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Written and unwritten rules: the use of alcohol by fraternities: a study of one college

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Written and unwritten rules: the use of alcohol by fraternities:
a study of one college

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The written and unwritten rules surrounding the use of alcohol by fraternities was examined at one college. Qualitative research techniques were employed to interview 29 students who were classified as independents and members of fraternities. These students were interviewed in focus groups and segregated by affiliation.

Changes were made to the College's alcohol policy just prior to the interviews. Implicit themes that emerged include: a) social life centered around Greek Letter organization activities; b) Greek organizations tend to dominate the campus culture; c) members of Greek Letter organizations and independents perceive recent changes to the College's alcohol and party policies differently, and; d) social life was viewed as declining and drinking occurred secretly or off-campus. Explicit themes that emerged include: a) fraternities perceived that recent changes were imposed on them with little input; b) the College was more socially active under the old alcohol and party policies, and; c) enforcement of the alcohol policy was inconsistent.

This research was conducted at one small private, four-year institution where most students were from the same state and approximately 35% of the students were members of Greek Letter organizations. Given these limitations, readers should not generalize or assume transferability to other institutions or fraternities at other schools.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Chapter One examines problems associated with the use of alcohol on college campuses, specifically focusing on the use of alcohol by members of fraternities. A brief overview and background of the problems associated with alcohol use on college campuses is provided along with a problem statement outlining the purpose of this study. Next, the institution being studied, purpose, the research assumptions and research questions, theoretical orientation, significance of the study, limitations, and finally, a definition of terms are presented.

The theoretical framework used for interpreting the themes that emerge from the data, a review of the literature specific to alcohol use on college and university campuses, fraternity culture, and social normative alcohol intervention programs are outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology including the research approach, design, researcher role, pilot study, and an in-depth discussion of the research site. This chapter also outlines how the participants were selected, how data was collected, the framework used for data collection, methods for coding, how the data were presented, and why the data was trustworthy.

The results of the focus group interviews are presented in Chapter Four along with the results of the American College Health Association: National College Health Assessment (NCHA). The Health Assessment questionnaire was administered to all students in the spring of 2006. The results of this survey will inform the responses of students who participated in the focus group interviews. Analysis and conclusions

with implications are outlined through the lens of Albert Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory* (1986) in Chapter Five. Chapter Six offers recommendations for the institution and the field of student affairs.

Background

Alcohol abuse is a significant public health problem on college and university campuses. It continues to be one of the major and recurring issues facing student affairs' professionals across the country (Bausell, Bausell, & Siegel, 1990; Cooper, 2002; Dejong, Vince-Whitman, Colhurst, Cretella, Gilbreath, Rosati & Zweig, 1998; Perkins, 2002; Sax, 1997; Wechsler, Kuo, Lee, Dowdall, 2000; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Lee, 2000; Wechsler & Isaac, 1991; & Wechsler, 2000). Problems such as excessive binge-drinking, alcohol overdoses, secondary effects of binge-drinking (non-drinking students having to manage the problems associated with other students' drinking), and violence, including sexual misconduct and vandalism, have taken a significant toll on students and college administrators alike (Gallagher, Harmon, & Lingenfelter, 1994).

The problems associated with alcohol abuse are greater in Greek Letter organizations, particularly fraternities (Borsari & Cary, 1999; Bartholow & Krull, 2003; Caron, Moskey, & Hovey, 2004; Juhnke, Schroat, Cashwell, & Gmutza, 2003; Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000). According to the "Final Report of the Panel on Contexts and Consequences" issued by three government agencies: (1) the Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, (2) the National Institutes of Health, and (3), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (NIH, 2002), "The presence of a Greek system on campus increases the likelihood

of heavy alcohol use.” (p.23). This is reinforced by Wechsler (2000) in a major study that was a compilation of national studies conducted in 1993, 1997, and 1999 involving over 48,000 students. According to Wechsler, “While student binge drinkers tend to be male, white, and under 24 years of age, the strongest predictor of binge drinking is fraternity or sorority membership” (p.5). Kuh and Arnold (1993), citing several authors, state the “The heaviest, most frequent, and most problematic drinking in college is done by fraternity members...” (p.327). Alva (1988), using the CORE instrument to survey 1,901 undergraduates at four large campuses in California, found students who were members of Greek organizations significantly more likely than non-Greeks to consume alcohol averaging 3.91 drinks per week compared to 1.75 drinks by students not affiliated with Greek organizations. According to (Borsari & Carey, 1999), “Fraternities are a major factor in maintaining...excessive drinking practices on campus...and residence in a fraternity is a strong predictor of heavy drinking while in college” (p.30).

Problem Statement & Purpose

Fraternities were chosen as the focus of this research given their established relationship with heavy drinking (Borsari & Cary, 1999; Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000; Bartholow, Sher & Krull, 2003; Caron, Moskey, & Hovey, 2004; Juhnke, Schroat, Cashwell, & Gmutza, 2003). Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) cite that “Clear evidence exists to indicate that being a member of a fraternity or sorority during college has a strong influence on binge drinking by both men and women during college...” (p.568). According to Wechsler (2000), a binge-drinker was defined as a “male

students who had five or more and female students who had four or consumed four or more drinks in a row at least once in a two week period (the 5/4 measure)” (p.1).

The purpose of this study was to examine the unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members’ use of alcohol both on and off-campus. A second purpose of this study was to examine how members of fraternities describe how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy.

Research Focus and Questions

A phenomenological approach was used for this study. According to Creswell (2003),

“Phenomenological research, in which the researcher identifies the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon as described by participants in the study. Understanding the ‘lived experience’ marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning...” (p.15).

More research was needed to better understand the relationship between implicit and explicit rules within the fraternity system, and the interplay of institutional policies. The following questions serve as the framework for this study. How do members of fraternities view their alcohol use? How do members of the staff enforce alcohol policies? What is the relationship between the fraternities own written and unwritten rules and binge-drinking, if any?

The following research questions were developed after a review of the literature on the use of alcohol by members of fraternities and the fraternity culture. These questions, specific to this institution, were developed to better understand the relationship between fraternity culture and norms and institutional policy and practices. They were:

- a. What are the unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members' use of alcohol both on and off campus?
- b. How do members of fraternities describe how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy?

Research Assumptions

The following research assumptions about Institutional alcohol policy and fraternities provide the foundation and basis for this study. These include:

- a. Alcohol abuse is widespread within fraternity culture, and institutional strategies must be employed to address this problem (Kuh & Arnold, 1993).
- b. Cultural rules pertaining to alcohol followed by fraternities may be different than institutional alcohol policies and procedures, and these differences may be detrimental to students associated with fraternities (Kuh & Arnold, 1993).
- c. It is desirable to understand the acculturation process within fraternities to change problematic behavior related to alcohol (Kuh & Arnold, 1993).

- d. Students will cooperate during the focus group interviews.
- e. Students will have an understanding of the institutional and fraternity culture and be able to characterize their views about these cultures.

Significance of the Study

Alcohol use poses a serious risk to students associated with Greek organizations (Alva, 1988; Kuh & Arnold, 1993; Wechsler, 2000). The cost both socially and academically to those around students who abuse alcohol, such as families, students, roommates is very high (Bausell et al., 1990). For the student who is consuming alcohol, dangerous drinking can result in serious injury or even death.

Binge-drinking rates among college students has remained close to 44% since 1993, while the percentages of frequent binge-drinkers have increased by nearly three percent from 1993 to 1999 (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000). As a result, institutions are finding themselves at risk given that parents of students who are injured or killed directly or indirectly as a result of alcohol often turn to the court system for resolution (Elkins, Helms, & Pierson, 2003).

Institutions must look for alternative and creative methods to reduce dangerous drinking (Gulland, 1994), given that alcohol use is higher in Greek Letter organizations. Understanding the elements of fraternity culture by examining unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) rules as they pertain to alcohol, and how the rules interplay with the institution's alcohol policies for regulating alcohol use and enforcing alcohol violations may allow college administrators to better manage dangerous drinking on their campuses (Kuh & Arnold, 1993).

Limitations of this Study

This was a study of fraternities at a small private, four-year institution. Most students were from the same state and approximately 35% of the students are members of Greek Letter organizations. The College was located in a rural location within a small town near a major city. Students often traveled home or to visit friends at other campuses on the weekends rather than staying on campus.

The results of this study may not be directly applied or transferred to other institutions in higher education. Furthermore, students attending this institution were primarily from one state in the Midwest and students who do not attend this institution from other states may differ in their views related to alcohol. In addition, cultural values and beliefs within the student culture may differ greatly by institution. Inquirers should be cautious when applying this study to other institutions. No attempt will be made to claim transferability. However, the results may provide useful information for college administrators such as Vice Presidents for Student Affairs, Deans, and those individuals who work directly with members of fraternities since it does discuss fraternity members' views of alcohol relative to campus policy.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have the following to say about transferability:

The person who wishes to make a judgment of transferability needs information about both contexts to make that judgment well. Now an inquirer cannot know to which someone may wish to transfer working hypotheses; one cannot reasonably expect him or her to indicate the range of contexts to which there might be some transferability. But it is entirely reasonable to expect an inquirer to provide sufficient information about the context in which

an inquiry is carried out so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to that judgment. (pp. 124-125)

Twenty-nine students participated in this research project and were interviewed using qualitative research techniques. Four focus groups were conducted with members of fraternities, and three were conducted with students who were not members of Greek Letter organizations. The focus groups were useful for examining participant reactions and the interplay between group members during interviews.

The individuals selected for interviews were members of the campus community and familiar with institutional policies and procedures, and fraternity culture. Individuals less familiar with institutional policies and procedures may have responded differently to interview questions due to their lack of knowledge and were not included in this study. Judgments about whom to include were made by the Dean of Students.

The NCHA (2006) was used to triangulate the results of the qualitative interviews. This survey consisted of 58 questions regarding the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. It was administered to College staff members in the spring of 2006. Since responses to this quantitative survey are unique to this particular institution, results may not be transferred to other colleges of this type or other higher education institutions.

Theoretical Orientation

This study will be viewed through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986). Social Cognitive Theory will be used as a framework to better

understand the relationship between student attitudes, behavior, and their environment. This theory will be used during analysis for interpreting focus group interviews with members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. Gonzalez (1994) in an article titled “Theories, Dominate Models, and the Need for Applied Research” has argued the need for more theory-based alcohol prevention and education programs and has stated that “The lack of theoretical frameworks for college efforts has made it difficult to conduct program evaluation and has led to increasing demands from college administrators for information on ‘what works’ to prevent alcohol and other drug related problems” (p.1).

One theory outlined by Gonzalez is Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), an earlier version of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Gonzalez (1994) states that “According to social learning theory, alcohol and other drug use is socially learned, purposeful theory resulting from the interplay between socio-environmental factors and personal perceptions” (pp.5-6). Bandura’s social cognitive theory is applicable to this study because it brings to light the relationship between environment and behavior.

McCormack Brown (1999) outlined the purpose of SCT. The purpose is (a) “To understand and predict individual and group behavior” (p.3), (b) “to identify methods in which behavior can be modified and changed” (p.3), and (c) “...to be used in interventions aimed at personality development, behavior pathology, and health promotion” (p.3).

As mentioned previously, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) will be used to provide a framework for analyzing and interpreting focus group interviews with members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms and definitions that will be used in this study. Definitions include campus-based organizations, acronyms for student groups, and common terminology used by researchers when discussing issues involving alcohol abuse.

Common Definitions from the Field of Alcohol Prevention

- a. College Alcohol Policy - In this study, college alcohol policy was defined as the actual policies in place at this institution to regulate the use of alcohol and manage the problems associated with alcohol abuse. Policies range from where this institution allows alcohol to be served, and the processes in place for managing student violations of the alcohol policy. Institutional policy may be written or unwritten and may or may not be followed by the institution.
- b. Binge Drinking - According to (Wechsler, 1995) binge drinking "...is defined as five or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period for men, and four or more drinks in a row one or more times during the same period for a woman – a gender specific modification to a national standard measure" (p. 3).
- c. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) – Focuses

on alcohol-related issues and is affiliated with the National Institutes of Health. The purpose of this agency is to be the primary agency or clearing house on the study of alcohol abuse and alcoholism among Americans in the United States.

- d. **Second-Hand Effects** – defined as students having to manage the drinking of others. Problems experienced by these students might include being insulted or humiliated, being the victim of unwanted sexual overtures, managing someone out of control, having one’s property damaged by drinkers, being the victim of sexual assault, and/or having one’s academic work being interrupted (Wechsler, 2000).
- e. **Environmental Management** – “The environmental management approach is intellectually grounded in the field of public health, which emphasizes the broader social, cultural, and institutional forces that contribute to problems of human health...” (DeJong et al., 1998, p.5).
- f. **Fraternity practices** - The written (explicit) and unwritten (implicit) cultural rules that guide the use of alcohol by students in fraternities on this college campus. These rules may or may not be sanctioned by the institution. These explicit and implicit rules are often imbedded within the campus culture and may strongly influence the behavior of fraternity members, regardless of institutional policies and practices (Kuh & Arnold, 1993).

Campus Based Definitions (College Student Handbook, 2006-2007)

Pseudonyms will be used when necessary to identify specific governing groups, residence halls, policies, and party locations to protect the identity of the institution.

- g. No Class Day – Students have the choice of cancelling classes for one day (Vice President for Student Affairs, personal communication, July, 18, 2005).
- h. Activities Council (AC) – The group responsible for developing and implementing student activities and campus events (Student Handbook, p.43).
- i. Student Government (SG) – The governing body representing students on this campus. This group was self-governing (Student Handbook, p.43).
- j. Judicial Board (JB) – The group that adjudicates policy violations. Composed of students only and many independent students. Cases are referred by the Student Leadership Office. Student alcohol violations are heard by this group which was composed of students with a staff advisor (Student Handbook, p.88).
- k. Residence Director (RD) – Full-time professional staff member living in the residence halls. RDs enforce the code of conduct, ensure that the halls are safe, provide counseling and advising, and supervise Resident Hall Assistants (Student Handbook, p.49).
- l. Resident Assistants (RAs) – Peer managers for each floor in the residence halls. They are responsible for room check-in and check-out,

activities for the floor, the enforcement of college policy, on-call/duty responsibilities, peer advising, and reporting housing issues such as repairs, etc., (Student Handbook, p.49).

- m. Residence Directors (RDs) – Professional live-in residence life staff that supervise the RAs (Student Handbook, p.49).
- n. Campus – Unique to this institution. It was a term used by students to indicate they are allowed to drink and have parties on campus. (Campus Administrator, personal communication, July, 18, 2005).
- o. LP – The LP. This comprehensive program helps students recognize and utilize their unique talents and abilities through monthly leadership luncheon, ‘leadershops’ [sic] working with mentors, self-assessment exercises, and the development of a personal leadership transcript. (Student Handbook, p.44).
- p. Student Leadership – This term describes offices within the Student Leadership Office that include student development, student leadership and/or the student life area (Student Handbook, p.44).
- q. Residence Hall Suites – Refers to two campus residence halls. They include two halls, typically each with four rooms that share a living space and bathroom facilities (Vice President for Student Affairs, personal communication, July, 18, 2005). These were the only places parties were allowed to be held under the old alcohol policy.
- r. Greeks – Do not have independent houses and live throughout the housing system. This term includes fraternities and sororities.

- s. Fraternities – A Greek Letter society for men.
- t. Unwritten (implicit) Rules – Unstated rules followed by members of fraternities on this campus.
- u. Written (explicit) Rules – Written rules followed by members of fraternities on this campus.
- t. Sororities – A Greek Letter society for women.
- u. Hazing – Pertaining to all Greek students and includes “...any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally, whether on or off campus premises, endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student” (Student Handbook, p.29).
- v. Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) – Composed of the College’s five fraternities. This body acts as the governing board for fraternities and acts as a liaison between the fraternities and the campus community (Student Handbook).
- w. Inter-Sorority Council (ISC) - Composed of the College’s sororities. This body acts as the governing board for the sororities and a liaison between sororities and the campus community (Student Handbook).
- x. B/C Hall Councils – Serves to promote activities and positive interpersonal relationships among hall residents and positive interpersonal relationships among hall residents (Student Handbook).
- y. Party Policy – This policy allowed parties in the larger residence hall gathering areas prior to 2005. At the end of the academic year in 2005, the policy was changed by trustees. Beginning with the fall of 2005, parties could only be held in the College’s Gymnasium. Students must

bring their own alcohol that was checked in to student security and given back to students during the evening. Students may bring five beers in one night (Vice President for Student Affairs, personal communication, July, 18, 2005).

