

# **Relationship Between Acceptances of Drinking Behaviors Among Domestic and International College Students**

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## **Abstract**

Drinking behaviors have been an increasing problem on college campuses due to the increasing acceptance of dangerous drinking behaviors. One study found that 63% of college students under the age of 21 reported consuming alcohol in the past 30 days. These students also consumed more alcohol on one occasion than students 21 and older.<sup>4</sup> This study is comparing the drinking behaviors of domestic and international college students. International students come from countries where the drinking age is below 21. 53.6% of college students are said to be consuming alcohol, with 34.8% of those people engaging in binge drinking. Binge drinking can be defined as four or more drinks in a row for women and five or more drinks in a row for men.<sup>5</sup> There are many consequences associated with the dangerous drinking behaviors that college students take part in. There is little research comparing alcohol consumption and drinking behaviors among international and domestic students. The objective of this study is to examine the differences in accepted drinking behaviors, such as drinking under the age of 21, drinking alcohol every weekend, and drinking enough alcohol to pass out between international and domestic students. It is hypothesized that international students will find drinking under the age of 21 more acceptable since these students come from a country with a lower drinking age. It is hypothesized that domestic students will find other drinking behaviors more acceptable. Data was collected at a mid-sized Midwestern university using a survey method via email. Implications will be discussed.

**Keywords: College, International Students, Drinking Behaviors, Binge Drinking**

## **1. Introduction**

Alcohol use, and therefore, dangerous drinking behaviors have become more prevalent on college campuses throughout the United States. Students have been consuming more alcohol in many different ways. It has been reported that 63% of college students that are under the legal drinking age have reported consumption of alcohol within the last month. These students also tended to drink more alcohol than students of legal drinking age on one or more occasions.<sup>5</sup> The amount of alcohol consumed varies depending on what day of the week it is, such as weekday or weekends. Students tend to drink more alcohol on weekends (Fridays and Saturdays) than they would during the week.<sup>3</sup>

A study found that students who are from China and are enrolled in college in China tend to have drinking rates of 78% for males and 61% for females. The reasons for drinking were that they had positive social effects and it also relieves tension. There are rising rates for drinking in females due to the increasing westernization in China.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.1 Binge Drinking**

Binge drinking refers to a period of excessive drinking that constitutes four or more drinks for women or five or more drinks for men during a short time period. Binge drinking is commonly used to describe drinking in college students because of their tendency to consume more drinks in shorter periods of time.<sup>6</sup> Binge drinking has become a widely

used way of consuming alcohol especially in college students. Binge drinking has led to numerous harmful and preventable injuries in college students. There have been studies that have found that college students were more likely to binge drink when consuming alcohol than people over the college age<sup>7</sup>. Another study found that reasons for this large binge drinking behavior in the college student population can be due to stressors and coping with emotions brought on by college. International students also can have stress related to enduring a new culture which could cause an increase in drinking<sup>8</sup>.

## 1.2 Drinking Behaviors

Drinking behaviors can be defined as a behavior someone takes part in due to the influence of alcohol. Drinking behaviors can include the way people are consuming the alcohol or the behaviors during and after drinking alcohol. Dangerous drinking behaviors are behaviors that can put an individual in harm's way due to the consumption of alcohol. Examples of drinking behaviors, especially dangerous drinking behaviors would be drinking and driving a car, taking shots, and drinking enough to pass out.

## 1.3 Purpose

Many studies examine dangerous drinking behaviors among college students such as binge drinking and drinking under the age of 21, however there is little research examining the drinking behaviors of international students on college campuses, especially, the perceived acceptance of these drinking behaviors. Based on the literature, it is hypothesized that international students, having come from countries where the drinking age is lower than 21, will have a higher acceptance rate of drinking under the age of 21. It is also hypothesized that domestic students will be more accepting of other drinking behaviors, such as binge drinking and drinking enough to pass out.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants analyzed domestic and international college students. A total of 4943 students completed the survey. 58.9% (n=2915) students identified as female and 39.2% (n=1938) students identified as male. 1.8% (n=90) participants identified as another gender other than male or female. There were 18.9% (n=937) participants identifying as an international student. 5.1% (n=252) identified as Black/African American, 77.8% (n=3849) identified as American White/Caucasian, 5.4% (n=269) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, 17.0% (n=842) identified as Asian or Asian American, 0.4% (n=20) identified as Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 1.1% (n=56) identified as Native American or Alaskan Native, and 2.5% (n=124) identified as a race that was not listed. 64.2% (n=3180) of participants were ages younger than 21 and 35.8% (n=1763) were over the age of 21. The average age of participants was 20.4 years (SD=3.47).

