seems to be declining, the use of alcohol has steadily increased recently (Girdano and Girdano, 1976). As evidenced by the numerous citations within the text of this paper, there is considerable concern about adolescent and college student drinking. Much of this concern is related to how an institution can prevent the development of problem drinking and/or other alcohol-related problems. The approach presented here, alcohol education programs, offers hope in this regard.

The college student development administrator can play a vital role in increasing alcohol awareness and preventing the development of alcohol-related problems on campus, particularly through the implementation of alcohol education programs. Due to the nature of the field, student development personnel can have a great amount of contact and potential influence upon college students. It is imperative that a proactive approach be taken to deal with alcohol usage and the incidence of alcohol-related problems on campus. Residence halls, health services, counseling centers, and dean of students offices can especially get involved in this area. Student development personnel must become increasingly sensitive to the effects of alcohol use and abuse and should pay attention to what the literature is suggesting might be done to deal with it.

Ewing (1977) has suggested that "if we are to accomplish anything of a preventive nature, we must get certain messages over loudly to the student body" (p. 207). It is consistent with the goals of higher education in general, and student development in particular, for every college and university to support adequate alcohol education through either formal classroom activity or outreach work. The "word" must get out to students and student development personnel must be available to help prevent and/or deal with alcohol abuse and alcohol-related problems.

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