- z. Current Alcohol Policy - Consumption and possession of alcoholic beverages was permitted by persons of legal age in their private room with the door closed, or in the private room with the door closed with another student of legal age (in residence hall suites, "private room" includes the large suite area). In the traditional residence halls, alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the hallways, lounges, or any other public areas in or around residence halls, including the balcony area... (Student Handbook, 2006-2007) The following regulations are in place:

1. Students who live in suites are expected to abide by the Residential Living Standard which states high expectations for a healthy, safe and peaceful living environment. Excessive noise, unhealthy conditions, including overcrowding, and unsafe and disruptive behavior, will be dealt with according to college policies. Except when authorized by college officials, kegs, and other multi-liter containers are prohibited on college property. (Student Handbook, 2006-2007)
2. Transportation of the contents of kegs/multi-liter containers on college property from individual or city property was prohibited. Residence Life staff and other college officials have the authority to

request and supervise the immediate removal and disposal of alcoholic beverages, kegs, beer bongs, and taps when beverages are being consumed or possessed in violation of this rule. (Student Handbook 2006-07)

3. The college prohibits using college or student organization funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages for any student function. Campus organizations may not use alcoholic beverages at membership recruitment functions. References to and/or pictures of alcoholic beverages may not be used directly or indirectly in the advertisement of any college organization function. Hard liquor, including but not limited to mixes, brews, or alcohol punches, was not permitted on campus or at social gatherings...etc. (Student Handbook, 2006-2007)
4. Drinking or possessing alcoholic beverages on college property, except where permitted under these regulations, is subject to disciplinary action as follows: Minor in Possession - Offense #1 - \$75 - \$200 and/or additional disciplinary sanction. Offense #2 - \$125 - \$500 and additional disciplinary sanction, plus the completion of required counseling or a required visit to the...for an alcohol evaluation. Students will be expected to follow evaluation recommendations. The student will incur the expense of the evaluation. (Student Handbook 2006-2007)

5. More than two offenses - \$175 - \$500 and additional disciplinary sanction, plus the completion of required counseling or a required visit to the [alcohol treatment center] for an alcohol evaluation. Students will be expected to follow evaluation recommendations. The student will incur the expense of the evaluation. (Student Handbook 2006-2007)

6. Purchasing for a Minor: Serving and/or making alcohol available for students under legal age is a crime, and the college will not tolerate or condone such practices. The college's judicial system is designed to handle such infractions of the law and penalties are severe. Local and state regulations provide sanctions of 90 days in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine. Student Government has authorized a \$500 fine for such an offense on campus, which could, in addition, be turned over to the local legal system for review and trial. (Student Handbook, 2006-2007)

7. Alcohol Consumption in Public Places/"Open Container - \$50 - \$100 and/or additional disciplinary sanction. Possession of Hard Alcohol - \$75 - \$200 and/or additional disciplinary sanction. Possession of Glass Bottles - \$50 - \$500 and/or additional disciplinary sanction. Possession of Multi-liter Containers - A \$200 fine paid by the person who purchased the container or occupant(s) of the room, confiscation of keg and taps, and disciplinary

sanction. Please note that "multi-liter" includes anything over one liter. (Student Handbook, 2006-2007)

8. Minors committing any of the above offenses are subject to any and all fines. Legal and responsible use of alcohol on campus is the goal of these regulations. Irresponsible (though legal) use of alcohol which infringes on the rights of others (i.e., excessive noise, physical or emotional abuse or assault, or unsafe conduct) or results in the destruction of property, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Based on behavioral concern reports and/or incident reports, the administration reserves the right to require that a student submit himself/herself for an alcohol or drug evaluation at his or her own expense. Subsequently, the student will be expected to abide by the recommendations of the evaluation. (Student Handbook, 2006-2007)

- aa. Party Policy - The following guidelines and policies for parties with alcohol on the College campus provide a framework in which to define when parties can occur, where they can take place, who can attend parties and what is expected of both guests and sponsoring groups or individuals. These guidelines help [the] College meet several goals, including more effective enforcement of the student conduct code, the support of an atmosphere that actively discourages underage and binge drinking and a

new focus on our residence halls as living/learning communities. (Student Handbook, 2005-2006)

Parties can be scheduled on select Friday or Saturday evenings throughout the school year. Dates are available on a first come, first served basis and must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance through the Student Leadership Office. All parties will take place in the gymnasium. Parties will begin at 9 p.m. and will peacefully end and disband at 1 a.m. All campus quiet/courtesy hours begin at 1:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. (Student Handbook, 2005-2006)

All parties must be open to all College students. Personal guests of students must be registered at the door. Each...student is entitled to have one guest. Guests must be 18 years of age or older. Two out of three of the gathering organizers must be 21 years of age, be present the entire gathering, and not consume alcohol prior to or during the party. A complete list of their responsibilities is found on the registration forms available in the Student Leadership Office. Party organizers may either provide the alcohol for free to students of legal age or students of legal age can provide their own. If it is a BYOB party, only four drinks (a drink being a 12 ounce can of beer) per student may be taken into [the] Gym. Only alcohol permitted by the College Alcohol Policy is permitted at parties. If the organizers are providing the alcohol, a limited number of kegs may be approved by the director of Residence Life, with the idea that

the number of drinks per student would still be limited to four. Party organizers are responsible for their attendees at all times. If an attendee draws negative/ inappropriate attention to him/herself, the organizers will be held responsible for those actions and will be subject to judicial review and disciplinary actions. Parties which fail to observe the regulations above, and those on the party registration form, will be closed down and the individuals participating will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. (Student Handbook, 2005-2006)

Summary

This research study examines the relationship between institution alcohol policy, written and unwritten rules within the student culture that guide the use of alcohol among members of fraternities on a single campus, and the consumption rates of students in fraternities.

Research questions examine students cultural rules that are unique to fraternities that guide use of alcohol regardless of institutional policies and practices and whether or not fraternities comply with institutional alcohol policies and procedures or follow their own cultural rules. They also investigate the relationship between institutional alcohol policies for regulating the use of alcohol and enforcing alcohol violations. This was not a quantitative study and no statistical analysis will be conducted during the course of research. Existing survey research will be utilized to triangulate interpretive conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter One provided the reader with the problem statement and purpose of this study along with the research setting, questions, significance, limitations, and theoretical orientation. This chapter examines the literature regarding problematic alcohol use on college and university campuses among all students as well as the problems associated with alcohol use by members of fraternities. It also includes an examination of fraternity culture, social normative programs relevant to Greek Letter organizations, and a theoretical framework for examining the written and unwritten rules of fraternity behavior surrounding the use of alcohol and the interplay of institutional policies. Finally, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) will assist in explaining individual and group behavior of members of fraternities.

Alcohol and Higher Education

Alcohol abuse has been well documented to be a significant health issue on most college campuses (Bausell et al., 1990; Cooper, 2002; Dejong et al. 1998; Sax, 1997; Perkins, 2002; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Lee, 2000; Wechsler, 2000, Wechsler & Isaac, 1991). Carr and Ward (2006), citing a study conducted in 2005, reported the following "...between 1995-2002, college students ages 18-24 were victims of approximately 479,000 crimes of violence annually: rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault" (p.382).

In addition, "Alcohol and other drugs were implicated in approximately 55-74% of sexual assaults on campuses" (p.383). They further state that "41% of all

violent crime experienced by college students” (p.383), the perpetrator was perceived to had been using alcohol and drugs.

According to the National Institutes of Health [NIH], (2002), alcohol abuse is a deep-seated problem that is very much a part of the culture of colleges and universities across the country. In 1991, Wechsler defined problematic drinking among college students as “binge drinking” (p, 21) with no delineation between the number of drinks men and women consume in one setting. However, in 1995 Wechsler defined binge drinking differently for men and women. He defined binge drinking “...as five or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period for men, and four or more drinks in a row one or more times during the same period for a woman – a gender specific modification to a national standard measure” (p. 3).

Binge drinking is associated with missing classes, violence, student attrition, high risk sexual behavior, and physical injury (NIH, 2002; Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt, & Lee, 1998; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo, 1994). Other researchers also have identified the risks associated with underage excessive alcohol use. In a national study conducted by Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo (1994) involving a random sample of 17,096 students at 140 four-year colleges, bingers compared to non-bingers were more likely to experience such problems as falling “behind in their school work” (p.1675), doing “something you later regretted” (p.1675), having a disagreement with friends, engaging in vandalism, having difficulties with police, and getting injured.

LaBrie, Tawalbeh, & Earleywine (2006) examined the differences between male students who had alcohol violations adjudicated and those who had cases that were not adjudicated. It was expected that those students who had cases adjudicated engaged in heavier alcohol use and abuse. This was supported by the author's research. They found "...that higher family incomes, more positive SPP [social and physical pleasure] alcohol expectancies, less concern about one's health, and less tension were predictive of students who violated campus alcohol problems" (p.529) Those male students who were likely to be adjudicated "...were more likely to be Caucasian and from families with an income above \$75,000" (p.530). Adjudicated first-year students were more likely to be "frequent binge drinkers" (p.530).

Broughton & Molasso (2006) conducted a "quantitative content analysis" (p.611) of the *Journal of College Student Development* and *NASPA Journal* examining articles on alcohol from 1973-2003. The purpose of this study was to examine "...the role of these two journals in the dissemination of the profession's knowledge, specifically about college drinking" (p.611). This article was relevant because it examines the degree of emphasis placed on the study of alcohol over the past 30 years. The NASPA journal published more articles about alcohol than the *Journal of College Student Development* (JCSD). The *NASPA Journal* devoted 3.98% of its articles to alcohol while the JCSD published 3.69%. Practitioners in the field published the majority articles or 42.86%. However, 65.56% of the articles "did not advance a particular framework as the basis for the study" (614). This is significant given that alcohol consumption among college students has continued to

be a serious issue facing colleges and universities (Bausell et al., 1990; Carr and Ward, 2006; Cooper, 2002; Dejong et al. 1998; Perkins, 2002; Sax, 1997; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Lee, 2000; Wechsler, 2000; Wechsler & Isaac, 1991).

College administrators also believe that alcohol abuse is a significant problem on their campuses and the problem is increasing (Hanson & Engs, 1995). Hanson & Engs (1995) investigated "...the relationship between students' self-reported drinking patterns and problems and college administrators' perceptions of those patterns and problems" (p.107). Researchers found that administrator perceptions and student use patterns were similar and there was a positive correlation between administrator perceptions and student use for "students who drank at least once a year" (p.110) and "the percentage of students who were heavy drinkers" (p.110).

Gallagher, Harmon, & Lingenfelter (1994), in a survey of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs), found that 40% of those surveyed felt that alcohol use had increased within the previous five years, while 11% believed drug use increased during the same period. Eighty-six percent of those who were surveyed indicated that they were interested in addressing the problem (Gallagher et al., 1994). Perceptions among administrators were consistent regardless of type of institution.

The effects of binge drinking were also felt by individuals around the person engaging in the binge drinking (Wechsler et al., 1994; Wechsler, 1995). Wechsler (1994) termed these effects as the "secondary binge effects" (p.1676). In their 1993 study of 17,592 students at 140 colleges and universities, they found that nondrinkers who are within close proximity of those individuals who engage in binge drinking experienced negative effects.

Even at schools with low bingeing rates "...35% or less of students were binge drinkers" (p.1674), 21% of non-bingeing students had "been insulted or humiliated" (p.1676), 13% had been in conflict with the person engaging in the binge drinking, 7% were involved in some form of assault, 6% experienced damage to their property (Wechsler et al., 1994). Most surprising was the percentage of students who had to take care of a student or had their sleep or studying interrupted. Thirty-one percent of those surveyed found themselves in a position where they had to take care of a student while 42% were interrupted from their studying and 5% of those not engaging in binge drinking experienced unwelcome sexual advances.

In a study involving over 60,000 undergraduate students, Bausell, Bausell, & Siegel (1990) posed several questions that probed the relationship between alcohol, drug use, and crime on campus. Their study indicated that individuals who perpetrate crimes tend to use alcohol or drugs, "Student perpetrators of crime are considerably more frequent users of drugs and alcohol than are either their victims or students who have not been associated with any sort of crime" (p.59)

In addition, they found that "Students who commit multiple offenses tended to use drugs and alcohol even more frequently than students who had committed a single crime" (Bausell et al., 1990, p. 4). Based on their research, they created a profile of those individuals who are likely to be perpetrators and victims. Victims tended to have the following characteristics: "(a) be more frequent illicit drug users, (b) use more alcohol, (c) be slightly older, (d) be a fraternity/sorority member, (e) own a car, have a job, live off campus, and (f) be more likely to smoke" (p. 4). The characteristics of perpetrators include " (a) even more frequent drug, alcohol and

cigarette users, (b) athletes or fraternity/sorority members, and (d) have slightly lower grade point averages” (p.5).

Dejong, Vince-Whitman, Colhurst, Cretella, Gilbreath, Rosati, & Zweig (1998) have suggested the use of environmental management strategies for reducing alcohol and drug use on campus. They suggest:

- 1) college presidential leadership on AOD issues; 2) formations of AOD task force that include community representation; 3) reform of campus AOD policies and programs; 4) a broad re-examination of campus conditions, including academic standards and requirements, the campus infrastructure, and the academic calendar; 5) formations of campus and community coalitions that focus on environmental change strategies; and 6) the participation of individuals from the higher education community in state-level and other associations that focus on public policy” (p.2).

In a monograph supported by the Robert Wood Foundation involving 48,218 students from three surveys conducted in the years 1993, 1997, and 1999, principle investigator Henry Wechsler (2000) wrote that “...the strongest predictor of binge drinking is fraternity or sorority residence membership. Four of five students who live in fraternities and sororities are binge drinkers” (p.5).

The literature has stated that social normative programs have become viable approaches to reduce dangerous drinking (Clap and McDonnell, 2000). This strategy is designed to educate students about actual alcohol consumption rates by students on a campus, since student perceptions of alcohol consumption among their peers is often inflated (Perkins, 2002). Since students tend to drink at the rate they believe

their peers are drinking, providing actual student drinking rates is thought to decrease alcohol abuse. The strategy has recently been scrutinized and believed to be not as effective as originally thought (Wechsler, Nelson, Lee, Seibring, Lewis, & Keeling, 2003).

In the landmark book, *How College Affects Students: A third Decade of Research*, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) interestingly note that fraternity and sorority membership is highly related to increased alcohol use; however after college "...this influence may diminish rapidly once an individual is removed from that context and is confronted with more traditional adult roles..." (p.565).

More research is needed to examine strategies that have been reported to be successful. Every college and university has a culture that is unique to that particular institution (Kuh and Whitt, 1988). It can be argued that there is no single set of alcohol intervention strategies that can be universally applied across all colleges and universities to address this serious public health problem.

Therefore, it is imperative for each campus to examine its own culture to better understand institutional policies and the explicit and implicit cultural practices that affect the use of alcohol on campus. After such a study has been completed, intervention strategies must be specifically tailored and designed for the institution's culture.

Fraternities and Alcohol

Overview

The use and abuse of alcohol in Greek Letter organizations has been widely documented in the literature (Borsari & Cary, 1999; Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000;

Bartholow, Sher & Krull, 2003; Caron, Moskey, & Hovey, 2004; Juhnke, Schroat, Cashwell, & Gmutza, 2003). Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) suggest that membership in Greek Letter organizations in college is strongly related to “binge drinking” for both sexes. They state, “Clear evidence exists to indicate that being a member of a fraternity or sorority during college has a strong influence on binge drinking by both men and women during college, and this effect persists even in the presence of controls for important confounding influences, including binge-drinking behavior in high school” (p.568).

In a 1999 study examining the “Five Recurring Themes in the Literature, 1980-1998” (Borsari & Carey, 1999, p.30), the role of fraternities is a strong part of the alcohol culture and perpetuates the culture of excessive alcohol use and abuse. These themes are prioritized in the order that students are likely to encounter them on campus when coming to college. In an attempt to better understand how this phenomena occurs, they use Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory as a framework as described below:

To understand how these factors are related to the evolution of abusive drinking, we invoke the construct of reciprocal determinism, which is consistent with social learning theory....Reciprocal determinism maintains that ‘personal factors, environment, and behavior are interlocking determinants of each other...[and] the relative influences exerted by the independent factors are assumed to differ in different settings and for different behaviors’....Each of the five themes represents factors that may influence

the likelihood that an individual in the fraternity system will drink excessively.
(p.31)

The first pattern outlined by Borsari & Carey (1999) is the “Continuity of Pre-college Drinking Patterns” (p.31). The authors maintain that problematic behavior related to alcohol actually began in high school and continues when students attend college. Individuals who drank excessively in high school are likely to become binge drinkers when they attend college and are drawn to organizations that perpetuate this form of behavior, such as fraternities. This behavior is related to environment of these students since “...personal variables...interact with environmental options (p.31).

The second pattern outlined by Borsari & Carey is “The Self-Selection Process” (p.31). Here, they contend that similar value systems will gravitate towards each other, students who engage in heavy drinking will be drawn to organizations that have the same values. The third pattern is titled “The Role of Alcohol in College and Fraternity Socialization” (p.33).

This pattern contends that socialization is a strong motivating factor for encouraging problematic behavior as a result of using alcohol.

Drinking games are a unique example of the connection between alcohol use and fostering friendship. Although there are more than 100 drinking games, almost all of them are played in groups. As a result, these games promote socialization among both friends and strangers in a structured context and are especially popular with first-year students (p.33).

The fourth pattern outlined by the Borsari & Carey is “The Misperception of Drinking Norms” (p.34). This pattern has gained attention in the literature (Baer, 1994; Wechsler et al., 2003). Students tend to overestimate the consumptions’ patterns of their peers and drink at the level they perceive the peer norms to be, not what actual consumption rates are on a college campus which is why it is very important for college administrators to understand perceived norms vs. actual drinking patterns among the student body on their campuses (Perkins, 2002).

The final pattern outlined by the authors is “The Physical Environment of the Fraternity House” (p.35). The socialization of alcohol abuse is likely to be stronger within the fraternity house. Reasons for this include: (a) there is little supervision within the house, (b) more drinking occurs within the house than other places on-campus, (c) problematic behavior is more likely to be accepted as the norm in fraternity houses, and (d) severe problems associated with alcohol are often protected by fraternity members and there are few consequences since members take care of each other.

Another study of fraternities and sorority members, focused on 508 Greeks at a “large, northeastern land grant university in 1994 and 2000...” (Caron, Moskey & Hovey, 2004, p.51). Important differences in students’ perceptions were reported between these two time periods which may indicate that student abuse of alcohol was less frequent among students in the 2000 survey.

The percentage of students who indicated they consumed alcohol during their high school years was greater in 1994 than in 2000. Sixty-eight percent of students indicated they used alcohol in high school in 2000 compared to 77.9% in 1994.

Once at college, students were more likely to increase their drinking. Sixty-five percent of students surveyed indicated their drinking increased, which is similar to what students reported in 1994. Peer group pressure to drink was reported to be significantly higher in 1994 when compared to the 2000 survey. Greek students who were surveyed in 2000 also reported that they acted more responsible when drinking. When asked about pledging and being pressured to drink, 7.1% of students reported this problem in 1994 compared to 5.2% in 2000. Finally, when asked about whether or not they had drinking problems, 16.8% reported this to be true in 1999 compared to 8.7% in 2000.

Liability associated with alcohol has become a serious issue facing higher education, and social host liability is an issue of particular concern for anyone who serves students alcohol on a college campus (Walton, 1996). Social host liability is defined as a "...legal doctrine that may impose liability on private hosts for serving alcohol to party guests who are afterwards involved in an alcohol-related accident" (Walton, 1996, p.29). This has serious implications for members of fraternities given their high use of alcohol.

Fraternity Culture

The role of culture within fraternities deserves close attention, given the strong bonds associated with fraternity members. Kuh and Arnold (1993) examined the role of culture in a qualitative study of fraternities of two separate institutions. One was a large, public research university and the other was a small, private liberal arts college. At this institution, which approximately 25% of students were members of Greek Letter organizations. The authors define culture in the following manner:

Culture is a holistic, complex set of properties that influence the behavior of people. Many definitions of culture exist in higher educations (Kuh and Whitt, 1988; Kuh & Arnold, 1993). In this study, "...culture will be viewed as a system of reciprocal interactions among fraternity members, the physical manifestations of the setting(s) frequented by the group, and symbolic meanings unique to this group" (p.327).

