

# **Pregames to Parties, Crawls to Pong: DOES AMERICA HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM?**



## ***~A DELIBERATION REGARDING THE DRINKING CULTURE IN AMERICA~***

***February 28, 2017 – Common Place – 115 Fraser St. – 7-8:30 PM***

**By: Rachel Smiga, Rachel Hooker, Taylor Hayes, Stephanie Jones, Alannah King, Noah Sutter, Wes Alexander, John Michael Gurklis, Katy Larkin, Ashlyn Morin, Ally Mastrangelo**

# OVERVIEW

Alcohol consumption has been an issue in America's past. From 1920 to 1933, the government even enforced a ban on importing, producing, transporting, and selling alcohol in the United States. In 1984, the government increased the standard drinking age across America to twenty-one (NIAA). Since then, drinking has become a normalized part of the lives of Americans. Drinking is engrained in our culture: we drink to get drunk, and we drink to compete. With alcoholism ever present in our society, bars and nightclubs cluttering city blocks, and drinking-related car accidents frequently flooding the news, America's relationship with alcohol has been disputed and prodded from all angles.



**["Drinking is engrained in our culture."]**

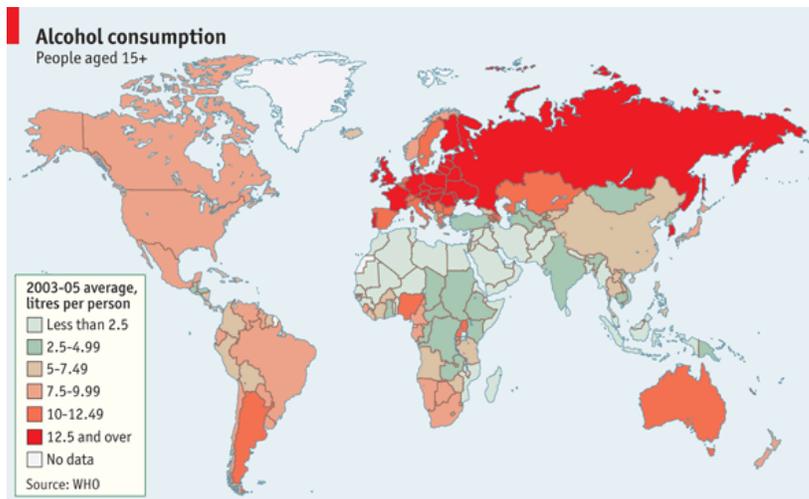
In this deliberation event, we yearn to explore the legal drinking age in the United States and its resulting factors. Our goal is to consider the benefits of having a standardized drinking age, its costs, and its emerging influence on American society. In short, studies show that twenty-one is the threshold age at which people can handle alcohol responsibly with less general risks. But at the same time, enforcing the drinking age at twenty-one does not stop teen drinking but rather "...pushes underage binge drinking into private and less controlled environments, leading to more health and life-endangering behavior by teens" (DrinkingAge.org). With two strong arguments standing in opposition to one another, it is evident that alcohol is a problem in both cases. Regardless of the legal drinking age, drinking has become a *common* and *dangerous* activity- two adjectives that should not be adjacent.

**["Alcohol is a problem in both cases."]**

As a result, it is up to us--as *citizens* of the United States--to consider the reality of drinking and its correlation to age. Yes, there are arguments stating, "I can fight for our country at age 18 but can't drink a beer," and "Why would you want to ruin your brain just to party? Just wait until you're twenty-one." But that's simply not why we are here. We want to portray how whether you are sixteen, eighteen, twenty-one, or twenty-six, alcohol-related problems will prevail and are currently flourishing. As a group, we have ultimately agreed that at age twenty-one or not, drinking is an overarching issue in the United States. Drinking can be defined as a seemingly recreational activity, something we do for fun. As Penn State students, we can define the prime conditions of drinking culture in our respective atmosphere and analyze them. We can ask ourselves, "Is there a problem with the drinking culture in America?" "How is drinking portrayed and what connotations are attached?" "What policies affect the drinking

age and do they retain significance among society?” “How does drinking affect teenagers: physically, mentally, emotionally, and culturally?” As we address these specific aspects that make up the drinking age law, we can come to a conclusion that drinking in America needs to be less hyped-up, appealing, and thrilling...and therefore less dangerous. We believe this exciting, binge-drinking trend is currently radiating through American culture and needs to change.

