Alcohol: Research Driven Responses to Moderate Behavior

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Context: U.S. student consumption of alcohol

Binge Drinking in the Last 2 Weeks

Healthy Minds Study 2015

*Binge intake = 4 female, 5 male, 4-5 other gender, or more drinks in a row
Context U.S. student perceptions of alcohol use

**Daily Consumption**

Peer Perception vs. Actual Reported

**Binge Behavior**

Peer Perception vs Actual Reported

- **Nights per Week**
  - Actual: 3.51
  - Perceived: 2.34

- **Total Drinks**
  - Actual: 4.3
  - Perceived: 3.24

- **Binge Drinking**
  - Actual: 3.86
  - Perceived: 2.19

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*NORMATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF PEER SUBSTANCE USE AND PARTY-RELATED BEHAVIORS; InSight: RIVIER ACADEMIC JOURNAL, VOLUME 12, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2016*
News reports and descriptions from study abroad personnel highlight concerns about heavy drinking while abroad.

"...some turn the entire school semester into one long spring break."

"Do Drinking Abroad Programs Have A Studying Problem?"

"Widespread binge drinking and rowdy behavior."

"The American image has been tarnished."

"Study Abroad – Major in Getting Drunk."

"Study Abroad Students Gone Wild."

"For my junior year abroad, I’m going to learn how to party in a foreign country."
Recent research confirms concerns about drinking abroad

Study recently funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

- Examine drinking abroad
  - Preliminary data from 720 students (Winter quarter/semester 2018)
- Design and test a predeparture prevention program

Mean age of 20.1 years
- 16% are 19 years old
- 56% are 20 years old
- 25% are 21 years old
- 3% are 22 years old

Mostly women (75%)

Mostly juniors (72%)
- 21% sophomores
- 7% seniors

Mostly non-Hispanic, White (74%)
- 12% Hispanic/Latino(a)
- 8% Asian
- 2% African American/Black
- 4% More than one race/ethnicity
Student participants come from 42 different universities/colleges across 25 states and DC.
Student participants are abroad in 12 different countries
Drinking increased by 75% during the first month abroad
Among those who drink, frequency of binge drinking more than doubled.

* Binge drinking: 4 drinks in a row for women, 5 drinks in a row for men.
Prior research also indicates that students increase their drinking abroad and return drinking slightly higher than before they left.

*Pedersen, Larimer, & Lee, 2010*
Students face unique consequences abroad

- Legal problems with a foreign government
- Academic sanctions from both the home institution and the affiliated study abroad program
- Placing oneself in a dangerous situation with local people
- Social and personal consequences
- Contributing to negative stereotypes of Americans
In our preliminary sample, many students experienced consequences abroad

Within the first month while abroad...

- 55% had a hangover the day after drinking
- 48% embarrassed themselves by saying something or doing something they later regretted
- 41% ended up drinking on days that they had not planned on
- 22% noticed a change in their tolerance (needing more to get the same effects)
- 19% did impulsive things they later regretted
- 18% were not able to remember large stretches of time while drinking
- 17% felt badly about themselves because of drinking
- 16% took foolish risks while drinking
- 11% missed class
- 8% reported a sexual situation they later regretted
- 5% passed out from drinking
Our prior work also indicates that many students experience negative consequences while abroad.

During the entire trip abroad...

- 44% had a hangover the day after drinking
- 25% found themselves in a situation where they did not remember all or parts of the night
- 21% embarrassed themselves by saying something or doing something they later regretted
- 20% ended up drinking on days that they had not planned on
- 14% passed out from drinking
- 12% missed class
- 10% injured themselves
- 9% found themselves in a dangerous situation they would not have been sober

Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011
Heavier drinking students may self-select into study abroad programs

Pedersen, LaBrie, Hummer, Larimer, & Lee, 2010
There are some characteristics of students that place them at greater risk than others:

- Student characteristics
  - Male students
  - Greek students
  - White students
  - Pre-abroad GPA
  - Students under age 21

Pedersen et al., 2010; Pedersen, Skidmore, & Aresi, 2014
There are some characteristics of students that place them at greater risk than others

- Student behaviors pre-abroad
  - Drinking intentions before departure
  - Heavier pre-abroad drinkers
  - High in sensation seeking

- Abroad factors
  - Students with more spending money
  - Cultural studies and language majors less likely to drink heavily

Pedersen et al., 2010; Pedersen, Skidmore, & Aresi, 2014
Where a student lives while abroad matters

- Living with roommates in an apartment (compared to living with a family)
- Urban setting (compared to rural)
- Region of study
Desire to fit in and initiate and maintain friendships among peers is a major motivating force behind drinking behavior.