Next, Kuh and Arnold define the process of "socialization" (p.327) which is a powerful tool for shaping the behavior of the new members. "Fraternities teach new members the culture of the organization through intentionally designed and carefully orchestrated rush and pledgeship experiences. Rush is the process whereby the fraternity first identifies individuals who appear to be worthy of consideration for membership" (p.327).

Three elements of culture were defined by Kuh and Arnold and are considered "Properties of Fraternity Culture that Promote Alcohol Use" (p.331). They include: "(a) artifacts, (b) strategic perspectives and values, and (c) assumptions and beliefs" (p.331). Artifacts are the aspect of culture that is visible to the eye. They include all aspects of fraternity life such as "interactions, patterns, language, conversational themes and images, daily and periodic rituals, behaviors rewarded and punished, ceremonies and symbols, formal and informal rules, and procedures and artifacts..." (p.331).

The next level of culture outlined by Kuh and Arnold are strategic perspectives and values. Although fraternity members emphasized education, service, and openness to diversity, they also emphasized negative behaviors that

often included the use of alcohol. These behaviors were characterized by the authors as “hedonistic, anti-intellectual behaviors and attitudes” (p.331).

Assumptions and beliefs were the third level of culture outlined by the authors. These are deeply seated elements of culture that are not readily apparent. The authors describe them in the following manner: “Assumptions are so basic, so taken-for-granted, and so strongly held by the group member that any other way of acting or behaving is practically inconceivable....Assumptions in this sense, have become, or are, organizational reality” (p.331).

Kuh and Arnold argue that the elements of culture within organizations are almost impossible to modify, given their deeply held values and beliefs. This is highly problematic given the high level of alcohol abuse that occurs in many fraternities and may be why intervention in these organizations is so difficult.

The next section focuses on literature pertaining to social normative intervention strategies and outlines the problems associated with this approach as it pertains to its use within fraternities.

Social Norms & Fraternities

Larimer, Irvine, Kilmer, & Mallatt (1997) studied “...376 members (157 men, 219 women) of Greek houses with reputations for high, average, and low drinking” (p.588). Greeks were studied using three criteria: (a) “perceived house reputation” (p.588), (b) “acceptability of high-risk drinking” (p.588), and (c) “perceived norms” (p.588). Three different survey instruments were used to examine each of these three areas.

The results of these surveys presented several interesting phenomenon. First, “house reputation” was described by fraternity members who drank heavily and “...viewed their house as significantly more popular, possessing better looking members, being more sexually active, and wealthier than men from average or low-drinking houses” (p.593).

Under the criteria of “acceptability of high-risk drinking” members in houses that were labeled “high-drinking houses” (p.593) were less likely to think of themselves as friendly (Larimer et al, 1997). In addition, fraternity members in average-drinking houses rated themselves as more academic than higher and lower-drinking houses. Fraternity members in high-drinking houses were much more likely to engage in dangerous or inappropriate behavior as outlined below.

...men in high-alcohol-use houses viewed becoming intoxicated, doing so on a weekday, missing classes due to drinking, and having sex when oneself or one’s partner is intoxicated as significantly more acceptable within their houses than did men in low-alcohol-use houses. (p.594)

Finally, under the criteria of “Perceived Normative Quantity of Drinking” (p.594), fraternity members of high-drinking houses reported they drank more heavily than other fraternity members in the Greek system including non-Greek students.

Larimer, Turner, Mallett, & Geisner (2004) examined Greek pledges’ perceptions of alcohol consumption in a study of 294 men and 303 women pledges at a large West Coast research institution. They describe two types of norms: “descriptive norms” (p.204), and “injunctive norms” (p.203). Descriptive norms, when

misperceived, are used to describe inaccurate perceptions of other students' drinking while "injunctive norms" describe "...the behaviors and attitudes that are judged to be acceptable, expected, or correct within a social system..." (p.204). Gender differences were noted with "descriptive norms" (p.204). They may influence problematic behavior among men more greatly than women's negative behavior associated with the abuse of alcohol. The results of this study indicate that both types of norms may be "important predictors of drinking behavior" (p.208). Injunctive norms were outlined as a more problematic for future alcohol abuse within that particular sample.

The effectiveness of the social norms approach with fraternities was questioned by Carter and Kahnweiler (2000) in a study of 676 members of fraternities (30% of male undergraduates) at a southern private university. The authors used a survey instrument that was developed from two questionnaires: "the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, and Northern Illinois University Health Enhancement Services, HES survey" (p.67). They examined:

"...flaws in the application of the social model that could account for failure to change behavior in Greek organizations: (a) There is no predominant, healthy drinking norm in this population; (b) Students are influenced more by people within their network(s); and (c) 'Binge drinking' is the norm in the Greek population and may serve to perpetuate the alcohol problem" (p.66).

Three flaws were outlined by Carter and Kahnweiler when applying the social normative approach to members of fraternities. First, the general student populations have lower binge drinking rates than members of fraternities. Since the binge rates

are higher for members of fraternities, “It appears there is not a predominant, healthy norm to advertise to this population suggesting that a major underpinning of the social norms approach is missing” (p.67). The second flaw outlined pertains to comparison populations. When the normative comparison is made with close peers (in this case fraternities), students are unlikely to pay attention to the student norms at the institutional level.

This notion is supported by Kuh & Arnold (1993) who state “Pledges have frequent contact with one another, particularly those who live in the chapter house: they develop strong loyalty to each other and the group, which makes them even more susceptible to group influence” (p.327).

Finally, the term “Binge Drinking” is cited as the third flaw in the use of the social norms approach to alcohol abuse reduction. Members of fraternities who drink heavily may not perceive “...five or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period for men” (Wechsler, 2000, p.3) as problematic. This is due to fraternities alcohol norms being much higher than the “binge drinking” as it is defined normally.

Carter and Kahnweiler caution the use of social normative intervention strategies with members of fraternities for the reasons cited above. Their results support the assumptions above “...norms and reported consumption is higher among Greek men than it is in the general college population” (p.69). The study also indicates that student alcohol consumption behavior is more closely associated with one’s peer group rather than outside the immediate peer group (Carter and

Kahnweiler, 2000). Greek students also tend to have a more accurate perception of their own abuse of alcohol.

Alva (1998) conducted a study on alcohol use by fraternity and sorority members and non-Greek students involving 1,901 undergraduate students from a large university system in California. Of the 1,901 students, 385 reported to be members of Greek Letter organizations. Using the CORE survey, three goals were outlined for this study. The first goal was to compare alcohol use by members of Greek Letter organizations with non-Greek students differentiated by gender. The second goal was to examine social norms of perceived use of alcohol by peers to actual use by students. Finally, the third goal was to examine the predictors of “...higher drinking patterns commonly reported by fraternity and sorority members” (p.4). Results indicated higher consumption rates among fraternities and sororities, with an average weekly consumption of 3.91 drinks compared to 1.75 drinks by non-Greek students (Alva). When differentiated by gender, members of fraternities reported using alcohol at a much higher rate than members of sororities. Fraternity members reported consuming 5.78 drinks per week compared to 2.25 drinks consumed by members of sororities. Seventy-six percent of Greeks were likely to drink at private parties compared to 10% of non-Greek students. In addition, “...significant correlations were found between self-reported alcohol use and perceived disapproval by friends among male Greek fraternity members ” (p.5).

The belief systems of members of Greek Letter organizations differed on several levels from students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations.

Members of both fraternities and sororities believed that alcohol is an important part

of social activities that: “(a) alcohol makes women sexier. (b) facilitates bonding, (c) gives people something to do, and (d) makes dealing with stress easier” (p.7).

Interestingly, member of sororities believed that: “...alcohol (a) make men sexier, and (b) enhances social activity” (p.7).

Social Cognitive Theory

The purpose of this research project was to examine the written and unwritten rules of fraternity behavior surrounding their use of alcohol and the interplay of institutional alcohol and disciplinary policies. These rules will be examined through the lens of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986) which will assist in explaining individual and group behavior.

Gonzalez (1994) states that “According to social learning theory, alcohol and other drug use is socially learned, purposeful theory resulting from the interplay between socio-environmental factors and personal perceptions” (pp.5-6). Bandura’s social cognitive theory was applicable to this study because it brings to light the relationship between environment and behavior.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) will be used to provide a framework for analyzing and interpreting focus group interviews with members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. Social Learning Theory was more behaviorally based than Social Cognitive Theory (McCormack-Brown, 1999). McCormack-Brown (1999) outlines the purpose of SCT. The purpose is (a) “To understand and predict individual and group behavior” (p.3), (b) “to identify methods in which behavior can be modified and changed” (p.3), and

(c) "...to be used in interventions aimed at personality development, behavior pathology, and health promotion" (p.3).

According to Bandura:

..human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other. The nature of persons is defined within this perspective in terms of several basic capabilities. (p.18)

Bandura summarizes these processes using the following terminology:

"Symbolizing Capability" (p.18), or the ability of humans to use symbols in their environment; "Forethought Capability" (p.19), or the ability to exercise forethought, such as realizing the consequences of one's actions in various situations; "Vicarious Capability" (p.19) which means that humans can learn from observation of others; "Self-Regulatory Capability" (p.20), or the ability of humans to regulate their behavior based on a set of their own standards and self-evaluation; and finally, "Self-Reflective Capability" (p.21), the ability that enables humans to reflect upon their behavior.

Summary

Alcohol abuse is a serious issue among college students, particularly students involved in Greek Letter organizations. The problems associated with alcohol abuse in higher education were discussed as well as the use of alcohol by fraternity members. Elements of culture were defined that are considered "Properties of Fraternity Culture that Promote Alcohol Use" (Kuh and Arnold, 1993, p.331) which

include: “(a) artifacts, (b) strategic perspectives and values, and (c) assumptions and beliefs” (p.331).

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) will be used to provide a framework for analyzing and interpreting focus group interviews with members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. The relationships between alcohol, fraternities and social norms were discussed in depth.

This literature review provides a foundation for examining the questions to be answered about the written and unwritten rules surrounding the use of alcohol within a single fraternity system. These questions include: (1) what are the implicit and explicit cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members' use of alcohol both on and off campus, and (2) how do members of fraternities describe how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three summarizes the research methods and techniques used to gather and interpret the qualitative interviews conducted on the campus. The selection of the research site is discussed along with how the institution is defined using the Carnegie Foundation classification system. Finally, the research design, approach, selection of participants, data collection techniques and analysis, researcher role, pilot study, questions posed to research participants, and trustworthiness are presented.

According to the College's Student Handbook (2004-05), the College listed five fraternities that are not affiliated with national Greek Letter organizations. There are no Greek houses set aside for members of Greek organizations. Rush, the process for being invited to join a fraternity or sorority, occurs during second semester near mid-semester exams. Members of Greek Letter organizations are required to maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a four-point scale . Greek Letter organizations are expected to conduct regular community service projects, and mission statements are directed to contribute to academic achievement.

College alcohol policy in this study is defined as the actual policies in place at this institution to regulate the use of alcohol and manage the problems associated with the abuse of alcohol. Policies may include where this institution allows alcohol to be served, the processes in place for managing student violations of the alcohol

policy, and the unwritten rules that guide the use of alcohol by members of fraternities and students not associated with Greek Letter organizations.

Research Site and Selection

Entry to the study site was negotiated with the College's President and Vice President for Student Affairs. The President had been recently hired and expressed interest in having the issue of alcohol use among students studied. The Vice President for Student Affairs was hired a short time prior to the new President and was supportive of this research as well.

Professor Larry Ebbers provided guidance for this study which was ultimately approved by my Program of Study Committee in the spring of 2006. Applications were submitted to both the Human Subjects Review Board at Iowa State University and the research site. Both sites approved the research proposal. All forms and correspondence may be found in Appendix A.

Using the revised, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classification system (2007), the institution's undergraduate program was defined as "Prof+A&S: Professions plus arts & sciences" (p.783). The graduate program of the College was classified as "Postbac-Prof.Ed: Post-baccalaureate professional (education dominant). The enrollment profile was classified as HU or high undergraduate. This institution has two satellite campuses in nearby cities.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen over traditional quantitative designs because quantitative techniques would have made it difficult to address the research questions. Quantitative methods are more objective and detached from the process

of interpersonal communication. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) describe the quantitative approach as "...the positivist or scientific paradigm, which leads us to regard the world as observable, measurable facts" (P.6). Gall, Borg, & Gall (1986) had the following to say about qualitative vs. quantitative research: "Some researchers believe that qualitative research is best to discover themes and relationships at the case level, while quantitative research is best used to validate those themes and relationships in samples and populations" (p.29). This is supported by Glesne & Peshkin (1992), who suggest that "...qualitative researchers deal with multiple, socially constructed realities, or 'qualities' that are complex and indivisible into discreet variables; they regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (p.6).

Research Approach

This was a phenomenological study. Creswell (1998) characterizes the phenomenological study as: "...the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (p.51). The interpretive paradigm used for this research project is "constructivist-interpretive" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Denzin & Lincoln,

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures...Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory. (p.27)

Lincoln & Guba (1985) view constructed realities in the following manner:

...constructed realities ought to match the tangible entities as closely as possible, not, however, in order to create a derivative or reconstructed single reality (or fulfill the criterion of objectivity), but rather to represent the multiple constructions of individuals (or fulfill the criterion of fairness. (p.84)

Since this study was conducted under the constructivist paradigm, grounded theory will be used as the interpretative approach to analysis. Grounded theory strategies include thoroughly examining multiple levels (verbal and non-verbal) of communication between students, as well as individual and group behavior within the focus groups (Charmaz, 2000). Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that “Grounded theory, that is, theory that follows from the data rather than preceding them (as in conventional inquiry) is a necessary consequence of the naturalistic paradigm that posits multiple realities and makes transferability dependent on local contextual factors” (pp. 204-205).

Charmaz further suggest that “Qualitative researchers should gather extensive amounts of rich data with thick description” (p. 514). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), “The description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings...” (p.125).

To increase the trustworthiness of the study, the method of triangulation was used. Triangulation is a process of the “...use of multiple-data-collection methods” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.24). In this study, triangulation was employed by using existing survey campus research about the fraternities and the fraternity system in

addition to conducting the focus groups, and member checking by allowing the research participants to review drafts of the research.

Selection of Participants

Qualitative research was conducted on the College's main campus with traditional aged undergraduate students (ages 18-23 years old) with both members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. As stated previously, purposeful (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) sampling was used to select participants for this study. The authors state:

All sampling is done with some purpose in mind. Within the conventional paradigm that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense representative of a population to which it is desired to generalize. Even a simple random sample is representative in the sense that every element in the population has an equal chance of becoming chosen". (pp.199-200)

Purposeful sampling was selected to increase the probability that members of each of the College's five fraternities were included. In addition, each group included fraternity members from different class years. Creswell (1998) defined this form of sampling as a strategy that "illustrates subgroups and facilitates comparisons" (p.119). Maxwell (2005) outlines four goals for "purposeful selection" (p.89) that are similar to Creswell's definition. These include: (a) to construct a sample that will accurately represent the individuals being studied, (b) to capture the "entire range of variation" (p.89), (c) to select members who will test the theories being applied to the study, and (d) to create an avenue to provide contrasts between the groups being studied. In this study, using the criteria listed above, focus group participants were

selected to accurately represent the attitudes, beliefs, values, and rules of this one fraternity system and to compare them to the non-Greek students.

Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996) state that “A stratified purposeful sample includes several cases at defined points of variation (e.g., average, above average, and below average) with respect to the phenomenon being studied” (p. 233). The method used for coding the transcripts was “line by line” (Charmaz, 2000, p.515) to look for emerging trends.

All the fraternity members at this institution were invited to participate in this study along with a select group of students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. The Dean of Students initiated contact with all members of fraternities and a select number of non-Greeks.

A letter was sent to fraternity members asking for their participation by the Dean of Students. The letter (see Appendix A.) outlined the purpose and scope of the study and presented a statement on confidentiality and methods. A follow-up letter was sent a short time later. Each focus group contained members of more than one fraternity.

The same letter was sent to non-Greek students asking for their participation (see Appendix A.). Again, the letter outlined the purpose and scope of the study as well as a statement on confidentiality and methods. A follow-up letter was sent to non-respondents asking them to respond a second time. Non-Greek members who agreed to participate were assigned into groups to represent the student population of non-Greeks. Factors considered in the selection process included class, gender, and ethnic group.

Each participant was asked to sign a consent agreement (Appendix C.) after it was reviewed with members of the focus groups. A statement of confidentiality was included in the consent agreement.

Data Collection

Focus groups were selected as the primary research method for informing the research questions. The College Health Assessment was used along with other publications about fraternities to triangulate the information collected from the focus groups.

Focus groups are a type of group interviewing that is structured by the researcher (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The use of focus group interviews is helpful for learning about shared experiences of members and the interactions between individual members as they answer questions. This method was used because “The group interview has the advantages of being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and above individual responses.” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000. p.55). This is important since fraternity culture creates strong bonds between members (Kuh & Arnold, 1993) through these shared experiences. According to Kuh & Arnold, “Fraternities teach new members the culture of the organization through intentionally designed and carefully orchestrated rush and pledgship experiences” (p.327).

Focus groups were conducted with 29 students. Four groups or 18 students were composed of members of fraternities. Eleven students who were not members of Greek Letter organizations were interviewed in three focus groups. The groups ranged in size from two to eight students. Each group interview was scheduled for a

period of approximately 60 minutes; however, interviews lasted on average approximately 45 minutes.

Saturation was achieved relatively quickly. According to Creswell (1998), saturation is “based on several visits to the field to collect interview data to saturate (or find information that continues to add until no more can be found)” (p.56). All focus group interviews, but two (technical difficulties prevented audio taping) were transcribed from audiotape and analyzed immediately after each visit to the College, allowing for follow-up interviews to be structured with the previous interviews guiding the development of questions for the next set of interviews. Notes were taken on the two focus groups not recorded. Interviews were conducted on three separate occasions.

This approach is outlined by Charmaz (2000): “Analysis begins early. We grounded theorists code our emerging data as we collect it. Through coding, we start to define and categorize our data....Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection” (p.515). Participants signed a “release form” allowing the interview to be tape-recorded and to ensure confidentiality.

Researcher Role

It was important to define the role of the researcher in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). According to (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) “In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument: Her presence in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study is fundamental of paradigm” (p.79). Creswell (2003) suggests that researchers “...explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interests

about their research topic and process” (p.184). Marshall & Rossman (1999) have offered a number of ways to contemplate the role of the researcher. These are: (a) the level that the researcher will be a participant in the research; (b) the extent of the “revealedness or the extent to which the fact that there is a study going is known to the participants” (p.80); (c) the time spent conducting research at the site and amount of time with the participants of the study; and (d) the role may “vary depending on the focus of the study” (p.80). The next section describes the authors “biases, values, and personal interests” (Creswell, 2003, p.184) about the topic being studied.