**[“At age twenty-one or not, drinking is an overarching issue in the United States.”]**



With a desire to create a healthier lifestyle for all Americans, we must begin by addressing and establishing the fact that America does have a drinking problem. In order to change our cultural conditions, we can make drinking alcohol more organic: decrease legal fear and increase education and personal decision making. We could promote drinking in moderation; try drinking while socializing instead of drinking to be social; encourage healthier social habits in

children, portraying how we don't need alcohol to have fun; build confidence and voice in adolescents so they can be open without feeling the need to get drunk; provide resources to kids who acknowledge that they have a drinking problem or recognize signals in themselves; show students what physically happens to their brains when they binge drink; and reinvent the idea of punishment: promote personal disappointment over legal trouble. Essentially, rather than being distraught about receiving an underage or DUI, be upset because you are destroying your physical and mental health while simultaneously putting others' lives in danger. Personal growth and learning is more effective. It's up to you... you can do it if you want, but the weight lies on your shoulders. By placing the burden on personal decision making, we can individually analyze our choices and therefore address, is there a problem with the drinking culture in America? And how can I promote a healthier drinking culture and lifestyle? To help this deliberation flow, we have broken up our deliberation into three main approaches: the culture of drinking, the physical effects of drinking, and the policies of drinking.

**[“With a desire to create a healthier lifestyle for all Americans...”]**

---

# APPROACH SUMMARIES

## Approach One: Cultural Drinking Comparisons

The drinking culture in the United States is vastly different from that of other countries. Social media and the alcohol industry create advertisements that promote and glorify binge drinking. The dangerous behaviors associated with drinking have led to drunk driving accidents, underages, and hospitalizations. College campuses epitomize this cultural and behavioral drinking problem. Students drink to excess and blackout. The major problem facing America in relation to drinking is that we have created a culture that promotes – if not requires – a binge drinking and abusive relationship with alcohol.

## Approach Two: The Physical Effects of Alcohol

It is important to realize the physical affects that alcohol has on consumers. Alcohol can have very damaging effects such as slowly damaging the liver and impairing decision-making and motor skills. In the long run, drinking can also have a negative effect on academic performance and even lead to alcoholism. Binge-drinking can enhance all of these side effects, which is a concern for our society as we have created this culture around binge drinking. The legal drinking age of twenty-one helps minimize the negative effects alcohol has on the brain, but is it also promoting binge drinking?

## Approach Three: Alcohol-Related Policies

The effects of alcohol consumption and abuse have led to the necessary need to enact legal and university policies that will hopefully in turn curb the destructive drinking culture in America. Some people view these laws as a baseline legality to stop people from doing harmful activities such as binge drinking. However, some people view these laws as instigators for teenage rebellion. College campuses fuel drinking habits due to a lack of rules, regulations and supervision. In the United States, there is a huge problem with maintaining safe drinking practices on college campuses.



# APPROACH ONE: CULTURE

NOAH SUTTER & WES ALEXANDER

## Overview

The drinking culture in the United States is vastly different from other countries around the world. In Europe, people tend to drink alcohol at social events, however, in America people hold social events in order to drink. This is a distinct, cultural difference. European people are taught from a young age to drink responsibly and socially, therefore the culture of alcohol abuse, especially for minors is much less prominent than in America. In America, many abuse alcohol and constantly drink to excess, especially those under the legal drinking age.

## Drinking at College

College campuses are prototypical models that epitomize this cultural and behavioral drinking problem in America. Students drink to excess and blackout. They play beer pong and participate in case races. All this with the sole purpose as getting as drunk as they can, as quickly as they can. Alcohol use starts at a young age, sometimes even before high school, and can burgeon into a flow-blown drinking problem in college.

However, because of the binge-drinking culture present at American colleges, many do not feel like they have a problem. They see their peers binge-drinking just as much as they do and often do not realize that this culture is a problem until it is too late. This is part of the major problem facing America in relation to drinking. We have developed a culture that promotes, if not requires, binge drinking and an abusive relationship with alcohol. This ideology is a widespread issue throughout our society, and therefore it would require widespread reform to create change to the culture of drinking in the American society.





60.3% of full time college students are drinkers

**40%**  
of full time college students are  
**BINGE DRINKERS**

The direct benefits of implementing a change in our culture would result in an overall safer society. There would be less death and injury to minors due to binge drinking and other alcohol related accidents. There would be fewer deaths due to drunk driving. The result would be an overall

healthier, better society if we were able to change our cultural views on alcohol. However, the beer and alcohol industry would surely be opposed to any cultural changes, as our high volume of alcohol consumption fuels their huge margins of profit, however, they would be sacrificing their monetary gain for the greater good of American society. Additionally, it would be hard to sway people who have already incorporated a use of alcohol as an integral personal and social aspect of their lives. Our only chance to create change would be to enact strong action to reach younger generations, and then slowly, as they grow up, create a generation that is not reliant on alcohol abuse and use this generation as a base to spread this message to future generations. The underlying issue is our culture surrounding drinking, and that is something very difficult to reshape.

