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**THESIS**

**AN ASSESSMENT OF ALCOHOL ABUSE BY MIDSHIPMEN  
AT THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY**

by

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June 2006

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF ALCOHOL ABUSE BY MIDSHIPMEN AT THE UNITED  
STATES NAVAL ACADEMY**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis utilized a multi-method approach to conduct exploratory research regarding the use and abuse of alcohol by midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy (USNA). Quantitative data were analyzed regarding midshipmen perceptions of abuse. Over 50% of midshipmen consider alcohol abuse as a problem at the Academy. Focus groups were conducted in order to gather qualitative data concerning midshipmen drinking behaviors. Midshipmen representing all four classes at USNA reported significant pressures not only to drink underage but to binge drink. The probability of binge drinking at USNA may be related to the fact that midshipmen are restricted in their use of alcohol; there exists an attitude that they need to make up for lost time by over-indulging when they do have the opportunity. Sixty-five percent of the female and 77% of the male midshipmen participants admitted binge drinking within the last six months (significantly higher than the national college average of 44%). Fear of jeopardizing future careers prevents midshipmen from getting the medical assistance they need for alcohol poisoning or concerns about alcohol dependency. Recommendations include "playing down" the novelty of drinking, providing more opportunities for responsible use, establishing alternate avenues for reporting midshipmen for medical help, holding the 1/c midshipmen accountable for modeling responsible alcohol use, and continuing to support the ADEO program and prevention education.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

Alcohol abuse on campuses across the nation has become an epidemic. Binge Drinking is one of the most concerning forms of abusive alcohol use and is far more destructive than most people realize. Surveys from the College of Alcohol Studies at the Harvard Department of Public Health reveal links between binge drinking and numerous—often potentially destructive—problematic behaviors (Weschler, 2002). The consequences of binge drinking include: diminished academic achievement, DUIs, physical injury, rape, and death.

At the United States Naval Academy students are just as susceptible to these dangers as any other college students. One difference between a midshipman and the average college student is that midshipmen are training to become Officers in the military. The Naval Academy's mission is:

*To develop midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty in order to provide graduates who are dedicated to a career of naval service and have potential for future development in mind and character to assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship and government.*

Rules and regulations at the Academy are established to mirror an operational ship. On average, over 25% of the Academy's major conduct cases are alcohol related. Poor conduct is only part of the concern though. There seems to be a prevalent attitude among midshipmen that because

opportunities for drinking at USNA are limited, that they therefore need to "make up for lost time" when they do have liberty. This perception, coupled with widespread perceptions that underage and binge drinking are implicitly tolerated—even celebrated—creates an environment in which both behaviors are likely to persist.

## **B. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which alcohol abuse is a problem at the academy and to examine behaviors that lead to the abuse. It identifies the problems associated with alcohol abuse and seeks understanding in order to prevent destructive behavior in the future.

## **C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

The primary research question is: How prevalent is alcohol abuse at the United States Naval Academy, specifically, underage and binge drinking? A number of secondary questions are: (1) Why do midshipmen drink? (2) Do midshipmen think alcohol abuse is problematic at the academy, and if so, how? (3) Are the pressures to drink at the academy different from other institutions? (4) How do students at USNA compare to the national averages of other colleges?

The methodology used in this research consisted of the following steps:

1. Conduct a literature search of journal articles, professional publications, and other information resources.
2. Analyze Values survey data, NAAA survey data and Climate survey data.

3. Collect data from midshipmen providing explanations of trends in behavior via focus groups.
4. Interview Deputy Commandant.

**D. BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

Through the literature review and the data analysis this study provides important information crucial to the prevention of alcohol abuse at this institution. It identifies specific characteristics unique to the midshipmen and where they perceive problematic drinking occurs.