As I was about to complete my Master’s degree, I learned that Grinnell College was hiring resident advisors (the equivalent of residence hall directors) to work in a non-disciplinary role with students as well as to provide counseling. After I was hired, I worked with many students who were experiencing drug and alcohol abuse issues. At that time, drug problems were more prevalent among students than problems associated with alcohol. In the late 1980s, after the change of the drinking age to 21 years old, students began to experience more alcohol than drug problems.

My interest in studying alcohol issues and college students was partially due to my position as a chief student affairs officer who works with alcohol abuse issues on a daily basis. A second reason for studying this topic was due to my family background. Both my father and brother were alcoholics, so I witnessed the abuse of alcohol from an early age. I decided to pursue a career in a helping profession so I could help others who experienced similar issues.

I enrolled in graduate school and completed a Master's degree in Agency Counseling and was planning to work in a mental health center, but there were no jobs in Michigan at the time due to a depressed economy. I completed two internships during my degree program, one in the counseling center at Northern Michigan University and the other at the Alger Marquette Community Mental Health Center. During my internship at Northern Michigan University I was permitted to conduct group, individual, and marital therapy with licensed psychologists where I encountered a wide range of clients with a variety of psychological problems, including alcohol abuse. The Community Mental Health Center experience focused primarily on working with the chronically mentally ill.

My interest in campus culture and its relationship to alcohol use and abuse began during a class in which I was enrolled at Iowa State in the 1990s. The material outlined in the class was very helpful for providing a framework for understanding the elements of culture within a college and university and aspects of how culture shaped student behavior.

My role in this study was as a researcher attempting to complete my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University. My professional background has spanned 25 years at one highly selective liberal arts college with no Greek Letter organizations. I have served in many roles at this institution, including: Residence Hall Director, Associate Dean for Residence Life, Dean of Students, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, and Vice President for Student Services.

In my current role as Vice President for Student Services, I supervise Security, Residence Life and Housing, Academic Advising, International Student

Services, Student Activities, Psychological Services, the College Chaplains, Career Development, the Community Service Center, and Office of Social Commitment. In addition, I am indirectly responsible for the administering of the College's alcohol policy and conduct policies. I have been responsible for determining the final outcome in judicial cases since 1988. Most judicial cases involve the use of alcohol in varying degrees.

My attitude toward the use of alcohol on college campuses was influenced by direct experiences in the early 1980s, when the drinking age was 18 years old in Michigan, and the late 1980s when the drinking age was changed to 21 years old.

My philosophy may be characterized in the following manner: I do not believe that colleges and universities should ban alcohol from their campuses, and alcohol education programming should focus on responsible drinking rather than abstinence. This philosophy was due primarily to my experience with alcohol enforcement. I believe that a high percentage of students will choose to drink regardless of the type of alcohol policies on a given campus and more restrictive policies will force students underground and may dissuade them from requesting help when they observe a student in serious trouble due to too much drinking. I believe this scenario was much more likely to result in an alcohol death since students will be more reluctant to contact a staff member if they fear they will be punished. I specifically chose to study alcohol use in fraternities because I have no experience with Greek Letter organizations other than what I have read in the research.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted at another small liberal arts college to examine and test the interview questions and research orientation. Conducting a pilot study prior to conducting group interviews was important. Gall, Borg & Gall (1996) believe that various methods should be tried to determine the best method for establishing trust and engaging participants in the interview process. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) suggest that the pilot study should serve two purposes “Urge your pilot respondents to be in a critical frame of mind so they do not just answer your questions (the intent is not to collect data) but, more important, that they reflect critically on the usability of your questions” (p.68).

The pilot study was conducted at a four-year, private liberal arts college. The revised Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005) methodology classifies the undergraduate instruction program as a “Balanced arts & sciences/professions, no graduate coexistence” (p.748). The enrollment profile was “Exclusively undergraduate, four-year” (p.748) and the undergraduate profile was characterized as “Full-time, four-year, selective, lower transfer in” (p.748). The size and setting was labeled by the Carnegie Foundation as “Small four-year, highly residential” (p.748). The institution has four national fraternities. The College has an enrollment of 1575 students.

Entry for the pilot study was negotiated with the Dean of Students and was conducted with members of fraternities. The pilot study took place in April of 2006 and four students participated in a group interview. Respondents were asked to think critically about the interview questions. First, they were asked if they thought the

questions would provide useful information for collecting information about the written and unwritten rules regarding the use of alcohol. Second, they were asked whether or not students would answer the questions truthfully, and third, they were asked whether or not they thought the questions should be modified in any manner.

The students were quite forthcoming about their views and discussed each question separately. They stated that they had no concerns about answering the questions truthfully and accurately and did not feel threatened by any of the questions. They emphasized that the questions were worded appropriately and would likely solicit accurate information about alcohol use among students who were members of fraternities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of refining and synthesizing interview transcripts and document analysis. Bogdan & Biklen (1992) state that:

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others. (p.153)

Wolcott (1990) suggests using broad categories possible to sort the data, and defined categories for defining themes in the data. Then he suggests “...winnowing....The trick is to discover essences and then to reveal those essences

with sufficient context, yet not become mired trying to include everything that might possibly be described” (p.35). He strongly suggests not trying to include every piece of the interviews, but to engage in a refining process.

Audio Tapes and digital recordings were transcribed verbatim. Several different categories were then used to define significant events and themes that emerged from the coding. Following the process of “grounded theory” (Charmaz, 2002, p.515), data were coded and analyzed after each visit to the college. Results were then used to assist in preparing for the next set of interviews. Line- by-line coding was the process used for coding the transcripts (Charmaz, 2002). This was a process where the researcher examines each line of transcribed interviews and “then defining actions or events with it...”(Charmaz, p.515). Next, Charmaz suggests “action codes” (Charmaz, p.515) to make comparisons, a major technique in grounded theory.

The constant comparative method of grounded theory means (a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences), (b) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points of time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and (e) comparing a category with other categories... (p. 515).

This process of constant comparison was used to compare fraternity member characterizations of alcohol use to the characterizations of non-Greek students, and to compare experiences described by members of fraternities to members of other fraternities who attended the same events, and how members from the same fraternities described experiences from the same events they attended. In addition,

comparisons were made between students who attended the same events who were from different class standings.

General themes were outlined using very broad categories which were then carefully refined into more discrete categories. All written documents from the College's web site, College Student Handbook, College Catalog, Student Affairs Offices, and from the fraternities themselves were reviewed and used to inform themes and meanings that emerged from the coded data.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory was used as an interpretative lens to assist in explaining the behavior described by students and how the environment may play a role in reinforcing attitudes and behavior related to alcohol use and abuse. Literature on the use and abuse of alcohol in higher education was used to make comparisons between the behavior described by students with what was known to be occurring at the national level.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is very important component of qualitative research. According to Glesne & Peshkin (1992), the amount of time spent conducting interviews at the research site and thoroughly reviewing and analyzing documents contributes to trustworthiness. Lincoln & Guba (1985) outline five strategies that enable the qualitative researcher to achieve a high degree of trustworthiness. The first strategy is "prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302). Prolonged engagement is an activity where the researcher spends enough time at the research site so there is little possibility of researcher and respondent distortion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, prolonged engagement was achieved by visiting the campus three times. One visit was made to discuss my research with the Vice president for Student Affairs and the President of the College. Two separate visits were made to campus to conduct interviews with students over a period of three days. Four focus group interviews were conducted in the spring of 2006 and three in the fall of 2006. Group One contained six independent students, Group Two contained four fraternity members, and group Three contained four fraternity members. Group Four contained two students and Group Five contained eight Greek students.

To ensure prolonged engagement and saturation, a second round of focus groups was scheduled for September of 2006. During that visit, three focus groups were conducted. Group One contained two independent students, Group Two contained three independent students, and Group Three contained eight Greek students. During these interviews prolonged engagement and saturation was achieved. Members of the focus groups made comments that were consistent with what members of other groups said. The data began to repeat itself not only with members of fraternities, but with students who were independents as well.

Next, "Persistent Observation is to identify those characteristics and elements of the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). This was achieved in the focus group interviews by asking questions that specifically focused on alcohol use and fraternity culture with members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. A great deal of time encouraging students to elaborate on their experiences.

Triangulation was employed by using multiple methods to confirm themes that emerge from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulated findings are also a contributing factor to increase the quality of the study. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) suggested the “triangulation of observation, interview, and questionnaire data” (p.147) as a method to contribute to trustworthiness.

The questionnaire used in this study to triangulate information gathered in the interviews was the NCHA that was administered to all students on this campus in the spring of 2006.

The second strategy outlined by Lincoln and Guba to increase trustworthiness is “peer debriefing” (p. 308). This strategy employs the use of another individual to a “disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p.308). To assist with peer debriefing, a member of the staff at Grinnell College was willing to be a “sounding board” while confidentially discussing the research gathered during the focus groups.

Strategy three outlined by Lincoln and Guba is “Negative Case Analysis (p. 309). It should be noted that this method is used more for quantitative research, but has some applicability for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba). The goal of this strategy “...is continuously to refine a hypothesis until it accounts for all know cases without exception”. (309). This method was not employed for this study.

The fourth method outlined by Lincoln & Guba under strategy three is “referential adequacy” (p.313). This method employs the use of techniques to capture interactions and may include the use of technology such as audio tape or

digital recordings. Five of the focus groups were digitally or tape recorded to capture the interviews.

The fifth method outlined by Lincoln & Guba is “member checking” (p. 315). This method utilizes the technique of allowing members of the study to examine and comment on the results. The authors emphasize that “Member checking is directed at a judgment of overall credibility while triangulation is directed at a judgment of the accuracy of specific data items” (p.317). Students were given the opportunity to comment on Chapters Four and Five. An email, with a suppressed distribution list (for confidentiality), asked students if they wanted to review the research. If they responded yes, they were sent the Chapters and asked to comment on accuracy themes outlines and conclusions. Students were also asked to comment about anything else they thought might be relevant to the research.

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) describe member checking as allowing respondents to review drafts. They cite three benefits of this strategy: “(1) verify that you have reflected the insider’s perspectives; (2) inform you of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons; and (3) help you to develop new ideas and interpretations (p.147).

Understanding one’s own reactions and the limitations of a study also contributes to its trustworthiness. This was true in this study given the author’s years of experience working with alcohol issues. This provided a base line for understanding and interpreting behavior relating to alcohol use and abuse.

Lincoln & Guba suggest that “transferability” (p.318), “dependability” (p.316), and “confirmability” (p.318) are important elements of determining accuracy. They

associate transferability with “Thick Description” (p.316) and suggest that “the naturalist...can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.316). Thick description is described in the follow manner:

What is described in the ‘thick description’ of course depends on the focus of the inquiry, or whether it is a research, evaluation, or policy analysis inquiry, and on the salient features of the context. The description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings (findings are not a part of thick description, although they must be interpreted in terms of factors thickly described); this collectivity is sometimes called the ‘melange of descriptors.’ (p.125)

Dependability is a process whereby an audit trail is established and an outside auditor examines how dependable the data is and was collected (Lincoln & Guba). An extensive audit trail was maintained during this study. Confirmability is the process whereby the auditor determines that “..the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations—and attests that it is supported by data and is internally coherent so that the ‘bottom line’ may be accepted” (p.318). The authors further state that the dependability and confirmability processes may be completed simultaneously.

While conducting this study, an audio journal was maintained to monitor the researchers reactions to the responses of students and also interpret general thoughts and feelings during the research process. This was helpful for ensuring that

researcher attitudes and feelings were reflected upon during the data gathering, interpreting, and writing processes.

Questions Posed to Participants

During each group interview, participants were asked to read and sign the consent release and instructed not to use their real names. Questions asked by the researcher are listed below.

Questions for Members of Fraternities

- a. For those of you who drink alcohol, how would you characterize your level of use of alcohol both on and off-campus?
- b. For those of you who drink, what guides your use of alcohol both on and off-campus?
- c. For both those of you who drink and those of you who do not, how would you characterize the use of alcohol by members of fraternities at both on and off-campus events?
- d. For those of you who drink and do not drink, please characterize the level of alcohol used by students who are not members of Greek letter organizations both on and off-campus?
- e. For those of you who drink alcohol, please characterize the College's alcohol policy?
- f. For those of you who do not drink, please characterize the College's alcohol policy?
- g. Follow-up to questions (d) and (e): How would you describe the enforcement of the College's alcohol policy both on and off-campus?

- h. For those of you who drink alcohol and those of you who do not drink alcohol, please characterize what happens if a student violates the alcohol policy and the school becomes aware of the violation?

Questions for students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations.

- a. For those of you who drink alcohol, how would you characterize your level of use of alcohol both on and off-campus?
- b. For those of you who drink, what guides your use of alcohol both on and off-campus?
- c. For both those of you who drink and those of you who do not, how would you characterize the use of alcohol by members of fraternities at both on campus and off-campus events?
- d. For those of you who drink and do not drink, please characterize the level of alcohol used by students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations, both on and off-campus?
- e. For those of you who drink alcohol, please characterize the College's alcohol policy?
- f. For those of you who do not drink alcohol, please characterize the College's alcohol policy?
- g. Follow-up to questions (d) and (e): How would you describe the enforcement of the College's alcohol policy both on and off-campus?

- h. For those of you who drink alcohol and those of you who do not drink alcohol, please characterize what happens if a student violates the alcohol policy and the school becomes aware of the violation?

Summary

Chapter Three described the methods used to gather, interpret, and analyze the data for this research project. Traditional methods of qualitative research were discussed for gathering and interpreting data. Methods employed to increase trustworthiness include: 1) journaling to monitor the researcher's responses to answers provided by students during the interview process, 2) data checking techniques (allowing respondents to review drafts of the research) to increase trustworthiness, and 3) prolonged engagement to ensure that Interviews were conducted to the point of saturation or "...several visits to the field to collect interview data to saturate (or find information that continues to add until no more can be found)" (Creswell, 1998, p.56).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This Chapter discusses the results of the focus groups, and survey research. Relevant sections of the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 party policies are presented first to provide the reader with a context for understanding the changes that have occurred at this institution over the past two years. These policies inform the reader and provide a basis for interpreting the comments made by students in the focus groups.

The views and attitudes of fraternity members were presented second, followed by students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations or independents. Data from the NCHA was presented last in this chapter and will be used to triangulate the information collected from the focus groups in Chapter Five.

Seven focus groups were conducted in total and range in size from two to eight students. Technical difficulties prevented the audio recording of two groups (five students total) of fraternity members and notes were taken instead. The first focus group not audio recorded will be referred to as Interview One, and the second focus group not audio recorded will be referred to as Interview Two. The next five interviews were audio recorded without incident and transcribed to paper. They will be referred to as Tape One, Tape Two, Tape Three, Tape Four, and Tape Five.

To ensure confidentiality of the taped interviews, all quotations are identified as “student” along with its respective tape number. To clarify, Tape One, conducted in May of 2006, was a focus group with members of fraternities. Tape Two, also conducted in May of 2006, was a focus group with independents. Tape Three was a

recording of a focus group with independent students, Tape Four was a recording of a focus group with members of fraternities recorded in the fall, and Tape Five was a recording of a focus group with independent students recorded in the fall. Interviews one and two were conducted with members of fraternities. As mentioned previously, Tapes and digital recordings were transcribed to paper, then coded to examine emerging themes.

By conducting focus groups on two separate occasions, May of 2006 and September 2006, prolonged engagement and saturation was achieved. As outlined previously, Creswell (1998) believes that saturation is achieved when several visits to the field begin to produce the same or repetitive information and no new information can be found. By the end of all the interviews with both members of fraternities and independents, no new information emerged from the focus groups.

All interviews were conducted in the College's student union in a quiet meeting room located away from the dining hall. Students who came to the interviews were interested in the topic and seemed serious about their answers. Both members of fraternities and independents were respectful of each other in their groups and seemed willing to answer questions openly and honestly. There were no mixed groups (members of fraternities and independents together in the same group).

Students often complemented each other's comments with stories and/or their own views about the topic being discussed.

Policy Overview

Relevant sections of the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 party policies are presented next provide a context for understanding the changes that have recently occurred. These policies provide a basis for interpreting the comments made by students in the focus groups.

2004-2005 Party Policy

Prior to 2005-06, the Party Policy (2004-2005) allowed students to have parties in the residence halls with little supervision. The 2004-2005 policy stated:

- a. The following guidelines and regulations of parties on the...campus provide a better framework in which to define responsible party behavior, hosting, and frequency of parties in the residence halls. These standards will meet several primary concerns, including better enforcement of conduct, a non-disruptive atmosphere in the halls, control of underage drinking, a reduction in vandalism, and a challenge to the undesirable party reputation of certain halls. (Party Policy, 2004-2005)
- b. A host is responsible for his/her guest(s) at all times. If a guest draws negative/inappropriate attention to him/herself, the host will be held responsible for those actions, and will be subject to judicial review and disciplinary actions. Hosts must be sober. (Party Policy, 2004-2005)
- c. Parties may not be held in residence halls, Sunday - Thursday. All campus quiet/courtesy hours begin at 10:00 p.m., Sunday - Thursday night. (Party Policy, 2004-2005)

- d. Students may host parties in their residence hall on Friday and Saturday evenings providing they comply with the following regulations: 1) The designated party host(s) must register their party with the RA on duty by completing the proper college form. The host(s) must insure proper identification and marking of all minors in attendance. The party host(s) insure that all guests of legal age restrict their consumption or possession of alcohol within the room or quad lounge, not to extend to the public areas (i.e. stairwells, balconies, corridors, etc.). No bottles of any kind will be permitted at registered parties. Other regulations of the Alcoholic Beverage Policy remain in effect. (Party Policy, 2004-2005)
- e. Parties are to peacefully end and disband at or by 1:00 a.m. without staff intervention. All campus quiet/courtesy hours begin at 1:00 a.m., Saturday and Sunday. (Party Policy, 2004-2005)

Problems associated with parties were documented In 2004 and prompted a review by members of the College administration and the Board of Trustees. There were 210 judicial cases involving 819 students. A total of 405 students were found guilty by the JB (Alcohol Policy Concerns, 2004). A total of 133 students were involved in a judicial case during the 2004-05 academic year. Of the 133 students, 73% were male and 14% were female (Alcohol Policy Concerns, 2004). Fifty-two percent of the cases were referred to the JB and 25% were adjudicated by Residence Hall Directors (Alcohol Policy Concerns, 2004) . Forty percent of the cases originated in one residence hall with a suite style arrangement. Eight students experienced alcohol poisoning (Alcohol Policy Concerns, 2004).