## Existing Culture

Social media, movies, and television all play a role in perpetuating America's drinking problem. Instagram accounts such as "imshmacked" and "totalfratmove" glorify ridiculous drinking behaviors. Movies and TV shows such as "The Hangover" and "Project X" also show binge drinking as funny, or cool. Since so many people have access to these outlets, it normalizes the behaviors of blackout drinking and continues to spread this ideology to future generations through media influence. This is one of the ways that this destructive culture has become a societal norm in America.

## Conclusion

The root of the problem with drinking in America is our culture. Behaviors are normalized here that would be seen as heinous in other places in the world. Unfortunately, changing a culture takes a long time, especially in America because we are often very defensive when it comes to our ways and customs. People need to be brave and open minded to a discussion on our drinking culture. This is a change worth making.

## Binge drinking among young

More than 38 million American adults binge drink about four times a month. Some of the demographics of that activity:

Drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration to 0.08 percent or higher:

**For men**  **5 drinks** in about 2 hours

**For women**  **4 drinks** in about 2 hours

### 18-34

U.S. age group with the most binge drinkers

**42.2%** of full-time college students ages 18 to 22 were binge drinkers in 2010

**About 90%** of the alcohol youth under the age of 21 drink is during binge drinking

**35.6%** of non-college students in that age group were binge drinkers in 2010

**1,700** College students die each year from alcohol-related causes — 1,300 of these from drinking and driving

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Graphic: Chicago Tribune

© 2012 MCT

# APPROACH TWO: PHYSICAL

## ASHLYN MORIN & ALLY MASTRANGELO

### Overview

The consumption of alcohol, particularly underage drinking, has been sweeping the nation. Among America's youth, alcohol is the most widely used, and abused, substance. According to the National Institute of Alcohol and Alcoholism by the age of 15, 33% of teen state they have

had at least one drink in the lifetime. By the age of 18, 60% of teen have at least one drink in their lifetime. (NIAAA) Despite the massive media attention surrounding young adult use of marijuana and cigarette, alcohol is a much more common substance of choice among teens. The short and long term of excessive drinking and alcohol abuse are topic commonly discussed in the classroom and the family dinner



table but, often as a non-starter. In addition to societal pressures, and outside stressors, the lack of knowledge regarding the physical effects of destructive drinking habits is detrimental to the American youth, as they grow up unaware of alcohol's.

According to the Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), created by the American Psychological Association, alcoholism is medically referred to as Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). AUD is the combination of alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse. Overall, this is defined as a "pattern of alcohol use that involves problems controlling your drinking, being preoccupied with alcohol, continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems, having to drink more to get the same effect, or having withdrawal symptoms" (Mayo Clinic). Binge-drinking is another harmful drinking habit, which is defined by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism as "a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration to levels to 0.08 g/dL" (NIAA). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines binge-drinking as "5 or more alcoholic drinks for males or 4 or more alcoholic drinks for females on the same occasion" (SAMHS). Additionally, without being entirely dependent on alcohol or binge-drinking, over time excessive alcohol consumption can have severe and negative impacts on the human body.

In 2015 it was reported by NIAAA 7.7 million young adult participated in drinking “beyond just a couple sips” in the past month. (NIAAA) And while kids drink less often than adults, they tend to drink in heavier quantities over a shorter period of time. In a document released by the CDC, 90% of the alcohol consumed by those under the age of 21 is consumed in the form of binge drinking. This can be due to a number of reasons, some as simple as wanting to forget stress, indulging on occasions where there is no parental supervision, or societal pressures. Regardless of the reason, the effects drinking has on the body are overwhelmingly negative. However, despite the very clear research and evidence pointing to long and short term effects of poor drinking habits, America’s youth continues to party on.

## Alcohol Among Races

The consumption of alcohol of minors still undergoing brain development and growing, ages twelve to twenty is evenly spread across races.