### 2.2 Procedure

Data was collected at a midsized Midwestern university. Full-time students received emails inviting them to take part in the online Student Health Survey. The allotted time to complete the survey was three weeks and students were compensated with a \$3 gift card to local coffee shops on campus.

### 2.3 Measures

Participants were given a series of questions to measure how accepting they found certain drinking behaviors in college students. They were asked to rate different drinking behaviors based on the questionnaires given to the participants.

### 2.3.1 DNRF

The Drinking Norms Rating Form (DNRF) was utilized to create questionnaires to measure drinking behaviors. Participants were asked to indicate how many standard drinks consumed on any one occasion during the last 30 days, how many days the participant consumes drinks containing alcohol in a typical week, and how many drinks the participant consumes on a typical day that they are drinking alcohol.<sup>1</sup>

Another series of questions were utilized to understand how acceptable students find certain drinking behaviors. They were asked how acceptable they found drinking alcohol every weekend, drinking alcohol daily, driving a car after drinking, drinking enough alcohol to pass out, playing drinking games, drinking to have fun, drinking shots, drinking to meet people, drinking to get drunk, drinking with friends, and drinking under the age of 21. These questions were measured by answers that corresponded to a number which were strong disapproval (1), moderate disapproval (2), mild disapproval (3), wouldn't care (4), mild approval (5), moderate approval (6), and strong approval (7).

## 3. Results

On average, domestic and international students drank about 4 drinks on any one occasion in the past 30 days. In a typical week, students reported to be drinking about one day a week and on a typical day of drinking reported drinking about 2.5 drinks.

When analyzing international students only, in the last 30 days the average number of drinks consumed was 1.8 drinks. In a typical week, international students consumed alcohol on 0.6 days of the week and on the days in which they consumed alcohol, the students typically consumed about 1 drink.

Domestic and international students were analyzed about their acceptances of drinking behaviors (see Figure 1). Domestic students ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking alcohol every weekend than international students ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $t(3420) = 19.69$ ,  $p < .001$ . Domestic students ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) are more likely to think other students approve of drinking alcohol daily than international students ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ),  $t(3399) = 8.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . International students ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of driving a car after drinking than domestic students ( $M = 1.70$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ),  $t(3408) = 3.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking enough alcohol to pass out than international students ( $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ),  $t(3408) = 7.73$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 5.74$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of playing drinking games than international students ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ),  $t(3409) = 24.00$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 6.03$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking to have fun than international students ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ),  $t(3401) = 24.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking shots than international students ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ),  $t(3395) = 23.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking to meet people than international students ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ),  $t(3400) = 22.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking to get drunk than international students ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ),  $t(3399) = 22.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 6.06$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking with friends than international students ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ),  $t(3391) = 23.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Domestic students ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) are more likely to think that other students approve of drinking under the age of 21 than international students ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ),  $t(3400) = 24.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