2005-2006 Party Policy

After much discussion, the College's Board of Trustees decided that all campus parties that previously were held in the residence halls, could now only be held in the College's Gymnasium. Large parties were banned from [suites] in the residence halls and party organizers were required to follow College policy (Party Policy, 2005-2006).

Under the new policy, students were allowed to bring their own alcohol as long as it was checked into student security behind a table. Kegs of beer and glass containers were banned. Throughout an evening students could request their alcohol from members of Security so students would not become intoxicated too quickly. Each student was allowed to bring a maximum of four beers for one evening (Vice President for Student Affairs, personal communication, July, 18, 2005).

With this context, we now move to a discussion of the unwritten and written rules surrounding the use of alcohol by members of fraternities.

Fraternities - Drinking Behavior and Perceptions

This section presents the results of the focus group interviews conducted with members of fraternities followed by students who were not members of Greek letter organizations.

First, members of fraternities were asked to characterize the student culture, their own use of alcohol both on and off-campus and what guides their use of alcohol. Finally, they were asked to characterize the College's alcohol policy and how it was enforced by members of the College's staff.

Student Culture

Members were asked to reflect about the culture of their fraternities and the student culture and to describe which was stronger in shaping their behavior. One student commented that the changes in the Party Policy actually prompted stronger bonding with their fraternity than the institution, “Yeah. Even more so as far as because of all the changes” (Tape One, p.9). When asked about this further, he went on to say: “Yeah. I mean having to...I mean we used to throw parties with everyone but you know everybody from campus and now they’ve restricted that even more to where we’re just bonding with each other” (Tape One, p.9). The other three members of the group nodded in agreement with his statement.

When asked about whether or not the changes in the Party Policy have segregated independents from members of Greek Letter organizations, members felt that the changes did keep these two groups more separate:

The independents still come up. In your fraternity if your close group of friends you know, I mean you still got all your friends outside that come down and see you. You got other fraternities coming down. Sororities got other sororities hanging out together and then you got your independents who come over to hang out. They might not want to hang out with our fraternity but they are going to go down to his suite every time just because they are close friends. They are not excluded. What is excluding them now is we can’t have parties [in the suites rather than the gym]. A fraternity can’t host a party and invite the other fraternity or sororities and independents now. You are having

your own party off campus, where you exclusively invite your dates. (Tape One, p.9)

When members of fraternities were asked about the level of alcohol used by students who were independent and the difference between these groups, one fraternity member had the following to say:

...usually the fraternities have a [place] where the whole group can kind of hang and stuff, so there's usually a lot of people and they get some other people to come...but some of the Independents, and you know I think specifically a freshman, and I haven't seen as many freshmen, new people hanging out and stuff. I think that a lot of them already leave and some of them obviously do not drink, but I don't think a lot of people still don't do that as regular as others. (Tape Four, p.15)

However, another fraternity member suggested that "...the percentage of Greeks that don't drink is a lot lower than the percentage of independents that don't drink...just an outside perspective" (Tape Four, p.15).

Students commented that the use of the gymnasium for parties has not been successful primarily due to the restriction on the amount of alcohol that one can bring to the event. One student made the following comment about whether or not parties in the gymnasium are successful: "No. They had a four drink limit on...parties so if you're 21 you're only allowed four drinks once you get there" (Tape One, p10).

Alcohol Use

The amount of alcohol members of fraternities consume was discussed along with activities that prompt students to consume alcohol quickly. One fraternity member described his level of drinking in the following manner, “I would say that’s probably not uncommon, or I would say it’s common to go through probably like a 12-pack around drinking socially like on a weekend night” (Tape Four, p.2). Another stated that “I probably go through a case a weekend” (Tape Four, p.2). One member suggested that he was more of a light drinker, “I’m kind of a lightweight....it takes about maybe six or seven beers and I’m pretty wasted. So, I don’t know, I might go through a 12-pack over a weekend” (Tape Four, p.2). For another fraternity member, drinking in the residence halls prevented him from driving while intoxicated and getting into trouble: “Well for me, it’s easier to drink on campus because I don’t have to worry about driving or finding a driver to get back to campus, so it’s a lot easier” (Tape Four, p.1).

When members of fraternities were posed the question about whether or not a higher level of drinking occurs at parties on campus, one fraternity brother commented:

I would think so because you are trying to be sociable and trying to have everyone else that’s there have a good time, so you are going to want to play drinking games and drinking games go through a lot of alcohol. (Tape Four, p.3)

Drinking games seemed to be popular with members of fraternities who talked about them with some pride. They were associated with heavy alcohol use.

The NCHA survey administered in the spring of 2006 suggests that drinking games are prevalent among students. According to this survey, 28.9% of student surveyed responded that they never avoided drinking games (NCHA, 2006). One fraternity member described how one drinking game was played at a party:

Basically, beer pong you've got six cups set up in a triangle at both ends of a table cause you're on partners and you got a ping pong ball and you just try to make it into the cups and then the rules vary from where you go and who's playing, but they're all about the same. (Tape Four, p.4)

Another example of a drinking game called "beer die" (Tape Four, p.4) was discussed by another fraternity member. The game involves a high level of alcohol use by participants.

There's beer die. Again you're on teams, you've got a glass, I mean people play it different, but the basic outline is everybody has a glass in front of them and you are sitting off back from the table and you have one die and you take it and you throw it underhanded. It has got to be about your opponent's head and if it hits the table and then bounces and hits the cup, that's one drink. If you have it in the cup, that's three drinks. If it bounces and it falls off the table and hits the floor, then your opponents have to take a drink, but if they catch it, no drinks. (Tape Four, p.4)

When asked about what drives the use of alcohol, one fraternity brother said: "Money....You don't want to spend too much, weekend after weekend. You don't want to go all out and buy real expensive alcohol or you'll be broke" (Tape Four, p.5).

Another member had a somewhat different response to this question. He felt that drinking on the campus was safer than drinking off the campus.

...the discipline actions [on campus] if you get caught are far less on campus than off campus...it doesn't actually go into the court system. (Tape Four, pp.1-2)

When asked about members of the opposite sex and alcohol, one student made the following comment: "Liquid courage" (Tape Four, p6). It was later defined in the following manner:

It definitely eases the tension and it seems like if there is alcohol involved, everybody is like, there's a more comfort level. Everyone is just kind of hanging out and having fun and stuff; I don't know, it 's just easier to talk to people with a beer in your hand. (Tape Four, p.6)

When others were asked to characterize their use of alcohol both on and off campus, one brother mentioned that: "Thursday night is bar night usually here...that's the name of the bar" (Tape One, p.2). Another student characterized student drinking to be higher away from campus than on "You know if we're off campus and we're doing our own thing and were just by ourselves we consume a lot more alcohol than we normally would. (Tape Four, p.2)

This was reinforced by others. When talking about off campus, another fraternity member described the environment as being more "...carefree" (Tape One, p.2). Drinking used to be allowed in [suites] in the residence halls and is now banned. Students must hold their parties in the gymnasium on campus.

Members of fraternities were opposed to this idea. The change was outlined in the new “Party Policy” approved by the College’s Board of Trustees.

The [suite] is traditionally the place to go. A bigger area, like I have never lived in...but I guess it’s pretty loud up there. If your neighbors get kind of loud, you can hear through the walls pretty easily. (Tape One, p.3)

Another fraternity brother made the following comment about the new changes to the alcohol policy: “The way I see it, here you are forced to become a closet alcohol [sic]. At home you can do whatever you want. But chug your beer before you step outside your door” (Tape One, p.1).

Another student characterized his drinking in the following manner:

Well, on the weekend or weekdays, I don’t know, for some reason I like to drink a few beers when watching football...I don’t know; I kind of just like doing that. I like to relax and it just helps me relax and just, you know, enjoy myself. (Tape Four, p.5)

For another fraternity brother, the use of alcohol was a way for him to relax from the stresses of academic life:

...if I’m trying to write a paper or something, and I’m all freaking out or something, I just like to close my computer lid and drink a beer....and just watch TV or something, sit back and get away from homework for a little while and get your mind straight and then go back to it. (Tape Four, p. 6)

When asked about fraternity members and the party scene at the College, a senior fraternity member had the following to say about the change he has observed on the campus during his four years. This student was interviewed in the fall 2006, a

year after the Party Policy was changed. He reflects on his experience at the College over the past four years:

I've been here for four years. This is my fourth year, and since I've been here things have changed a lot. My freshman year we could have parties in the [suites] and I mean you walk up the [suites], you couldn't open the door all the way because there were just people piled from the front to the back and you couldn't even move. It takes you ten minutes to walk from the front of the [suite] to the back, but now it's kind of different. I mean last year we had a roller rink at...which was fun...just bigger, there were still a lot of people there. And then this year the party scene really hasn't been, I don't know, people haven't really attempted to throw big parties yet. We tried to throw one this weekend in the gymnasium. It was an ok turnout, but it was nothing compared to what it used to be when I was younger. (Tape Four, p.7)

One student suggested that drinking on campus was less risky than drinking off campus since the police were likely to issue a citation and the student would have to go to court with the possibility of ending up with a criminal record.

I would rather drink on-campus because the discipline actions if you get caught drinking are far less on campus than off-campus because you can just get on-campus anything and it doesn't actually go to the court system or anything and it doesn't even get on your record. I would much rather drink on-campus. (Tape Four, pp.1-2)

The roller rink was located at a local park and students would hold their parties there. A College van would transport students to and from the party.

However, last year the police were tougher on students and the number of parties held at this location has declined significantly (Tape Five).

Members of fraternities were unhappy about this change in town. One fraternity brother had the following to say: “I think it’s made a lot of people go home over the weekend. No one wants to stay here anymore” (Tape Four, p.9). Other students in the same group described the campus now as a “suitcase campus” (Tape Four, p. 9). Another described this phenomenon in the following manner:

I remember my freshman year, you could find a parking spot easier during the week than you could on a weekend because there was people from, You would see...cars and just cars from everywhere....Now it’s nothing like that. (Tape Four, p. 9)

When asked where students went during the weekends, one student from that state was quick to point out that he goes to a city close-by where there was a large university:

I just party there and stuff. I mean when [members of my family attended....They were able to have kegs and stuff....all the parking spaces were absolutely full all weekend. Everybody was here. People could come down here from [a major nearby city] or other schools. There would come and they would party here because it was fun, and now like they were saying it’s a ghost town because everyone is like, ‘Well, we can’t have fun here, let’s go to [major city] and have fun. Let’s go to [a nearby major city]. I’ll go home and party if I have to’ and it’s just because there is nothing to do here. (Tape Four, p.10)

Another fraternity brother expressed concerns over the new policy and described the effects of the changes:

...I think this year a lot more people go road tripping. A lot more younger students. Like before, the older students might do it just to get away and hang out with their friends. But there are a lot more freshmen than sophomores now that go out and go road tripping just because they are minors and they can't drink here on-campus. They go on country roads and drink. (Tape One, p.12)

Another fraternity brother expressed bitterness over the recent changes on-campus. He mentioned that some students are discouraging prospective students from attending the College due to the lack of traditional events held on the campus.

I think it's interesting that since the party policy has changed Greek numbers are down and in the whole student body, the numbers are down. And, my personal opinion is that [the institution] is going to keep getting smaller and smaller because, what can [the institution] offer? You know, you can get a good education, but you can go to [another institution] and you can get a really good education, but you can party there. Here, you've got to go up to [a large institution in a nearby city] to party and it costs, you know, basically the same amount to go there as it does here and [our institution has] ...less and less to offer, you know. I don't see, you know, I like it here and stuff and I've been able to enjoy myself, but if they make it so that you can't even have alcohol on campus and all that other stuff, then it's going to be like, "Well yep, I'm going to come here for classes and then I'm out of here" and I'm not going

to want to be involved in my College after I graduate because it wasn't enjoyable for me. (Tape Four, p.30)

When asked whether or not members of fraternities had communicated their concerns to members of the College administration, several students indicated that they spent considerable time examining new options. One student commented:

We've had a lot of meetings at our fraternity house late nights, trying to work with them. Coming up with ideas and proposals, having our President and Vice President meet with them, like a Residence Life Director and trying to work something out, trying to figure something out. It seems pretty hopeless when you actually do it, because you spend so much time and effort trying to work with them and then they turn around and do the complete opposite of what you've suggested would work. (Tape One, p.7)

Another fraternity brother expressed concern that members of the administration were changing major traditions and that would ultimately make the institution less desirable for students in the future.

They are changing everything. I heard they are thinking about taking away "no class day" which is like this big traditional thing at the school. Nobody has classes, everyone goes down to the [city park] and they can hang out and drink there, and it's actually on campus, too. They have some activities, and you know, they made it so you can't drink [at the city park], or they may have like a rent-a-cop, so if you are 21 you drink down there, but then minors and stuff couldn't. Which, you know, I can understand that, but they are just like, they're taking away everything that makes [the College] unique and all the

traditions and then when those are gone and you have just another suitcase college that nobody wants to go to. (Tape Four, pp. 31-32)

Alcohol Policy Enforcement

Members of fraternities expressed dissatisfaction with the College's new alcohol policy. Many members of the fraternities mentioned that enforcement had increased significantly (Interview Two). According to one fraternity member:

They are trying to be a lot more controlling. I've only been here two years but just what I've seen compared to last year to this year is especially with the off campus. Because they took away the Party Policy and I don't think they foresaw that as many people were going to go off campus as happened this year and then what is going on now is [the institution] trying to get control over [the city park]. They are trying to get control of that, because that's mainly the place where we've had off campus parties and they are trying to get control of that to control the off campus drinking in town. (Tape One, p.7).

When asked about the residence life staff and how they enforced policies, some members of fraternities felt some RDs were tougher on students than the RAs. This was primarily due to the fact that some RAs seemed sensitive to the frustrations expressed by student members of Greek Letter organizations.

I think it comes down to...I don't think the RAs are particular this year. I know this year has been a lot more relaxed than past years because they realize the confinements we're under. But the RDs, like some of them you don't stand a chance with, like if they think they see something, even if it's hearsay, if it's a rumor, they are writing you up for it. (Tape One, p.8)

Another fraternity member agreed with these comments, again, suggesting that since the RAs were students they were more understanding than the RDs who are not students.

RAs are definitely more understanding this year because they realize that we can't go over to the suites and drink. So I know several RAs, I mean, a couple of buddies have been up in my room drinking, and they know what's going on and they just keep walking just because they know there's no other place for us to go. And we're not sitting there banging on the walls, breaking stuff.

We're just a couple of us hanging out or whatever watching a movie. They are a lot more understanding. The RDs like he said, are pretty much the same.

They are still pretty strict, just because it's their job. (Tape One, p.8)

A few members of fraternities were highly critical of the changes to the alcohol policy, both in enforcement and policy point-of-view. Some felt the whole process of change was *fait accompli* from the beginning.

I think it's terrible what they've done. It's been terrible for the Greek system. I mean like, the numbers have been down this past year and I'm guessing that they are just going to get worse. People who left last year said the Greek system is probably not going to be around. You know, I talked to a few guys that left my fraternity, and they said they see the Greek system being done in about four years completely. It's going to be done. And, you can say that alcohol doesn't have a part in it, but I think it does to a certain extent and it's the Number One thing in a fraternity, but it definitely affects the Greek system.

(Tape Four, p.18)

Another member expressed his dissatisfaction with the number of students that are allowed in rooms at one time under the new policy. The actual number of students allowed in a room at one time was eight [some students were unclear about the number, see below] or less (Tape Four, p. 19). He described alcohol as a secondary factor.

You know, it doesn't matter. You know, the hard, no hard alcohol I don't think it really matters, but it's when you can't have big groups of people together [except in the gymnasium]. I think that that really affects it, because people like, only five of us can hang out and that's not any fun....I'm going to one of those huge parties up there [at another institution], I'm going to go back home [his home town] and do some of that. (Tape Four, pp.18-19)

Next , the discussion turned to the actual enforcement of the alcohol policy and what implications that had for members of fraternities. One fraternity brother made the following comments:

I think this year they are really trying to crack down because they are not giving in. They have stated they are not giving warnings to anyone. They are getting written up right away when they, you know, no warnings or anything if they are being loud. Say if you were in a dorm room and you have some people over and you're drinking and you're being loud, they're not going to warn you, "Hey, you guys need to leave or be quiet." They just write you up right then and you've got to go [JB]. (Tape Four, p.25)

The whole group was then asked to describe what it means to go to the JB.

Specifically: 1) what type of sanctions would be imposed, 2) are cases handled

consistently between Greeks and independents, and 3) are fraternities sanctioned as a group or just the person who was caught violating college regulations. One fraternity brother responded: “Punishments are usually monetary, sometimes community service” (Tape Four, p.26). Another stated:

I’ve never actually had to go, but my understanding of it is, Well, did you do it [the JB the student]? Yeah [the student response]. And they look it up and see what the punishment is for your first offense. Like ok, it’s \$100, you have a \$100 fine and ten hours of community service. (Tape Four, p.26)

Some fraternity members reported that they were treated by residence life staff in the same manner as the independents. An entire fraternity would not be held accountable for the problematic behavior of one member. However, one member had the following to say about some members of the [residence life] staff who felt they were treated differently due to being Greek:

Oh, we had a really huge problem we ran into with the [residence life] staff where we had a fight break out at our party and basically they took the words of students who were intoxicated over the words of students who were not intoxicated and charged the party. And they took their words over ours and sanctioned us, punished us, instead of the people. We were just trying to break up a fight so the party could go on. We were doing what we were supposed to and we were punished for doing so and they took someone else’s word over ours just because of who we are. (Tape one, p.11)

Independents - Drinking Behavior and Perceptions

This section presents the responses of students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations and are referred to as independent students. First, independent students were asked to characterize the culture, their own use of alcohol both on and off campus and what guides their use of alcohol. Second, they were asked to characterize the use of alcohol by members of fraternities. Third, they were asked to discuss the College's alcohol policy. Finally, they were asked to characterize how the alcohol policy was enforced by members of the College's staff.