Percentage of kids and young adults ages 12-20 who reported drinking by race according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association (SAMHA):

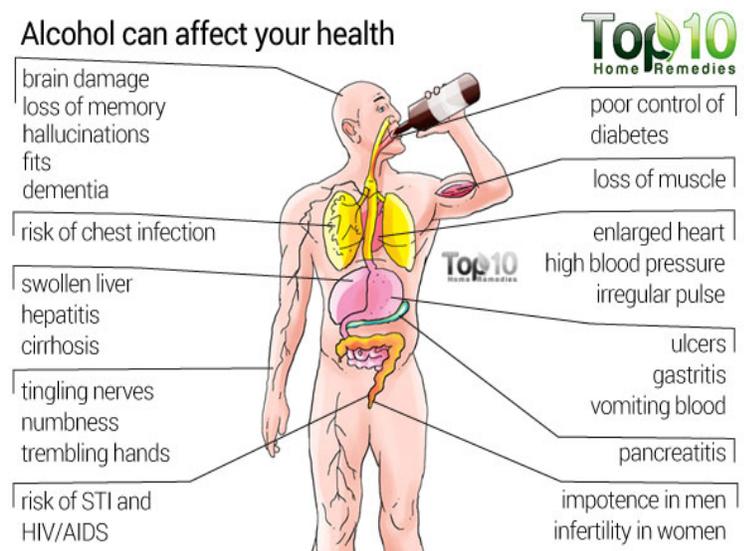
- 13.5% Asian Americans
- 17.3% African Americans
- 21.2% Hispanic
- 21.9% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 26% White
- 21.1% Those who reported identifying to more than one ethnic group

As you can see by those percentages, underage drinking is a problem faced by all sectors of the population.

## The Negative Physical Affects

### *Increased Rate of Cancer and Cardiovascular Disorders*

Excessive alcohol consumption and binge drinking have been proven to show increase the likelihood of developing a number of different cancers. These cancers include liver cancer, esophageal cancer, mouth cancer, throat cancer and breast cancer. (NIAA) Furthermore, alcohol abuse and consumption can lead to a number of different heart problems. These disorders include cardiomyopathy (stretching and drooping of the heart muscle), arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat), stroke, or high blood pressure. (NIAA) To put that into perspective,



tobacco which receives widespread media attention and is nationally recognized to do extreme harm to the body is known to cause the same cancers in the body. Furthermore, marijuana which is outlawed in many states, although not subject to as much research, has not been proven to dramatically increase the likelihood of those cancers. (NIAAA)

### *Liver Disease*

The liver is responsible for filtering alcohol, poisons and other kinds of toxins from the body and blood stream. This being said, when drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, the liver takes a heavy toll. When consuming alcohol, before being sent through the blood stream, it is absorbed through the small intestines and stomach. Therefore, the liver is the part of the body that receives the most concentrated form of the alcohol. Once in the liver, enzymes in the liver cells metabolize the alcohol. However, your liver can only filter around one drink per hour. ("Alcohol Metabolism Rate and Your DUI.") If an individual drink at a faster rate than the liver can process, the alcohol continues to affect the brain and other body tissues.

As a result of the liver taking such a heavy toll in processing alcohol, over consumption and destructive drinking habits can do extreme harm to the liver. One can develop fatty liver disease, alcoholic liver cirrhosis, or alcoholic hepatitis. Fatty liver disease is caused by fat cells that accumulate in the liver. Not as serious as the others, if a person stops consuming alcohol, it will often reverse the damage. However, it can lead to the development alcoholic cirrhosis and alcoholic hepatitis if ignored. Alcoholic hepatitis is the inflammation of the liver. Mild forms do not to have many visible side effects. Chronic alcoholic hepatitis can cause damage to liver and lead to cirrhosis. Very severe forms can quickly lead to cirrhosis and other physical side effects such as yellow coloring to the skin. Liver cirrhosis is a condition the healthy liver tissues in the organ is converted to scar tissue. As the scar tissue continues to develop, the liver will lose its ability to function properly and affect blood flow in the liver. About 1 in 10 heavy drinkers and alcohol abuses will develop cirrhosis of the liver. This condition can eventually lead to liver failure and death. (Roger)

### *Increased Likelihood of Addiction and Dependency*

Starting to drink at a young age can greatly increase the likelihood of developing alcoholism later on in life. In a report by the CDC, binge drinking, excessive drinking, and alcohol dependence were most common among those aged 18-24. Those who begin to drink before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some point in their lifetime. (CDC)



## *Lack of Inhibition and Poor Decision Making*

By nature of being drunk, there is an increased likelihood of physical and sexual assault of those who are intoxicated. Alcohol inhibits the brain from thinking and acting like it would under normal, healthy circumstance. Therefore, things one normally would not do are likely to occur under the influence. From 2006-2010, it was reported 4,358 young people in America died due to alcohol. (CDC)