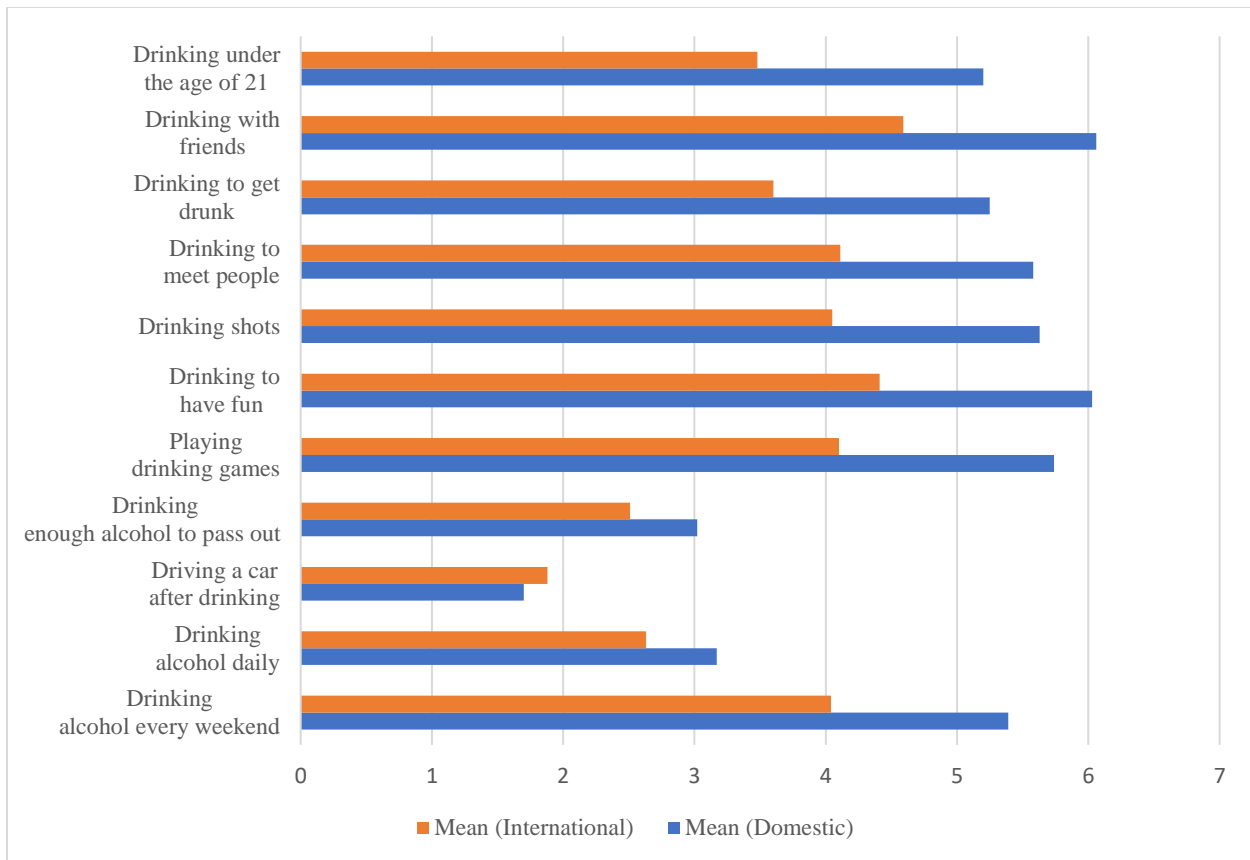


Figure 1. Mean acceptances of drinking behaviors for international and domestic college students

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between how accepting international students and domestic students found certain drinking behaviors. More specifically, examining how acceptable participants thought the typical student found each drinking behavior. There has been little research focusing on the acceptance rates of drinking behaviors when comparing domestic and international college students. There have been few studies examining binge drinking but little research on numerous drinking behaviors that were analyzed in this study.

It was hypothesized that international students would find a typical student to be more accepting of drinking under the age of 21, as the students come from countries where the drinking age is lower than 21. It was also hypothesized that domestic students would find the typical student to be more accepting of dangerous drinking behaviors such as binge drinking and drinking to pass out. It was also found that domestic students were more likely to consume alcohol on more occasions and were also more likely to consume more alcoholic drinks on more occasions than international students.

In almost every question where college students were asked to rank how acceptable they thought a typical student would find certain drinking behaviors, domestic students were found to think typical students would find these behaviors more acceptable than international students. The only question that international students thought typical students would find more acceptable was driving a car after drinking. This supports the hypothesis stating that domestic students would find the typical student to be more accepting of most drinking behaviors. Although unexpected results showed that the hypothesis stating that international students would believe the typical student would find drinking under the age of 21 more accepting than domestic students was refuted. Domestic students found drinking under the age of 21 to be a lot more accepted than international students did. The reason as to why this was the case was undetermined and more research would be needed to understand this finding.

There were a few limitations to this study. The survey method was one limitation to this study as this was self-reported data. There could be misleading information as well as missing data when using a self-reported method. There were some participants who did not answer every question and some participants who may have not interpreted the question the way it was expected to be. There was also no explanation as to why certain students found different drinking behaviors more acceptable. Another limitation was that there were more females than males and on average, females drink less drinks on one occasion than males. This could lower the average number of drinks consumed. The institution where the study was conducting was a predominantly white institution and therefore was limited in the diversity of students which could have altered answers if there was a more diverse group of students.

Future research should include a different method of obtaining data about drinking behavior acceptance rates. This can include interviews or a more in-depth survey method. Although a survey method will generate many responses and can be sent out to large populations, there is no answer as to why the students answered each question the way they did. Asking about the acceptances of other drinking behaviors may determine if international students would find those behaviors more accepting than domestic students. It would be useful to understand why certain groups of people found that the typical student would find certain behaviors more or less acceptable than other groups. This study had a majority of female participants, so expanding the male population would help better measure the number of drinks consumed by domestic and international students. It should also be further investigated as to why international students thought that the typical student would find most drinking behaviors less accepting than domestic students. Future research should also focus on obtaining results from a more diverse group of students, since the institution where data was collected had a predominantly white population. Having a more diverse population would also include collecting data from international students that were from a variety of countries rather than predominantly one country.

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