Student Culture

Several Independent students suggested that there were fairly significant differences between students who are members of Greek Letter organizations and students who are not. One student put it this way:

I think that if you're going to split the campus into two groups, people who are in Greek organizations and people who aren't in Greek organizations, that the people in Greek organizations will have a higher percentage of people who will drink, as I said, to excess on occasions, and the non-Greeks will have a higher percentage of people who choose not to drink at all and they probably have a higher percentage of people who when they drink don't get sloppy drunk basically. That is what I see although I probably don't have enough experience to say that that is completely true. But, I don't know any – or maybe one or two people in the Greek organizations who are of age who choose not to drink at all. But I know a few people on campus who are not in

Greek organizations who are of age and choose not to drink at all. Whether that has to do with athletics or their religious choice. (Tape Two, p.1)

Some Independent students were quick to point out that some members of fraternities do not drink and that seems to be ok with other students as suggested in the following statement:

I would say that there are quite a few fraternity members that do use alcohol both on and off campus and it is very well known that they do, but then again on this campus I know quite a few actual members of fraternities and sororities that do not use alcohol at all and so I think it's still a minority, but there are some in fraternities that do not use alcohol. (Tape Five, p.4)

Students who choose not to drink are able to say publicly that they don't want to drink and there seems to be respect for that position. This was reinforced by both students who are members of Greek Letter organizations and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations.

That's the great thing about this campus. I mean if you do go to a fraternity party if, you know, if you don't want to drink they're going to respect that.

They're not going to push on you that, or keep wanting you to drink or what ever. So, that's really nice. And I mean it's always kind of assumed that if you're going to a Greek party there will be alcohol there. (Tape Five, pp. 4-5)

One student made the comment that the pressure to drink was low if you don't drink, but if you do drink the pressure may be somewhat higher and more noticeable and an inherent part of the party structure.

I don't think there is a lot of pressure for non-drinkers to drink at parties because I don't think that people want to push you against something that you've already like chosen and said that you chose. But I think that people who know that other people drink will pressure them to drink more and it's not always like a really aggressive thing, like "You gotta drink" but it's kind of an inherent thing within the party structure. (Tape Two, p.1)

Another student was more explicit about the pressure that drinkers feel when they attend parties and alcohol was available. Although drinking was not a requirement at parties, some students who drink do feel mild pressure from other students who are drinking.

Well, the way that people approach each other with alcohol and try to like, "Oh take a shot with me" or "Come on, I want to have my first drink with you of the night" and they'll start early because they'll want us to have a drink together and just kind of the aspect of a party where people will pass around a gallon jug that's got some sort of alcohol in it and everybody will pass it around. If you get passed to you and you're drinking anyway, you feel like you are supposed to drink out of it. (Tape Two, P.1)

Another student reinforced the notion that the pressure to drink for students who don't drink was fairly low.

I totally agree with that. You know, you know it happens at any function, or you know, but I think it's people that want to drink will drink regardless of where they are or who they are with. And so if people don't want to drink,

from what I have observed, will either avoid the situation or just make it clear they don't want to" (Tape Five, p.4)

Although the pressure to drink was described as low, Independent students mentioned that most all large parties are sponsored by Greek Letter organizations leading one to make the assumption that Greek Life plays a predominant role in campus life. "I don't think there are any exclusively independent parties" (Tape Five, p.6). Another student said that independent parties tended to occur in smaller groups around campus:

I was just going to say that the parties...for the Greeks are just larger scale than independents. I mean, the independents may, there may be the same amount of people drinking, but it's very much so scattered into a bunch of smaller groups. Whereas, in the Greek system it's one large group drinking. (Tape Five, p.7)

When asked about what guides their use of alcohol, students who were not members of Greek Letter organizations were fairly candid with their comments.

Once student had the following to say:

Oh yeah, it's purely social. I mean, you go hang out with a friend and have a beer. I mean it's not, you know, if I'm not in the mood, then I don't have anything. If I am in the mood and there's something available then I just, whatever. (Tape Five, p.3)

Another student who recently quit drinking had the following to say about her drinking in the past:

For the most part, drinking occurred on campus because I felt it was a more secure environment, cops weren't just randomly driving through, you know. You're in a group of people that you know that you don't have to drive off campus, drive back on campus, and so when I would go off campus, I don't think that there was quite as like a large consumption of alcohol off campus. (Tape Three. p.2)

Several students indicated that they had made decisions to drink on campus because the likelihood of being caught by the police was low and there was more alcohol on the campus.

And I would probably say I drank my freshman and sophomore year. I drank more on campus than off. Being from [large city near the campus], I would go back to [the city] a lot...so I wouldn't really associate with the College or anything. But, as far as like freshman year when there was policy and stuff, I drank on campus a lot more then. You know, I was around a lot more and stuff like that. As far as off campus, it didn't really happen as much, but like she said, there wasn't a lot going on off campus as well. (Tape Three, p.3)

When asked what guided their use of alcohol both on and off campus, several students talked about fitting in and being more comfortable at parties. These were two significant items that emerged when talking to students about reasons for their alcohol use. "Yeah. I kind of – definitely trying to fit in a niche, trying to fulfill the college expectation, coming into [the College] knowing it was at that time considered a 'wet campus' I guess" (Tape Three, p.5).

A few students reported that the College was known to outsiders as being

a “wet campus” (Tape Three, p.5), and this was known to prospective students before coming to campus.

Yeah. That was something I knew before I came and it was from people I talked to. It was promoted as being that. So that being a couple of reasons, another was a little bit of insecurity with, like to be totally honest not for the study, but just insecurity with the opposite sex, like around guys in order to be able to come off as fun and for them to want to still think of me as cool to hang out with, that was something I did. Like, you know, I always, like my freshman year I remember saying, ‘I’m a beer girl, I drink beer’. You know, just to say “Okay, she drinks beer, she doesn’t drink the girly drinks or whatever, she’s a beer drinker”. You know, and that like psychologically I thought was going to run through guys’ minds as being, accepting me as being cool enough to hang out with, I guess.(Tape Three, p.6)

One student learned about the College as being a “wet campus” from a relative even though the relative didn’t attend the college.

My [relative] was the one that informed me [about being a wet campus]. I didn’t even know what it meant, so that wasn’t the reason or anything of why I came, because I drank every now and again in high school so it wasn’t anything, but once I got here, it seemed like the theme of everything, you know there was a party, everyone was drinking, you know, and there are plenty of people that chose not to drink, but you don’t see that as much, and right along with her, to fit in just to meet people and just know to get out there.

It just loosened you up and you thought it made you cooler, you know, so more people would want to talk to you. (Tape Three, pp. 6-7)

When discussing the changes made to the alcohol policy, students seemed to understand why the changes were made and necessary in light of the problems experienced on the campus, even though the student culture changed with the new alcohol policy.

Last year it [the new alcohol policy] was put into effect. I know that there was a lot of talk that it was instituted by the [new president]. Honestly, I'm sure he probably was confronted about it, but I think mainly the Board of Trustees, like it had been talked about and discussed anyway . I mean when you have kids going to the hospital for alcohol poisoning, I mean that's something that a college has to look at. I mean, you can't ignore that and I know that there was a lot of people that wanted to uphold an image of, or that thought that [the College] is traditionally this or traditionally that, but if you are in an authority position at a college and that's happening on your campus and you're receiving that, and having to put that into your statistics or whatever, you have to take that into consideration. You have to do something about it. (Tape Three, p.8)

Another student expressed agreement with the new alcohol policy and was pleased with the less visible drinking around campus.

I like how the policy is now. I don't like the idea of having [parties]....here is less amount of underage drinking that goes on, at least they are better at not getting caught at least. But I don't think that we should eliminate the alcohol

policy and the reason why is because then that allows students to go off-campus and that there might be a higher rate of accidents or drinking and driving. I mean, the school does allow, not really force, but they make sure that we live on campus for four years and denying a right that is given to us by the government saying that if you're 21 you can have a drink if you want, I think kind of violates that, if you take away the alcohol policy. So, I feel that if you're 21, if you want to have a beer you should. But I do not like having hard alcohol too because it would just create more problems when there is hard alcohol. (Tape Two, p.4)

Another student suggested that the current students were experiencing a major transition period at the College and some students have had a very difficult time making this transition.

And so right now the group of students on campus that are attending college right now are still knowing what it used to be and what it is now, or what it's becoming and so, I mean, humans are creatures of habit. I mean, it's going to be hard for students to know that things are changing where they are used to it being this way and liking it this way enough to stay here or come here....And it's going to be kind of a rebuilding time, I guess, for the College, but ultimately I think the College is going to take a different approach to what it is and what it promotes, because I mean there's a lot of people...a lot of talk that goes on campus and to be quite honest, I have not went into [the president's office] to talk to him because, quite frankly, I've never had a problem with what I've seen happen and what he's doing, but the people that

do have problems talk, but I don't know if they necessarily...go and chat with him, which his door is always open. You hear a lot of things. There's a lot of things about how [the President] wants this to be...or something like that. You know, you hear that and maybe he is, and that's fine, because I know I was in orientation later and there were like all the kids [in] my group were very intellectual kids, very intellectual students. I had a kid with a 35 ACT, I mean valedictorians...students who are coming here have a possibly different outlook on what this College is. (Tape Three, pp.25-26)

Alcohol Use

In this section, independent students were asked to comment about the alcohol use among members of fraternities. Students were forthcoming and seemed to be open and honest with their comments.

I guess both on and off campus as far as fraternities go, I don't think it changes [the amount of alcohol consumed]. There probably are some people that choose not to drink in a fraternity, but from what I see, it seems like a majority, but I mean I could be wrong. But I mean, I think it stays pretty much the same no matter where they are. (Tape Three, p.10)

The use of alcohol was also viewed by independents as a way to help students relax with members of the opposite sex, something that probably would not happen otherwise. A female had this to say about the use of alcohol:

I guess from my own personal opinion, I would say that alcohol is used for kind of a stimulant...for repercussions of what's going to take place post-party. I saw a lot, maybe it's not the fraternity. I mean obviously an individual

is an individual, they are going to make decisions that are going to affect what happens, but I saw a lot of people that on the van wouldn't speak to each other because they didn't really know each other when they were sober going to a party, and then coming back from a party I saw coeds walking and like obviously going into rooms. It's just I don't know if it's an incentive or like a stimulant kind of like, okay, well if you use alcohol, like you know how we said, it's going to promote [a relaxation of inhibitions]. (Tape Three, pp.10-11)

Independent students were asked about the prevalence of the Greek culture on campus and whether or not that dominated the social life for students. Some female students indicated that parties on campus were organized by members of Greek Letter organizations and independent students were much less likely to hold all-campus parties. According to one female student, "But, being the fact that pretty much every party held is by a Greek group, it seemed that way" (Tape Three, p.12). Another female student had the following to say about independents organizing parties:

Independents do have parties....they are kind of promoted within independent groups. I mean, it's like not like it's exclusive of all Greeks, because it's not like completely separated, they come. But it's not promoted as much on or off campus. It's just kind of like word-of-mouth, whereas like there are posters and everything for the Greek parties that get distributed...in the dorms, everywhere, like the three Greek letters are have this such and such a party. (Tape Three, 12)

Alcohol Policy Enforcement

Several independent students voiced concerns about the changes to the Party Policy. These concerns were expressed in the following manner, “ Like, I agree, but without the Party Policy....people move off campus. Declining the social climbing and you know increasing (I don’t know how to explain it to you) you know...” (Tape Two, p. 6). Another student, who was of legal age, was concerned about the number of friends allowed to visit student rooms.

Here’s the thing. They encourage you to live on-campus for four years, so I’m 21 years old and you’re telling me I can’t have friends over but you’re making me live here, you’re making me pay that much money but you’re telling me I can’t have a party...not even a party, just a gathering? You know, I can’t have five of my friends over, you know, but yet you’re making me stay here? (Tape Two, p.6)

One student commented about what was perceived as a deterioration of the student culture. There were visible signs of how parties have dramatically changed over the past year.

One of the differences that I noticed, just like a superficial thing is that last year all over the place in the cafeteria and on the walls you would always see signs advertising, like the next weekend’s party, because a lot of fraternities and sororities...just members of their fraternities and sororities, in one of the [residence halls] and they’d have a party that wasn’t like an official fraternity or sorority party usually, but it was just like that [room] was having a party and pretty much every weekend there was at least one party and I went to a

couple of those and had fun but you don't see that advertised anymore....And, I don't know if that still happens, but it's definitely not advertised because that sort of party would be known as a [party] I guess. (Tape Two, p.7)

Another student characterized the changes to the Alcohol Policy as a move in the right direction from where it was a few years ago.

I know from my time at [the College] that things have dramatically changed at residence life because when I was in my first year it was totally different; you could essentially get away with murder (not literally), but I mean anybody could drink in the [suites] and you could just get away with so much and now it's totally different. I think people are enforcing the rules better. (Tape Two, p.8).

In terms of enforcement of the alcohol policy, independent students have a variety of things to say about the residence life staff. One student summarized enforcement by staff in the following manner:

I know from this year on [JB] we haven't had a lot of cases where there's been just a ton of people in there. But I think it really depends on the RA of who's been checking rooms that night. I think an RA that's not of the floor where a certain group of people may be is more likely to enforce the rules but those are usually the hardest cases to decide on because it's hearsay essentially. But I really think it depends on the RAs because some are just less strict than others. (Tape Two, p.9)

Another student was in agreement that RAs may enforce the alcohol policy differently than their peer staff members:

I think some people are stricter than others and not as, I don't know how you would like to work it, but, for example, say an RA walked into a [suite] party because it was loud and they see a little bit of drinking, they might say, "This is your warning" and they might not do anything the first chance; some other people would. But then after that, you have so many chances, I guess. (Tape Three, p.20)

Another student indicated that enforcement was a matter of personal preference among members of the residence life staff. She suggested that some of the staff drink and some do not, and that may influence their level of enforcement.

I think it is very discretionary. I think it's who you know. The [residence life staff], the individual that's taking care of things like what their own personal preference in their life is. Some of them do drink, some of them don't drink. Some of them, I mean, obviously being a small campus like everybody knows everybody and if the [residence life staff] is friends with a group of people, obviously, they are not going to be more like active on writing a group of people that they are friends with...as they would people that they never hang out with. (Tape Three, p.21)

When asked specifically about what happens when a student violates the alcohol policy and how it's enforced, another student had the following to say about the College procedures:

Usually what happens is the first violation, say, for example, an open container ranges from \$50-\$70 fines. The more times you get caught, the higher the fine is and after the third offense, you can get up to a \$200 dollar fine for open container. Sad to say, that happened. If it keeps on escalating then the fines just keep on getting higher and then...you have to go to alcohol counseling. (Tape Two, p.13)

Another student suggested that the alcohol policy is not followed by quite a few students and those individuals who choose to drink tend to hide their drinking behind closed doors.

...I mean people don't really follow it [the alcohol policy], but they keep it behind closed doors, like they keep it away from authorities that way. They are not caught, you know, they're not putting them at, they're not making them do a whole lot. If say the [suites], for example, it's loud over there, an RA will come knocking, you know, and say, "Quiet down" and if there are minors in possession, they'll take action or whatever you want to say. They'll issue citations. (Tape Three, p.17)

For another student, the changes of how the alcohol policy has been enforced over the past two years has been clearly evident. She notes that the changes for the 2005-2006 school year have been more strict when compared to last year. There seems to be more consistency among members of the Residence Life staff this year.

I know at least last year, I mean it was kind of easy to overlook it. I mean just going with the [residence life staff], you had people, some people, who would write it up and some people who would, you know, just kind of look the other

way. But, this year we have just kind of taken a different stance basically, saying that if, we see it then we have to document it and then it's in the hands of your peers and the [Judicial Board] will take care of it. (Tape Five, p.15)

National College Health Assessment

This section summarizes the results of the NCHA (2006) that was administered to students during the spring of 2006. The NCHA was (and still is) available to colleges and universities by the American College Health Association.

According to the NCHA (2006), the survey has multiple uses for college and university administrators. These uses include examining “health issues among student populations” (p.3), tracking the health behavior of college students over time, measuring “...progress and effectiveness of intervention strategies” (p.3), monitoring “...prevalence and care for specific chronic disease groups...acute illness and preventions’ efforts” (p.3), and identifying “...students’ level of self-knowledge about health protection practices and illnesses.... and students’ perceptions about peer behavior” (p.3). While this survey focuses on a multitude of health areas, the primary focus here will be on student alcohol issues.

A total of 479 student surveys were returned at the residential campus. Students at the satellite campuses were not surveyed. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were male and 44.3% were female. The majority of the students who responded were white and 32.6% of the respondents were first-year students, 27.4% were second-year students, 25.2% were third-year students, and 14.2% of the students surveyed were fourth-year students. Sixty-seven percent of students

reported that they were between the ages of 18-20 years old and 33% reported they were between 21-24 years old.

Within the last 30 days [when the survey was administered], 17.7% of students reported they did not use alcohol while 18.3 percent reported they used alcohol 10-19 of the last 30 days. Thirty-seven percent of students reported that within the last 30 days, they drove a car after using some quantity of alcohol. When asked if they drove after drinking five or more drinks in one setting, 18.8% of students reported that they did drive after drinking this amount of alcohol.

When asked about whether or not their peers used alcohol within the last 30 days, 47.1% of students reported that they thought their fellow students used alcohol on a daily basis. When asked about the number of times students drank five or more alcohol drinks in one setting within the last two weeks, 58.9% of students reported they had engaged in this behavior. Of the 58.9% who drank five or more drinks in one setting, 22.7% reported they had done this 3-5 times and 7.4% reported they had done this six or more times.

Summary

Chapter Four summarizes the focus group research conducted in the spring and fall of 2006 and was divided into three areas: 1) perceptions of fraternity members, 2) perceptions of independents or students not affiliated with Greek Letter organizations, and 3) results of the NCHA.

First, fraternity members shared their perceptions of the student culture and their views about alcohol use on and off campus. A discussion of the College's alcohol policy followed along with how it changed the campus. A discussion of how

the alcohol policy was enforced by members of the Residence Life Staff and other administrators was presented next. Finally, fraternity members share their views about the police in town and how they address underage drinking issues.

Independent students then shared their perceptions of the student culture and alcohol use by both independents and members of fraternities. Finally, these students discussed their views of how the alcohol policy has changed and was enforced by members of the Residence Life staff. Finally, a summary of the results of the NCHA was presented with descriptive statistics about issues pertaining to alcohol.

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter Five provides the reader with an analysis and set of conclusions about written (explicit) and unwritten (implicit) rules of fraternity behavior surrounding the use of alcohol on a single college campus. First, the research questions and methodology are presented. Second, this Chapter provides an analysis of the research collected summarized in a series of themes that emerged from the interviews. Third, this Chapter outlines a set of conclusions based on the themes that emerged from the research. Finally, implications for further research will be discussed.