1,580 due to Motor Vehicle Crashes

1,269 due to Homicide

245 due to alcohol poisoning, falls, burns and drowning

492 due to suicide under the influence

Furthermore, there are around 189,000 emergency room visits each year due to excessive alcohol drinking by those under the age of 21. (SAMHA)

## *Hindrance to Brain Development*

In young people the brain continues to development well into their twenties. Alcohol consumption before the point of brain maturity can affect brain structure and function in youths and later in life as adults. (Squeglia, Jacobus, Tapert) This rapid development as youths between childhood and adulthood is a complex combination of social, biological and psychological changes. Over this time, the brain changes in efficiency and in specialization. In a study comparing the heavy drinkers, light drinkers, marijuana user and control groups, it was evident heavy drinking had the greatest effects on the brain and brain development. In heavy drinkers, there was a smaller hippocampal volume than light drinkers and marijuana users. The hippocampus controls memory. Additionally, in the frontal lobe, the part of the brain where planning, inhibition, and emotion regulation exist, heavy drinkers were shown to have smaller volumes. Also, there was decreased blood flow in heavy drinkers, as well as, decreased ability in verbal encoding abilities. (Squeglia, Jacobus, Tapert) These findings are significant because not only to they show the negative effects of alcohol on brain development, they show an illicit substance has less effect on the brain. This fact alone should make people think twice about drinking. The extent to which alcohol affects the brain is dependent on a number of factors. Some of these factors include age, how much and how often someone drinks, the age they started drinking, family history, and general health status. (NIH)

## **HOW ALCOHOL ATTACKS THE BRAIN**

A guide to the sequential damage alcohol inflicts on neural tissue

**1.** First, alcohol affects the forebrain and **assaults motor coordination and decision making.**

**2.** Then, alcohol knocks out the midbrain, and you **lose control over emotions and increase chances of a blackout.**



**3.** Finally, alcohol batters the brainstem as it **affects heart rate, body temperature, appetite and consciousness**, a dangerous and potentially fatal condition.

## Reasons Why People Continue to Drink

### *Alcohol is Not Associated with these Side Effects*

One possible explanation for the lack of control of excessive drinking and the draw to it by America's youth is they do not associate these negative physical side effects with alcohol consumption. While many young adults and kids know the generic "you make poor decisions under the influence", it is unlikely many grasp the full extent of the physical consequence of excessive alcohol consumption and binge-drinking. Few know they how much more susceptible they are to life-long consequences such as alcohol addiction and dependency, numerous different cancers, hindered brain development, and possibly even death. The physical effects of alcohol are comparable to both tobacco and marijuana. While both receive widespread media attention, alcohol simply part of American culture.

### *Easy Availability*

Alcohol is a much more accessible substance. It is easy for a child to still liquor from their parents liquor cabinet, convince an order sibling, friend, or relative to purchase them alcohol, or to use a fake ID in order to purchase it themselves. Furthermore, possession of alcohol of a minor is rarely a pursued offense of local police departments. This is especially true in college towns and university neighborhoods where it is too far a daunting task.



### *Outside Stressor and Social Implications*

Negative life events and the frequency in which kids argue with their parents increase the likelihood a child will partake in underage drinking. In high school, there is an increased amount of conflict between parents and young adults. Additionally, there is the desire to be "cool" and fit in. Social peer pressure is a big factor in pushing kids toward alcohol (Aseltine and Gore).

## Possible Solutions

When it comes to underage drinking, and the physical approach, the best way to make the side effects more known and to curb the phenomenon is education. In this the simplest solutions are sometimes the best.

### *Knowledgeable Parents*

One possible solution is offering classes and presentations to parents in order for them to educate their children on the physical consequence of alcohol. It has been shown parents who have good open relationships with their children, have children less likely to participate in underage drinking.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It is a simple, easy way for children to learn about the side effects of alcohol from a loved and trusted source.</li> <li>■ One of the pushes toward underage drinking is frequent fights with parents, so by encouraging open and honest relationships, that stress is lessened.</li> <li>■ Many parents want to know all the ways they can protect their children and many would be willing to educate themselves, or attend seminars or assemblies, to better inform their children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Many parents work full time and would not have the time or energy to further their education on the physical side effects of alcohol consumption.</li> <li>■ While some kids listen to their parents, some seek to rebel by doing the exact opposite of what their loved ones suggest.</li> <li>■ Parents may feel that how they teach their children about alcohol should be their own personal decisions. They may disregard these presentations and teach their children on their own time as they see fit.</li> </ul>