- Direct pressure from peers to drink alcohol is normative in college.
- During abroad trip, students may be motivated to consume alcohol in order to initiate new friendships and relationships with peers.
- Social reasons for drinking during their trip predicted increased drinking from pre-departure levels and increased risk for alcohol-related consequences.

Arnett, 2004; Cooper, 1994; Festinger, 1954; Pedersen et al., 2011
Young people want to fit in with their peers, but they are usually wrong about what they think others are doing

- Perceived descriptive norms are beliefs about the behavior of others

- Perceived injunctive norms are beliefs about the attitudes of others
  - Usually how acceptable or unacceptable a behavior is

- Specificity or salience of the normative group is important
Misperceptions about social norms can encourage harmful behavior

When I go out, I notice people who are drinking a lot.

Everyone drinks a lot. I think they have about 10 drinks when they go out.

I don’t want to be the only one drinking 1 or 2, so I’ll drink a bit more.

When I go out, I notice people who are drinking a lot.
Like college students in general, study abroad students misperceive the drinking behavior of their peers.
Misperceptions of salient abroad-specific groups influence drinking abroad

Pedersen, Cruz, LaBrie, & Hummer, 2011; Pedersen, LaBrie, & Hummer, 2009
Perceptions about native people’s drinking norms may be more influential on behavior than perceptions of peers.
Positive adjustment into the foreign environment and engagement with the local culture may protect against problem drinking while abroad.

- **Sojourner Adjustment**
  - “The psychological adjustment of relatively short-term visitors to new cultures where permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn” (Church, 1982, p. 540)

- **Possible protective factor**
  - If one feels more connected to the environment, there is possibly less risk for heavy drinking and consequences.
We created a measure to capture study abroad sojourner adjustment

- Six aspects specific to study abroad students
- Positive sojourner adjustment
  - Quality and quantity of interaction with local people
  - Trying to learn more about the culture and it’s people; developing one’s own perspective
  - Learning to speak and using the local language; using local idioms and slang
  - Behaving in ways like members of the country; subscribing to their values
- Negative sojourner adjustment
  - Quality and quantity of interaction with Americans
  - Feeling anxious or sad about being far from home; feeling out of place within the country

Sojourner Adjustment Measure (SAM); Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011
Positive sojourner adjustment protects students from consequences, while negative sojourner adjustment contributes to drinking risk

- Less consequences while abroad
  - Social interaction with host nationals
  - Language development and use
  - Host culture identification
- More consequences while abroad
  - Social interaction with co-nationals
  - Homesickness/feeling out of place
- Perceived norms and sojourner adjustment combine to contribute to risk

![Drinks per week diagram](chart.png)
General intervention strategies

Program Design

Destination

Minimize options for group clustering

Maximize opportunities for engagement with local culture

Emphasis on cultural acquisition

Consider housing choices

Systematically reward participation in program activities
Ohio State pre-departure admission intervention strategies

Admission Stage

Office of Student Conduct checks

- Students with active sanction of Disciplinary Probation are ineligible for admission for programs.

- Students with prior sanctions are reviewed by IRM, Office of Student Conduct, and Office of Legal Affairs to determine eligibility
  
  - Those with completed prior sanction for alcohol are usually eligible, but do receive a reminder of expectations and the Code

  - Those with more significant cases (e.g., repeat issues) may be required to meet to discuss expectations

- A second check is done prior to departure to detect any new occurrences of probation
Predeparture admission intervention strategies – benchmark

Predeparture - All applicants to university managed education abroad experiences are vetted with the Office of Student Conduct (aka Judicial Affairs, Community Standards)
Predeparture admission intervention strategies - benchmark

Predeparture: Students currently serving a sanction of disciplinary probation for alcohol related code infractions are prohibited from studying abroad.
Predeparture admission intervention strategies - benchmark

Predeparture: Students who have completed a prior sanction of disciplinary probation for alcohol related code infractions are prohibited from studying abroad.
Predeparture intervention strategies

Orientation Stage

Address in Student Online Predeparture Orientation
- General information
- Applicability of the Code
- Responsible behavior

Program specific orientations
- Opportunity to counter pre-conceived notions of drinking culture in location
- Establishing the social norms around consumption
- Increasing situational awareness
Ohio State – In program intervention strategies

**Code of Student Conduct**

Use, production, distribution, sale, or possession of alcohol in a manner *prohibited under law* or *applicable university policy* or *facility policy*.