This study focuses on the written and unwritten rules of alcohol use among members of fraternities and their perceptions of how alcohol is regulated. Much of what was discussed focuses primarily on alcohol and not other activities. This must be taken into account as the analysis is presented.

Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the implicit and explicit cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members' use of alcohol both on and off campus. A second purpose of this study was to examine how members of fraternities describe how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy.

The research questions for this study are listed below and guide the analysis

in this chapter. The analysis is organized into two sections: 1) unwritten or implicit rules, and 2) written or explicit rules. Both sections will address elements of the two research questions listed below.

- a. What are the unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members' use of alcohol both on and off campus?
- b. How do members of fraternities describe how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy?

This was a qualitative, phenomenological study. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992) "Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations....What phenomenologists emphasize, then, is the subjective aspects of people's behavior" (p.34).

The paradigm used for this study was "...constructivist-interpretive..." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest that there are "...multiple realities..." (p.27), with a "...subjectivist epistemology..." (p.27), using "...naturalistic realities..." (p.27).

The research for this project was conducted on the College's main campus with traditional undergraduate students (ages 18-23 years old). The focus group interviews included members of fraternities and students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations.

Focus group interviews were selected as the primary research method for informing the research questions. The NCHA was used along with other campus

publications to learn about alcohol use by students. The NCHA was useful for triangulating the information collected from the focus groups.

Purposeful (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) sampling was used to select participants for this study. They state: "All sampling is done with some purpose in mind. Within the conventional paradigm that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense *representative* of a population to which it is desired to generalize" (pp.199-200). The method used for coding the transcripts was "line by line" (Charmaz, 2000, p.515) to look for emerging trends.

All the fraternity members at this institution were invited to participate in this study along with a select group of students who were not members of Greek Letter organizations. The Dean of Students initiated contact with all members of fraternities and a select number of non-Greeks.

Focus groups were conducted with 29 students in May of 2006 and September of 2006. Four groups or 18 students were composed of members of fraternities. Eleven students who were not members of Greek Letter organizations were interviewed in three focus groups. Interviews were conducted to the point where the responses of the interviewees became very similar and no new information was obtained. According to Creswell (1998), this was the point of saturation. He states that saturation is "based on several visits to the field to collect interview data to saturate (or find information that continues to add until no more can be found)" (p.56).

Focus groups were conducted in the student union. Due to technical difficulties two groups were not audio recorded. However, notes were taken after the

interviews. Interview one was discarded due to the lack of responsiveness of the two students being interviewed. The second Interview was more fruitful and the notes were used with the transcribed interviews in the research.

To ensure that saturation was achieved, two more focus groups were added in the Fall of 2006. Ultimately, five focus groups were transcribed from audiotape and digital recordings and analyzed immediately after each visit to the College, allowing for follow-up interviews to be structured with the previous interviews guiding the development of questions for the next set of interviews.

The framework that was applied to the analysis is Albert Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory*. This theory was used as an interpretive lens because it takes into account the interplay between a person's environment and his or her behavior. Bandura (1986), in his book *Social Cognitive Theory*, suggested that people's behavior is shaped by a multitude of factors. His model of "Triadic Reciprocity" (p.23) explains these factors:

In the social cognitive view people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other. The nature of persons is defined within this perspective in terms of a number of basic capabilities.... Symbolizing Capability....Forethought Capability....Vicarious Capability.... Self-Regulatory Capability....Self-Reflective Capability. (pp.18-21)

Bandura's model provides a useful lens for viewing the behavior of members of fraternities in this study and will be integrated throughout this discussion.

Analysis

First, implicit rules guiding the use of alcohol by members of fraternities that emerged from the research will be presented as themes. Explicit rules that emerged will be discussed second. Themes will be identified in this section and the responses of members of fraternities and students who are independents will be compared and contrasted. Finally, conclusions will be presented along with suggestions for further research.

Implicit Rules

Implicit rules are defined as the unwritten rules that guide the use of alcohol among members of fraternities. These were the unstated or "underlying assumptions" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988) that guided fraternity behavior both on and off campus. To a lesser degree, but still prevalent, students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations follow these unwritten rules as well.

The tradition of fraternity (or sorority) members holding large parties in the residence halls has been an important aspect of the student culture. Prior to the implementation of the new policy, these parties guided the use of alcohol among members of fraternities and independent students who chose to drink. This was an important aspect of the campus culture for many generations of students over a long period of time.

With the recent changes made to the alcohol and party policies, albeit for good reason, there was a high degree of dissonance between members of the

College's administration and students who considered themselves to be a part of the former party culture.

Theme One - Campus social life centered around Greek Letter organization activities, particularly parties.

This view was highly prevalent in the focus groups and was perceived as positive by most of the students (both members of fraternities and independents) interviewed. In discussions during the focus groups, undercurrents emerged that clearly indicated that Greek culture superseded social aspects of the institutional culture and drinking alcohol played a large role. Bandura (1986) might term this behavior modeling and suggests the following: "modeling has always been acknowledged as one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behavior" (pp.47-48).

Under the old policies, most events organized by members of fraternities were held within the residence halls with little interference from members of the Residence Life Staff. Parties were open to both Greeks and independents. Both groups held very similar views about the Greek dominated student culture, that is, social life was driven by large parties with alcohol organized by members of Greek Letter organizations. These parties were often held in the same locations and became a part of the College's long term traditions.

While many students understood they were at the College to receive a quality education, their social life was heavily dominated by these activities involving alcohol. Some students may have been actually attracted to the College due to its reputation for being lax in the enforcement of alcohol. Given the high level of alcohol

use by students, secondary problems were likely (hangovers, skipping classes, etc.) that effected student performance in the classroom.

The parties held by members of fraternities became a framework for the appropriate ways to design alcohol-related events in the student culture. An independent student had the following to say about these changes:

...my first year here, like the party policy, everyone was like they went right to the [suites] and it was like packed over there and it was always loud and stiff and not it's extra quiet and then people told me that when they were here people never went home on the weekends and now it's like the [suites] are usually empty. (Tape Two, p.6)

This is evident in the history of the institution. Large parties were prevalent and institutional policies and enforcement practices were lax. A fraternity member reinforced this theme as he talked about relatives who attended the College in the past and their experiences with social life:

...they both went here when the parties were really big and stuff. They were able to have kegs and stuff, she said. My [relative] told me that all the parking spaces were absolutely full all weekend. Everybody was here. People could come down from [a local university] or other schools, they would come and they would party here because it was fun... (Tape Four, p.10)

During this period, the campus was well known for being a “wet campus” where students could drink freely and students from other institutions came to drink, a belief which was also clearly communicated to prospective students.

The College reputation for partying seemed to be known by students at other institutions as well. These traditions were modeled over and over again reinforcing this perceived reputation which evolved over time. Bandura (1986) suggests that

... [modeling] not only functions as prompts for similar actions, it also draws the observers' attention to the particular objects or environmental settings that others favored. As a result, the observers may subsequently use the same objects to a greater extent, although not necessarily in the same way or for the same purposes. (p.50).

To contrast the recent changes to the party and alcohol policies, a fraternity member was asked to describe the "Ideal alcohol policy" (Tape One, p.13). He believed that students should be:

...allowed to have parties, as long as you marked the minors, and tried to control it. And you could consume alcohol outside, I'm not saying like in the buildings on campus, I mean just out in front on a nice day (most of our dorms aren't air conditioned) to be able to get outside and go down to the pond or something and drink and just relax and get away and not be confined to your dorm room all the time. I think that would help out as far as binge drinking and you're not becoming a closet alcoholic because you could be outside playing games, drinking and you're not going to drink as many as if you're sitting inside playing a video game. (Tape One, p.13)

Both fraternity members and some independent students voiced frustration with the changes made to the alcohol and party policies. The new policy changes have significantly altered the dynamics of the student culture. Upper class students

were significantly more frustrated since they experienced both policies during their time at the College. One fraternity member had this to say about the changes,

It's been terrible for the Greek system. I mean like, the numbers have been down this past year and I'm guessing that they are just going to get worse. People who left last year said the Greek system is probably not going to be around" (Tape Four, p. 18).

Attempts have been made by fraternity members and independent students to adapt to these new regulations, but students say parties are not the same because they are held in the gymnasium and not in the residence halls.

Although the changes have altered the student culture, alcohol still remains prevalent. Students are avoiding the new policy by drinking elsewhere. Some members of fraternities go off campus. Others hold smaller parties in their rooms on campus which limited the number of independent students because of new policy which restricts the number of students allowed in rooms, and because events were not as well advertised as they were in the past. One might suggest that, "Self-Regulatory Capability" (Bandura, 1986, p.20), or the ability of humans to regulate their behavior based on a set of their own standards and self-evaluation, is in play here. Students are still following the unwritten rules of the student social culture and have not completely adapted to the new policies.

More frighteningly, some students leave campus and hold parties on nearby country roads to drink in fields where they are unlikely to be noticed. As pointed out previously in the NCHA survey, 18.8% of [students surveyed] students reported that

they did drive after drinking five or more drinks in one setting, thereby endangering themselves and other students who might ride in the car with them.

Theme Two - Greek organizations tend to dominate the campus culture and independents seem to assume a secondary role in the social life of the campus.

This was true even though approximately less than 35% of the institution's students were reported to be members of Greek Letter organizations. One example of this phenomenon was characterized below and summarizes how independents talk about the parties they organize. It's clear that independent parties are viewed differently by students which suggests that they assume a secondary role in the social aspects of the student culture.

Independents do have parties. They are not, they are kind of promoted within independent groups. I mean, it's not like completely separated, they [the Greeks] come. But, it's not promoted much on or off campus. It's just kind of like word of mouth, whereas like there are posters and everything for Greek parties that get distributed or are in the dorms everywhere, like three Greek letters are having this such and such party. (Tape Three, p.12)

There was no indication that independents were resentful about playing a secondary role to Greeks in the student culture, but this role did emerge as part of the undercurrent of the campus culture during the focus group interviews. Again, viewing this through the lens of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, where "behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events" (p.18) interact with

each another, one capability may apply to independent students. This capability is defined by Bandura as “Vicarious Capability” (p. 19), and states that,

...virtually all learning phenomena, resulting from direct experience, can occur vicariously by observing other people’s behavior and its consequences for them. The capacity to learn by observation enables people to acquire rules for generating and regulating behavioral patterns without having to form them gradually by tedious trial and error. (p.19)

Focus group discussions with independents about life outside of the classroom and students socializing often centered around the use of alcohol under both the old and new policies. This was reinforced by the results of the NCHA which indicated that 59% of all students surveyed engaged in binge drinking (five or more drinks in one setting).

This College’s binge drinking rate was much higher than the national average and higher than the percentage of students who (approximately 40%) are members of fraternities. Binge drinking rates nationally have remained close to 44% since 1993 (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000).

While some independent students choose not to drink, they still attend parties where alcohol was served primarily due to the parties being the focal point for campus gatherings. Students who do not drink reported they were not pressured to drink and were respected for not drinking by both members of fraternities and independents. There was, however, subtle pressure to drink if it was known that you drink alcohol. An independent student had the following to say about this behavior:

Well, the way that people approach each other with alcohol and try to like “oh take a shot with me” or “Come on”. I want to have my first drink with of the night and they’ll start early because they’ll want to have a drink together and just kind of an aspect of the party where people will pass around like a gallon jug that’s got some sort of alcohol in it and everybody will pass it around. If you get it passed to you and you’re drinking anyway, you feel like you are supposed to drink out of it. (Tape Two, p.1)

Theme Three - Members of Greek Letter organizations and independents perceive the changes to the alcohol and party policies somewhat differently.

Independents were more likely to voice approval of the changes made to the alcohol and party policies whereas members of fraternities were more likely to oppose to the changes made to these policies. This was true even among members of fraternities and independents who don’t drink.

The fact that some independents voiced this position was surprising given the perception among many students interviewed that Greeks dominate the student culture given that there were more independent students than students who were members of fraternities.

Relevant to this discussion is another “capability” (p.19) outlined by Bandura (1986) which suggests that: “Throughout exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily [sic]. By reducing the impact of immediate influences, forethought can support foresightful behavior, even when the conditions are not especially conducive to it (p.19). Clearly, holding the view that the

alcohol policy changes were positive was not a view held by most students who were interviewed.

Some independent students were quick to point out that they did not approve of every change that was made to the alcohol and party policies. For example, placing restrictions on students who are of legal age was raised as a point of contention. One independent student had the following to say:

...some people don't take advantage of the other events like Student Activity Council events or LP events that go on in place of that just because of drinking. I think that's a huge part of it. That's my personal opinion and I think because of that it can become more dangerous because I think there might be more drinking and driving....But, I also think it's had a good impact. (Tape, Three, p.24)

The agreement among most members of fraternities that the new policies violated the traditional campus culture may be due in part to the strong bond experienced by members of these groups, and some individuals may be more likely to agree with these policies if they were not in front of their fraternity brothers. There was no way to be sure.

Theme Four - The perception among members of fraternities and independent students that campus social life was declining and drinking was best done elsewhere or behind closed doors, where there was perceived to be little chance of regulation or control by staff members.

Again, the use of alcohol was a major factor in this theme. Both fraternity members and some independents mentioned they knew students who left campus for this reason or stayed and drank to excess behind closed doors.

According to many, students are finding creative ways to continue their drinking. Some mentioned that students will drive away from campus to consume alcohol and then drive back while intoxicated. According to the NCHA, 18.8% percent of student surveyed indicated they drove a car after consuming five or more drinks. However, when asked the question about whether or not students used designated drivers within *the last year*, only 4.8% said “never”. This may indicate that students regularly use designated drivers after they drink.

To illustrate that students were drinking at high levels, one student summarized how some bypassed the alcohol policy:

I went for a month where I didn't drink. I drank last weekend for the first time in a month....when you're sitting there sober and you see the same things as you do when your drunk. Everyone is in the back room trying to get drunk, chugging their beer because they can't be outside and they don't want to get caught. Everyone's over in [a residence hall] taking shots before we [left] because if you get caught...it's still the same...people do drink. The people who don't drink aren't going to realize that if they don't drink...so they don't have to worry about it. (Tape One, p.6)

Explicit Rules

The explicit rules about alcohol use that emerged during the research were viewed by students as external to them or imposed on them by authority figures on-

campus. Many of these “explicit rules” were perceived to be, against or in violation, of the unwritten or implicit rules of the student culture. This was heightened among the students interviewed, most likely due to the recent changes made to the alcohol and party policies since the impact of these changes were just being felt by students.

When identifying explicit rules, they often associate them with the new alcohol policy, enforcement by members of the Residence Life Staff, and other college administrators who students perceived as changing the alcohol and party policies. These rules were discussed as the “policies of the institution” and the administrators who students perceived changed the rules. As mentioned previously, there was greater discontent with the policies voiced by members of fraternities than independents. Bandura’s “symbolizing Capability” (p.18) is relevant to the views of members of fraternities. This capability is described in the following manner,

Through symbols people process and transform transient experiences into internal models that serve as guides for future action. Through symbols they similarly give meaning, form, and continuance to the experiences they have lived through. By drawing on their knowledge and symbolizing powers, people can generate innovative courses of action. (p.18)

Members of fraternities who drink have found creative ways to work around the new alcohol and party policies by drinking away from campus, privately in their rooms, and at other colleges and universities.

Theme One - Most members of fraternities perceived changes to the Alcohol and Party Policies to be imposed on them without any input from students and in violation of the student culture of the College.

Several members of fraternities reinforced this theme. One fraternity member had the following to say:

One promise that [the president] has made when he was first being chosen...was "I'm not going to change anything at [the college] for at least one year, I want to see [the] community and how it reacts and evolves and I want to see it before I make any changes, and by the time we came back over the summer break the [party] policy was gone. (Tape One, 14)

Another fraternity brother agreed that the changes will made with little student input during the summer when students were unable to comment or react.

Yeah, they went behind our back. It felt like everything that's happened so far as far as that and Greek Week and all of the rules. You're getting stabbed in the back because they go behind your back but they ask for your input and they are really nice to your face about it and they're trying to work with you but at the same time... (Tape1, p.14)

The perception that the new president made these changes was incorrect since the changes were actually considered and approved by the Board of Trustees prior to the new president's arrival. However, when the new President arrived, the changes were implemented and because of that, he was directly associated with the shift in policy, right or wrong, and some students believed that he was one of the main reasons for the changes.

Theme Two - The College was more socially active when the old alcohol and party polices were in place.

This was a prevalent theme. Students are struggling to replace the traditions and elements of the culture that were associated with large all-campus parties and the use of alcohol. Many students still cannot conceive how the campus could be fun without alcohol. Ironically, to significant degree, the old policies still influence the level of drinking under the new policies.

This means that the level of alcohol use and abuse was still high among students. Although the policies are more restrictive, the majority of students surveyed are still drinking at dangerous levels and doing so in a manner not to violate the new policies.

This high level of drinking among students was clearly supported by the NCHA administered in 2006 that indicates 59% of students surveyed indicated they drank five or more drinks in one setting two weeks prior to the survey being administered. This was a very high binge drinking rate when compared to the national average of 44% (Wechsler, 2000). Surprisingly, after the changes to the alcohol and party policies, administrators reported a significant decline in alcohol related problems when compared to the previous year (Disciplinary Report, 2004-05). One might conclude that the problems are still there but not visible to members of the Residence Life Staff since students mentioned that some were drinking at nearby campuses or out in the country.

Theme Three - Enforcement of the Alcohol Policy was inconsistent.

First, it should be noted that were some comments made that the staff was more consistent early in 2006-2007 than during the 2005-2006 year. However,

several students indicated that there was confusion over the enforcement of the College's new alcohol and party policies when first implemented.

The RAs were perceived as being more understanding about alcohol infractions than the RDs who tended to be more restrictive. Several students mentioned that enforcement practices vary by Residence Life staff members. At least two students made the comments that if the staff member was one of your friends, they were more likely to be lenient. This was supported by a number of students and observed in the following quote:

Some of them, I mean, obviously being a small campus like everybody knows everybody and if the [residence life staff] is friends with a group of people, obviously, they are not going to be more like active on writing a group of people that they are friends with...as they would people that they never hang out with. (Tape Three, p.21)

In the Spring of 2006, there was a sense that the RAs were understanding and more lenient because of the new policy changes while the RDs tended to be more restrictive:

That we can't go over the [suites] to drink and so I know several RAs, I mean a couple of buddies have been up in my room drinking and they know what's going on and they just keep walking just because they know there is no other place for us to go and we're not sitting there banging on the wall, breaking stuff, we're just of a couple of us hanging out or whatever, watching a movie. They are a lot more understanding. The RDs, like he said, are pretty much. They are still pretty strict, just because it's their job. (Tape One, p.8)

These inconsistencies sent mixed messages to all students, both members of fraternities and independents. This was problematic since it reinforced for some students that the new policy was not appropriate for the culture of the College, or members of the staff did not support it.