### *Increase Alcohol Discussions in Health Classes and Increase School Presentations*

Making kids more aware through school assemblies and health classes

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Students will gain a better understanding of the risks that come with underage drinking and may be less likely to participate in this activity.</li> <li>■ The physical consequences of alcoholism and binge-drinking will become better associated with alcohol.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Some students may lack interest in this course and as a result will be distracted and not absorb the material.</li> <li>■ Going more in depth about alcohol's potential consequences may take away from other important health subjects such as drugs, sex education, or healthy relationships.</li> </ul>

### *Increased Mental Health Help and Alcoholism Assistance*

For those who recognize the problem within themselves, to offer them assistance in battling alcohol dependency so they do not face severe physical outcomes and can work to offset the damage they have done to their bodies.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Americans suffering from alcohol dependency will have more resources to help them overcome this addiction.</li> <li>■ Asking for help with an alcohol addiction may become more normalized, encouraging more Americans to seek the professional help they need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Institutions such as the government or universities would have to dedicated large funds to make these resources possible.</li> <li>■ Americans suffering from alcohol addictions may not recognize that their habits are unhealthy and will therefore not take advantage of these increased resources.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

In this approach we explored the physical effects of alcohol. This effects include many people's worst nightmares addiction, cancer, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, hindered brain development and in severe cases death. However, America's youth continues to partake in destructive drinking habits that can do nothing but hurt them in the long run. We suggest several possible solutions to the problem. Most are simple suggestions that require minimal effort but, can have a big impact on the lives of youths heading down a dangerous path. The suggestions only require teachers, parents, and administrators to fully recognize the underage drinking culture in America and work together to make young adults and teen fully aware of the physical ramifications of their actions. In doing so, while abstinence is the best approach to save the body from alcohol caused harm, the fear of the extreme damage due to abusive alcohol consumption may be enough to change the binge-drinking and excessive alcohol culture.

---

# APPROACH THREE: POLICY

## KATY LARKIN & JOHN MICHAEL GURKLIS

### Introduction

As we have seen through the previous approaches the drinking culture associated with American Universities presents many problems that have been difficult to tackle effectively. According to the National Institute of Health two out of three college students have reported binge drinking within the past month and around twenty percent of college students meet the criteria for having Alcohol Use Disorder (NIH). It is clear that Universities have a problem; however, thus far solutions to the problem have not been effective in creating a safe drinking culture. Our approach looks towards the policy as the major tool in curbing the destructive drinking culture found on campuses. Policies on drinking have often been quite contentious as some have argued that these laws could potentially encourage drinking and the current binge drinking culture, while other critics maintain that the laws are too lenient and have allowed drinking culture to become out of hand. Our approach will attempt to outline the many current policies that affect the many facets of drinking on campuses and then look towards potential adaptations which could have a desired effect on improving the drinking culture.

As stated, the term 'policy' is a contentious word, but additionally it is a very broad term which encompasses many different topics and genres of policy. For this reason, our approach will focus on three main categories of policy: legal policies, and university policies. These two categories cover the major policies that are in place to combat alcohol abuse. This approach guide will evaluate the current status of both types of policies. Then, after highlighting shortcomings in the current policies, potential approaches to bettering the drinking culture will be presented.

### Legal Policy

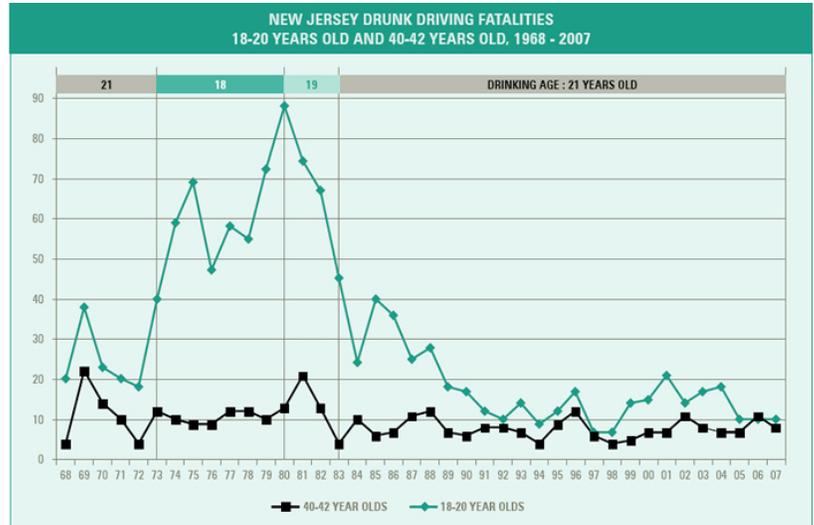
The legislation on alcohol covers a myriad of topics such as: how alcohol is distributed, who is allowed to drink, when individuals are allowed to drink, and where individuals drink. The ever pervasive nature of these legal policies ensures that they play a major influence on the drinking culture found in America. However, the current laws have many shortcomings that potentially have had negative impacts on the drinking habits of many Americans. For many, these laws are essential for combating the dangerous effects of alcohol and provide a baseline of legality which can stop individuals from doing dangerous activities such as drunk driving. On