- Law = students legal to drink wherever they are of legal age
- Applicable university policy or facility policy = capacity to introduce standards that supersede local law

Legal Use = Responsible Use

Behavior resulting from misuse can violate other standards of the Code

- Endangering behavior: Taking or threatening action that endangers the safety, physical or mental health, or life of any person, or creates a reasonable fear of such action.
- Actual or threatened damage to or destruction of university property or property of others, whether done intentionally or with reckless disregard.
- Disorderly or disruptive conduct that unreasonably interferes with university activities or with the legitimate activities of any member of the university community
In program intervention strategies - benchmark

While Abroad: On programs led or administered by your institution's faculty and staff, what is the standard policy for consumption of alcohol by students?

- Campus requirements: 6%
- Host Country: 29%
- Program Specific: 65%
In program intervention strategies - benchmark

While Abroad: Can individual programs establish guidelines that are stricter than the institutional policy (e.g. can the program restrict or limit alcohol consumption even for students who can legally consume alcohol under the policy above)?

- No, all programs adhere to a common university standard (31%)
- Yes, centralized unit (14%)
- Yes, program specific no written agreement (9%)
- Yes, program specific with written agreement (46%)
Ohio State – In program intervention strategies

Group Expectations Contract

Group Expectations = **applicable university policy**. Must be written and signed by students.

- Simple = members of the group promise that they will not engage in behavior that leads to program delays, interruptions, or disruptions of the experience for other participants
- Rigid = agree to remain substance free (free of alcohol and illegal drugs) for the entire duration of the individual trip
- Moderate = parameters around times and locations for responsible use

**Tenuous**

“Participants may not be visibly drunk”

Judgement call; does not address root causes

**Workable**

“No possession of consumption of alcohol in residential premises”

Objective; removes one opportunity for social clustering

*Intervention Point*
While Abroad - If protocol exists that limits or restricts consumption of alcohol, who reviews infractions and administers sanctions?

- All of the above
- Education Abroad
- Education Abroad; Office of Student Conduct
- Faculty and staff
- Faculty and staff; Education Abroad
- Faculty and Staff; Office of Student Conduct
- Office of Student Conduct
Pilot study of brief norms and sojourner adjustment feedback programs

- Correct misperceptions of study abroad peer and native adult drinking norms

According to the information you provided us during the survey...

You intend to drink 35 drinks per week while studying abroad.

You think the typical UW student studying in Europe drinks 35 drinks per week while studying abroad.

Based on recent research with UW study abroad students, students studying abroad in Europe actually report drinking a mean of 10.1 drinks per week while studying abroad.
Pilot study of brief norms and sojourner adjustment feedback programs

Social interaction with local people in your host country

You indicated that during your time abroad, you will...

- Spend a good amount of time meeting and conversing with local people
- Socialize a good deal with people from your host country
- Have deep and meaningful conversations with local people
- Have meaningful social interactions with local people

Here are some quotes from UW students who recently completed study abroad programs. They describe their experiences with meeting goals and setting expectations of social interaction with local people during their trips.

"The best relationships I had with local people abroad were owners of business that I went to; local cafes and the shop I got my film developed at. Those were the people that it was the easiest and most natural to forge a relationship with because I was there on a regular basis actually doing things, so it was natural to build a relationship."

"The locals definitely want to speak to you more if you show that you are making an effort to learn the language and their customs."

"Home-stay opportunities are great. We could do home-stays as long as we wanted to. I stayed with a family for two nights, who I then met the wife’s mother, who I ended up being very close to. She became my second mother and it was just from staying a couple nights with one family."
Pilot study findings revealed that norms correction alone worked best for lighter drinking students.
Pilot study findings revealed that norms correction enhanced with sojourner adjustment feedback worked best for problematic drinking students.

Pedersen et al., 2017
Why do we think the pilot intervention was successful?

- **PNF intervention**: Student learns peers and locals drink moderately, but without engaging the new environment to observe these norms, changes in perceptions may be meaningless in a new context.

- **Addition of SAF intervention**: Student engages their new environment, which allows them to observe the newly learned moderate norms.

- **Student** drinks moderately and experiences few alcohol-related consequences while abroad.
Next steps

• Received funding to expand pilot study to students from 40+ study abroad programs

• Focus on reductions of specific consequences (e.g., sexual assaults)

• Two phases
  • Document risks and collect normative information
    • This is what we are doing now
  • Seeking participants for summer and fall 2018
  • Test enhanced norms and sojourner adjustment feedback program
    • Brief, online, confidential
  • Videos of prior study abroad students
Further prevention and mitigation strategies

Quite simply: What has worked on your campus or program?

How have you made information resonate with students?

Have you placed alcohol awareness information in non-conventional settings?
Research on study abroad alcohol use


Research on study abroad alcohol use


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