Conclusions

The results of this study revealed two issues. First, the social life of students, both Greek and non-Greeks, was strongly associated with Greek related activities, especially parties. The connection was stronger prior to the recent changes made to the alcohol and party policies, but still exists. These activities were often expressed by students in behavioral terms (what students did behaviorally). These are defined as the “unwritten rules” (or implicit rules) of the student culture. These unwritten rules exist regardless of the new alcohol and party policies.

Second, the recent changes made by members of the College’s administration to the alcohol and party policies have reduced alcohol related problems, but students continue to find ways to still drink alcohol at remarkably high levels.

The changes described by students are by members of the College’s administration. These are defined as the written rules of the campus that govern the student culture, but not necessarily the rules that are actually followed by students. Several conclusions were formulated from the themes that emerged from the focus group interviews.

Conclusion one – Independents believe that Greek life dominates the student culture and all social activities sponsored by Greeks involve the use of alcohol.

Independents voiced this frequently. This was viewed as more true before the alcohol policy changes, but still prevalent after the policy changes. Most large scale parties were organized by members of Greek Letter organizations. One independent student affirmed this conclusion: "...I honestly believe that Greeks run [the College] because Greeks are the "in" a lot of people in the PW, so this College is pretty much run by Greeks. (Tape Two, p.15).

Another independent student also agreed, but didn't necessarily see it as a negative:

I think that is true to an extent. I don't know if that is completely negative because I think they do positive things but there is definitely a lot of power and their [intra] sorority/fraternity council (I don't know exactly what it is called) that that group does hold a lot of sway over certain things and a lot of the members of the Student Congress are in Greek organizations... (Tape Two, p.15)

Members of fraternities would argue, however, that the changes to the alcohol and party policies had a significantly negative effect on their campus role. This led some students to the conclusion that the College's administration wants to eliminate Greek Letter organizations.

They are changing everything. I heard that they are thinking about taking away "No Class Day" which is like this big traditional thing at the school,

nobody has classes, everyone goes down [to a city park] and they can hang out and drink there, and it's actually on campus, too. They have some activities, and you know, they made it so you can't drink [at the city park]. Or they may have like a rent-a-cop, so if you are 21 you can drink down there, but then minors and stuff couldn't. Which, you know, I can understand that, but they are just like, they're taking away everything that makes [the College] unique and all the traditions and then when those are gone and you have just another suitcase college that nobody wants to go to. (Tape Four, pp.31-32)

The social culture of fraternities superseded the social culture of independents. Independents suggested that the Greeks played a powerful role and dominated many aspects of the student culture, ranging from the high leadership positions to social activities that were organized by students. Many of the activities that were organized by members of fraternities included the use of alcohol. Not examined in this study was whether or not the student culture superseded the academic culture of the institution.

Conclusion two – Members of fraternities and independents viewed the changes to the alcohol policy somewhat differently. Most members of fraternities disagreed with the changes to the alcohol and party policies and some independent students did not.

There was a sense among some independent students that the alcohol culture on and off campus was somewhat out-of-control. Some independents described some students at parties, not identifying members of fraternities or independents, as being out of control. One independent student realized that the old

policies may have encouraged dangerous behavior. She had this to say about the policies:

...I mean when you have kids going to the hospital for alcohol poisoning, I mean that's something that a College has to look at. I mean, you can't ignore....but if you are in an authority position at a college and that's happening on your campus and you receiving that into your statistics...you have to take that into consideration. (Tape Three, p.8)

There is a point where the administration must manage dangerous behavior on a college campus. The Alcohol Policy Concerns (2004) document pointed out many issues related to the old alcohol and party policies. Another independent student had mixed feelings about the changes,

Personally, I think a lot of people were upset at first. I think it's good and bad. I think it is good because I feel like there is not this group of people, [that] group of people, this group of people and that's it. You know, like you said, they are going to, just like this last party at [the gymnasium], the first one this year, there was a whole bunch of Greek groups there and that was really kind of nice because you get to see all your friends, you know, like if you have Greek friends even if you're independent or not. (Tape Three, p.23-24)

Members of fraternities were particularly frustrated with their level of involvement in the development of the new policies. They indicated their suggestions were either discarded or not taken into account when members of the College's administration developed and implemented the final policies. One student commented "And it's just crappy the way that things have

changed, you know, so fast in the past year, year or two” (Tape Four, p.18), and another fraternity brother had the following to say, “Yeah, [the College] has definitely changed into a suitcase College. I don’t know if they necessarily go home. A lot of students go [to a nearby city] to party” (Tape One, p.12).

Conclusion three – Alcohol use among Greek and non-Greeks was still highly prevalent both on and off-campus.

Students continued to drink at high levels regardless of the new policies. Some drink and drive. While the intended policy changes have reduced the reported problems on campus, students continue to drink and avoid the alcohol and party polices.

The most troubling example was that students may leave campus in cars to do their drinking and actually drive while drunk. This was supported by the NCHA that was administered to the students in spring of 2006. Fifty-nine percent of students reported drinking five or more drinks in one setting in the two weeks prior to the survey being administered. Twenty-two percent of students reported they engaged in this level of drinking three to five times within this period. In addition, 18.8% of students reported that they drove a motor vehicle after consuming five or more drinks.

This may have indicated that students believed the policies are too restrictive. They may feel it was easier to drink away from campus where they are unlikely to be sanctioned for their behavior. The College should examine this issue very closely to determine the cause of this behavior.

It was clear that students are drinking at high levels regardless of the changes to the alcohol and party policies and that actual problems on the campus have been reduced. However, the level of drinking and driving was dangerously high and may indicate that some policies might lead students to travel away from campus.

Another approach for addressing this problem would be to offer alternative (to alcohol) social programs for students to discourage drinking and driving. The level and type of student activities should be examined to ensure that the number of activities are adequate for encouraging students to remain on the campus. The Activities Council was a group that could provide more student activities designed to encourage students to attend campus activities that might not involve alcohol. This might counter the belief among students that campus social life was declining.

Conclusion four – The residence life staff was not consistently enforcing the alcohol and party policies.

Inconsistencies were raised by both independents and members of fraternities. Students were clear that RAs and RDs did not consistently enforce the alcohol and party policies. Several students suggested that RAs were lenient with students because the new policies put into place were perceived as being too restrictive.

RDs were viewed by students as being very strict in their enforcement of the alcohol and party policies. This was problematic because it sent students mixed messages that created confusion and negative perceptions about the Residence Life Staff, and anger among those cited for alcohol infractions when penalties are imposed on some students and not others.

However, there was some indication that the College was attempting to address this issue. During an interview in the Fall of 2006, one fraternity member had this to say about the enforcement of the College's alcohol policy:

I think this year they're are really trying to crack down because they are not giving in. They have stated they are not giving warnings to anyone. They are getting written up right, when they, you know, no warnings or anything if they are being loud. Say if you were in a dorm room and you have some people over and you're being loud, they're not going to warn you, "Hey, you guys need to be quiet." They just write you up right then and you've got to go to the [JB]. (Tape Four, p.25)

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) cultural rules that are characteristic of fraternities that guide their members' use of alcohol both on and off campus. A second purpose of this study was to examine how members of fraternities described how the institution regulates the use of alcohol and enforces violations of the alcohol policy.

First, the research provided evidence that unwritten or implicit rules more strongly influence the behavior of members of fraternities than written or explicit rules. Evidence suggested that this was true for students who consume alcohol on-campus and students who consume alcohol off campus. Second, the research supported that the alcohol policy was inconsistently enforced by members of the Residence Life staff.

Further Research

The results of this study should be examined with caution since it focused on 29 members of fraternities and independent students. Eighteen of the students interviewed were members of fraternities and eleven students were not members of Greek Letter organizations. It should be understood that the results might have been different at this institution had the research focused only on independent students or members of sororities.

Furthermore, this research was conducted at only one small College. Using the revised, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classification system (2007), the institution's undergraduate program was defined as "Prof+A&S: Professions plus arts & sciences." The graduate program of the College was classified as "Postbac-Prof.Ed: Post-baccalaureate professional (education dominant). The enrollment profile was classified as HU or high undergraduate. This institution has two satellite campuses in nearby cities.

As chronicled in this study, alcohol continues to be a major health issue facing this institution and colleges and universities nationwide (Bausell et al., 1990; Cooper, 2002; Dejong et al., 1998; Sax, 1997; Perkins, 2002; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Lee, 2000; Wechsler 2000, Wechsler & Isaac, 1991). As cited earlier, according to the NIH (2002), alcohol abuse is a deep-seated problem that is very much a part of the culture of colleges and universities across the country.

As with other institutions, this College has attempted to manage a difficult issue by changing policies, limiting the use of alcohol, and other intervention strategies. The role of student activity programming was mentioned only peripherally

by students who were interviewed and should be examined much more closely by members of the College's faculty, staff, and students as a strategy for managing this difficult issue.

Unfortunately, much more work needs to be done on this campus to address the issue of binge drinking and driving after consuming large quantities of alcohol. Boyer, in the Carnegie Foundation (1990) for the Advancement of Teaching Report on *Campus Life: In Search Community*, suggested that,

When rules are tightened, undergraduates often go off campus to drink. A private Southwest university in our study passed a rule forbidding all alcohol consumption on campus. In response, students presented the ultimatum: "If we can't drink on campus, we'll drive drunk" – a position the administrator called "blackmail." The moratorium was lifted but the university ruled that a uniformed police officer and four nondrinking chaperones must be present at all parties where alcohol is served. (pp.39-40).

While this approach was not suggested, it does illustrate how students may respond when confronted with administrators attempting to manage this difficult issue. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005), as cited earlier in this study, suggest that Greek membership is strongly related to binge drinking. However, they also state that "...the effect of Greek affiliation on drinking behavior does not appear to be the case that the effect of Greek affiliation on drinking behavior during the college extends to the years immediately following college" (p.568).

While this may be the case, higher education administrators must continue to seek new strategies to address this ongoing issue. Even with the limitations cited,

this study does contribute to the research on alcohol abuse on college campuses in that it chronicles one approach for changing a college alcohol policy and how students responded to those changes.

Further research on alcohol use and abuse on college and university campuses must continue to find effective methods for managing this difficult issue, especially since student's attitudes and beliefs change over time (HERI, 2005).

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutional Recommendations

Below are a set of recommendations that the institution should explore given the issues that emerged from the focus groups and the College Health Survey. Again, the researcher met with only a small sample of students in seven focus groups, so this research study may not accurately portray the entire student body.

However, the results of the 2005 Health Survey clearly indicate problems with alcohol on campus. A high number of students engage in dangerous drinking and some (approximately 18 percent) of those students reportedly drove a car after drinking. Recommendations for addressing problems related to alcohol abuse are listed below.

- a. Examine more closely why the binge drinking rate for this institution is elevated when compared to the national average.
- b. Examine whether or not this institution has become a “suitcase College”. Is it fact or just myth?
- c. Develop and implement strategies that students will accept (consistent with the student culture) to reduce the level of dangerous drinking (binge levels and higher) both on-campus and off-campus.
- d. Examine how violations of the alcohol policy are managed by members of the residence life staff to ensure that procedures and practices are consistently enforced.

- e. Closely examine the issue of drinking and driving. This should be done immediately given the high number of students who reported they had more than five drinks in one setting and then drove a car.
- f. Re-examine and bolster initiatives that are offered on weekends to reduce the probability that students will leave campus to drink and then drive.
- g. Examine student wellness in general to ensure that there are a wide range of cultural, educational, social, and recreational activities available to students during the weekends.
- h. Examine more closely why some students perceive the Greek letter organizations as the dominating force within the student culture.
- i. Bring in outside consultants to conduct a culture audit of the student culture. The audit should be much broader than this study and include faculty, staff, and students to examine all aspects of the academic and co-curricular experience for students at the main campus.

Recommendations for Practice In Student Affairs

This section examines implications for the field of student affairs and student affairs staff, including vice presidents, deans, directors of residence life, student activity professionals, and Greek advisors.

- a. Develop and implement strategies to evaluate the student and Greek letter culture to better understand the dynamics between the two groups relative to the campus culture. Since evidence exists that Greek culture may supersede institutional culture, it is important to

examine this phenomenon on a regular basis to ensure that independent students are not isolated on their campus.

- b. Examine, monitor, and compare the use of alcohol and drugs by Greeks and independent students both on and off campus. Given the evidence that alcohol plays a significant role in Greek systems, campus administrators should have an ongoing mechanism to determine the level of alcohol used by all students on their campus.
- c. Assist Greek Letter organizations in emphasizing the positive aspects of Greek life. Many Greek letter organizations are developing and implementing impressive social justice and/or community service programs. These should be highlighted and reinforced on campus. Standards should exist for Greek letter organizations outlining activities they are expected to offer to the campus.
- d. Provide Greek letter organizations with the resources and tools to accomplish their goals both on and off campus. Greek letter organizations should be fully supported by campus officials to ensure that resources are available to assist these organizations.
- e. Develop positive and constructive interpersonal relationships with the leaders of Greek letter organizations on campus. Campus administrators should establish positive working relationships with Greek leaders before problems occur.
- f. If Greek letter organizations are affiliated with national organizations, develop clear communication lines with the national organizations.

These national groups are often excellent resources for local chapters particularly in the areas of liability,

- g. Examine the pledging process to ensure that it does not conflict with the academic performance of students engaged in the pledging process. Emphasis should be placed on academics and no activities should conflict with the academic mission of the institution.
- h. Resist the temptation to view Greek letter organizations as negative elements of student life and the campus culture. Resolve problems that arise quickly and efficiently while maintaining positive interpersonal relationships with students in Greek letter organizations.

APPENDIX A.

Confidentiality Protocol

Title of Study: **Written and Unwritten Rules with Fraternities: A Study of One College.**

Investigator: **Thomas Crady, B.S., M.A.E.**

1. Students will be sent a letter of invitation to participate. All members of fraternities will receive an invitation as well as a random group of non-Greek affiliated students.
2. Respondents will be asked to communicate directly with the Investigator rather than members of the College staff about the project.
3. Focus groups will be set up in a confidential room on the College campus and participants will be asked to read the Informed Consent Form and decide whether or not to participate. Those who agree to participate will be asked to complete and sign the Informed Consent Form.
4. Focus groups will be conducted and tape recorded. Students will be assured that names of individuals and groups will not be use, and pseudonyms will be used in drafts of the research. The interviews will be tape recorded, transcribed, and coded. The College and participants will not be identified by name in the final document. An audit trail will be maintained. Tape and transcripts will be held secure by the Investigator and destroyed at a later date according to Iowa State University policy.
5. After a draft of the research is completed, participants will be asked to Comment on the document for accuracy. Once changes are made, comments will be added to the audit trail and be destroyed at a later date according to Iowa State policy.

APPENDIX B.

Release Form Written and Unwritten Rules Pertaining to the Use of Alcohol Within Fraternities: A Study of One College

We ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Topic: Fraternity culture pertaining to the use of alcohol.

Investigator: Thomas Crady, Vice President for Student Services, Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa 50112

Purpose: Examine the differences of written and unwritten rules governing alcohol use on this campus.

Procedure: Participate in a focus group to discuss your perceptions of the written and unwritten rules pertaining to alcohol use by members of fraternities on your campus.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The study has the following risks: Possible embarrassment in front of your peers; discussion of fraternity behavior surrounding the use of alcohol on this campus.

The study has the following Benefits: To assist College/Universities administrators in developing realistic alcohol policies.

Confidentiality: No names or individuals will be identified and pseudonyms will be used in text. All records will remain with the researcher and not be given to the... College administration.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: This study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate it will in no way harm your standing at...College

Contacts and Questions may be referred to Thomas Crady

You may ask any questions you have now.

Thomas Crady
Vice President for Student Services
Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa 50112
641 269-3700, crady@grinnell.edu

Larry Ebbers
University Professor and Professor
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011
N226 Lagomarcino Hall
515-294-8067, lebbers@iastate.edu

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.
Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C.

Invitation Letter

1124 Elm Street
Grinnell, Iowa 50112
April, 2006

Dear Student:

I am writing to ask your help by participating in a research study that I am conducting to complete my Ph.D. at Iowa State University. Please let me introduce myself. My name is Tom Crady, I have been a college administrator at Grinnell College since 1982, and have held many positions at the college. I am currently the Vice President for Student Services.

I am in the final stages of my degree program and am now writing my doctoral dissertation. A doctoral dissertation must be an original piece of research of interest to the doctoral student in consultation with the student's major professor.

My study focuses on the written and unwritten rules governing the use of alcohol within fraternities at your College. I have chosen to study fraternities because it is an area that I have no experience with as a college administrator, but find very interesting. My study will not identify the College by name or the names of individual students or groups that participate. In addition, students and student groups will not be identified by name to members of the College administration.

This is a qualitative study that involves meeting with and interviewing students in small groups rather than conducting survey research. With your assistance, I am planning to interview 28 students in five focus groups over a two-day period this April. I will travel to the College to conduct the interviews in a confidential location on-campus. My research will reflect the themes that emerge from the interviews with students. Participants will have an opportunity to review a draft of the themes identified in my research before a final product is completed.

I have designed three of the five focus groups to be members of fraternities on-campus. Each of these groups will contain five students each and two of the focus groups will be with students who are not members of Greek Letter organizations. Six non-Greek students will be placed in one group and seven non-Greeks in the other.

Students will have the right to decline to answer my questions if they feel uncomfortable. I plan to Tape record the interviews and have the Tapes transcribed to paper. Once I have paper copies, I plan to identify the themes that I hear from

students. During the interviews, students will be asked to not identify themselves by name and pseudonyms will be used as I draft my research.

Once I have completed a final draft, it must be approved by my Program of Study Committee at Iowa State University and I must pass an oral defense of my dissertation. My doctoral dissertation will be available publically once I complete all the requirement for my Ph.D.

Once again, I hope you are willing to participate since this research will identify student themes that emerge from my interviews. It may also assist college and university administrators in developing effective student life policy.

Please feel to contact me at 641 821-9670 (cell phone) or at crady@aol.com if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Thomas Crady

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