the other hand, others critics say that these laws, in particular the drinking age, cause drinking to be viewed as a rebellious act which attracts young individuals towards drinking.

Those who stress the importance of laws regulating alcohol consumption highlight laws that are in place to ensure that people remain safe and do not endanger themselves. Driving under the influence (DUI) laws that state make it illegal to drive while affected by the alcohol or

other drugs, and the enforcement and harsh punishments associated with of these laws has led to a reduction in the amount of dangerous accidents due to drunk driving. Another example of similar drinking legislation affects bars, and has had similar positive effects in ensuring the safety of people who are drinking. The referred to laws are the bartender cut off policies which state that the bartender is responsible for cutting off an individual from drinking if they are inebriated; stopping that individual

from potentially harming themselves while under the influence. If bartenders do not follow these policies, they can be fined and lose their license for bartending (Stim). These policies are crucial and important because they focus on situations which involve dangerous consequences to individuals who are drinking and those around them which makes these policies crucial. For these reasons, there is very little debate surrounding the enforcement of these laws as they are seen as vital to protecting society. These laws have unilaterally positive effects on the drinking culture by making dangerous drinking potentially punished and make people avoid doing these illicit activities.



In 1973 the drinking age was lowered from 21 to 18.  
In 1980 the drinking age went from 18 to 19.  
In 1983 the drinking age went from 19 to 21.  
In 2004 the definition of Drunk Driving (DD) Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) level was lowered from 0.10 to 0.08.

On the other hand, there are alcohol regulating laws in place, which are not viewed as playing vital role in impacting the safety of society. The major law involved in this category is the America in minimum drinking age of twenty-one. Signed into law in 1984, the National Minimum Drinking Age Act states that if a state sets their drinking age below twenty-one, the state will have road and infrastructure funding revoked among other penalties (NIH). The effect of this law, outside of making the drinking age twenty-one in all of America, has been overall positive despite the law's negative image. Studies on the issue illustrate that since the introduction of the law there have been reductions in the prevalence of drinking in minors and drunk driving incidents (Wagenar). But, the same study did not find a major decline in drinking prevalence on college campus despite the introduction of the law. It is clear that the drinking age does have positive impact, and in fact a majority of people in America support maintaining the drinking age at its current level (Gallup). Yet there are also negative side effects of this law



State has made many strides in hopes of ridding themselves of this persona and greatly reduce underage drinking, as well as binge drinking. Even with these regulations in place, Penn State students, under twenty-one and above, find ways to obtain and abuse alcohol.

In the past few weeks there has been a major change in Penn State's policies. After the death of a sophomore, pledging Beta Theta Pi, the Greek system has been put under review. An official statement was sent out last week suspending all socials for the rest of the Spring 2017 semester, as well as revoking the university's and national chapter's recognition of Beta Theta Pi (Shimkonis, Lexi). Other regulations have also been put in place that will continue past this semester. Some of these regulations are the prohibition of hard alcohol at socials, all alcohol must be served by a certified Pennsylvania's Liquor Control Board member, and the IFC has ceased all new member programs. There have allegedly been many problems within greek life, in addition to the tragic death that occurred, which have brought on these regulations. However, these other events have not been made public. All of these regulations have been put in place in an effort to minimize underage drinking and the rampant abuse of alcohol that has taken place at Penn State.

## **Conclusion**

Across universities and colleges nationwide, one prominent issue is the drinking culture. While many universities have set up policies and programs in an attempt to curb this phenomenon, not one has yet to be proven effective in limiting alcohol consumption on college campuses. Penn State, for example, has placed a temporary ban on fraternity and sorority socials, as well as implementing "dry campus" regulations. Staples of said regulation include not allowing people in university housing to have alcohol on their person or in their rooms at any time. As citizens and students of a "college town" we know this to be true. However, it is rarely acknowledged that extreme social drinking is a nationwide phenomenon as well. As you well know, the nation as a whole has created and enforced policies to restrict drinking, such as placing BAC level restrictions when it comes to drinking and driving and limiting the drinking age to 21. Over time, laws and policies have adapted as a way to curb drinking culture as it has evolved, however, none have been able to fix the drinking problem.

---

## WORKS CITED

"About." Students for Sensible Drug Policy. SSDP, n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

"Alcohol Alert." *National Institutes of Health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Oct. 2004. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

*Alcohol Can Effect Your Health*. N.d. Top Ten Home Remedies. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Alexander, Wagenaar, and Toomey Traci. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 14 (2002): 206-25. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

"Alcohol and Tobacco." *National Institutes of Health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Jan. 2007. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

"Alcohol Metabolism Rate and Your DUI." *Findlaw*. Thomson Reuters, n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2017.

"Alcohol's Effects on the Body." *National Institutes of Health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

"All About Alcohol." *Office of Student Conduct*. Pennsylvania State University, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

*America's Prohibitive Alcohol Laws Make No Sense*. N.d. ATTN. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

"Americans Still Oppose Lowering the Drinking Age." *Political Polls*. Gallup Inc, 24 July 2014. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

Aseltine, Robert H., and Susan L. Gore. "The Variable Effects of Stress on Alcohol Use from Adolescence to Early Adulthood." *Substance Use & Misuse* 35.5 (2000): 643-68. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 20 Feb. 2017.

Binge Drinking Among Young. N.d. Blox Images. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

"Cirrhosis." *National Institutes of Health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Apr. 2014. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

"College Drinking Facts Sheet." *On Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*. National Institute of Health, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

*College Students and Alcohol Abuse*. N.d. Web. 15 Feb. 2017.

Esser, Marissa B., MPH, Sarra L. Hedden, PhD, Dafna Kanny, PhD, Robert D. Brewer, MD, MSPH, Joseph C. Gfroerer, BA, and Timothy S. Naimi, MD, MPH. "Prevalence of Alcohol Dependence Among US Adult Drinkers, 2009–2011." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 Nov. 2014. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

"Fact Sheets - Binge Drinking." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16 Oct. 2015. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Galbicsek, Carol. "Binge Drinking." *Alcohol Rehab Guide*. Recovery Worldwide, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Henderson, Roger, Dr, and Tim Kenny, Dr. "Alcohol Poisoning and Liver Disease. Effects of Alcohol Abuse." *Patient*. Patient Platform Limited, 08 Aug. 2015. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

Holloway / AlterNet, Kali. "Are Americans Drinking Themselves to Death?" *Alternet.org*. Alternet, 16 Oct. 2015. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Juan Henao | Collegian Staff Writer. "A History of Drinking at Penn State." *The Daily Collegian*. *Collegian.psu.edu*, 13 Nov. 2014. Web. 24 Feb. 2017.

Loewentheil, Hannah. "Can You Guess Where In The World People Are Binge Drinking The Most?" *Mic*. Mic Network Inc., 26 Oct. 2015. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Mcmurtrie, Beth. "Why Colleges Haven't Stopped Binge Drinking." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 14 Dec. 2014. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

National Institutes of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

NIH. "Alcohol Alert: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism." *National Institutes of Health*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Oct. 2002. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Squeglia, L. M., Joseph Jacobus, and S. F. Tapert. "The Influence of Substance Use on Adolescent Brain Development." *Clinical EEG and Neuroscience* 40.1 (2009): 31-38. *Sage Journals*. Web. 20 Feb. 2017.

Shimkonis, Lexi. "Penn State Revokes Beta Theta Pi's Recognition, Imposes Strict Greek Social Regulations." *Onward State*. 2016 Onward State, 17 Feb. 2017. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

Stim, Rich. "Can Your Bartender Be Arrested for Your DUI?" *Driving Laws*. Nolo, n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

*Students Binge Drink*. N.d. The Ulster Craic. Web. 17 Feb. 2017.

"The 1984 National Minimum Drinking Age Act." National Institutes of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

Torres, Stephanie. "How Drinking Culture Is Killing America." *Pathway to Hope*. Pathway to Hope- Addiction Treatment Center in Fort Lauderdale, FL, 07 Sept. 2016. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

"Underage Drinking." *National Institutes on Alcohol and Alcoholism*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Jan. 2016. Web. 20 Feb. 2017.

"Underage Drinking." *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration*. Department of Health and Human Services, 27 Oct. 2015. Web. 20 Feb. 2017.

Video on drinking in America vs. Italy Kelleher, Madi. "Drinking in America vs. Italy." *ATTN*:. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.