**E. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This study begins with an introduction to Binge Drinking and the relevance of this topic to the Naval Academy. Chapter II offers a clear summary of binge drinking research from colleges across the nation as well as military populations. Chapter III explains the methodology used in the current study. Chapter IV presents results of the data analyses. Chapter V draws conclusions from the research and reviews the limitations of the study. Finally, the author offers several recommendations for USNA policy and future research on the topic.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Today we are here to talk about a very serious public health problem and our message is a simple but serious one, which is that alcohol abuse on college campuses has reached a point where it is far more destructive than most people realize and today it threatens too many of our young people. College students need to know that if they party to excess, they could die, and college administrators need to know that intervention is the only way to get this out of control behavior under control. [Chairman Leiberman, May 15, 2002 U.S. Senate]*

### A. INTRODUCTION

In order to confront alcohol abuse at the Naval Academy it is important to first assess to what extent it occurs. Reviewing studies conducted at other universities across the nation reveals several trends regarding abuse in the college age group. Although they are located in an institution with rules and regulations that restrict some of the autonomy and freedoms common of the college experience, midshipmen remain similar to other college students in most respects. Although these rules and regulations limit, to a certain extent, their use of alcohol; midshipmen are still susceptible to the pressures and influences of alcohol.

### Operational Definitions of Alcohol Abuse and Dependence

The desire to categorize and diagnose mental disorders has been emerging since the first census in 1840 (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" or "DSM-IV" is the

primary reference for diagnosing a mental disorder. By having operationally defined categories codified by clear symptoms, care-providers can more readily diagnose and treat individuals with disorders.

The DSM-IV identifies alcohol as the most frequently used brain depressant and the cause of substantial morbidity and mortality in most cultures (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Ninety percent of adults in the United States have had some experience with alcohol. Sixty percent of men and 30% of women have experienced one or more alcohol-related adverse incidents, such as drinking and driving, missing school or work due to hangover (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Alcohol abuse, as defined by the DSM-IV, requires fewer symptoms than alcohol dependence and can only be diagnosed, once dependence is ruled out. Below are the requirements for each diagnosis.

*Alcohol abuse* is defined as:

*A maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by one (or more) of the following:*

- 1. recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home (e.g., repeated absences or poor work performance related to substance use; substance-related absences, suspensions, or expulsions from school; neglect of children or household)*
- 2. recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (e.g., driving an automobile or operating a machine when impaired by substance use)*

3. recurrent substance-related legal problems (e.g., arrests for substance-related disorderly conduct)
4. continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance (e.g., arguments with spouse about consequences of intoxication, physical fights) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 214.

Alcohol dependence is defined by the American Psychiatric Association (2000) as:

A maladaptive pattern of substance use, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time in the same 12-month period:

1. Tolerance, as defined by either of the following:
  - a need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or desired effect
  - markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance
2. Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:
  - the characteristic withdrawal syndrome for the substance
  - the same (or close to it) substance is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms
3. The substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended
4. There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
5. A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance (e.g., long distance drives), use the substance, or recover from its effects

6. *Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use*
7. *The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance (continued drinking despite recognition that an ulcer was made worse by alcohol consumption) (p. 213).*

Rather than focusing on specific Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) levels and the amounts that individuals drink, medical providers focus on the behaviors associated with their drinking. For the purposes of this study, the author has identified underage drinking and binge drinking as alcohol abuse. Binge drinking which will be defined and explained later in this chapter was defined according to levels that were associated with problematic behavior.

#### **B. ALCOHOL ABUSE AND DEPENDENCE IN COLLEGE**

In 1998, a study was initiated to measure the number of 18-24 year old United States college students who annually experience alcohol-related deaths, injuries and other health problems (Greenbaum, 2004; Hingson, 2002). Data were gathered and analyzed for all 18-24 year olds from the following sources: National Highway Traffic Safety data, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Education college enrollment data, results of national coroners studies, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the CDC National College Health Risk Behavior Survey and the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Survey (CAS). The findings of this study were presented to the U.S. Senate on 15 May, 2002. Some of the most salient outcomes included the following:

In 1998 there were approximately

- 1400 alcohol-related unintentional injury deaths among U.S. college students of which 1100 were alcohol-related traffic deaths.

In 2001, a national survey of students between the ages of 18 and 24 revealed that:

- 2.1 million drove under the influence of alcohol
- 500,000 were injured because of drinking
- 400,000 had unprotected sex because of drinking
- 100,000 had sexual intercourse when they were so intoxicated they were unable to give consent
- over 600,000 college students were hit or assaulted by another drinking college student
- 70,000 were victims of a sexual assault or date rape by another drinking college student

(Greenbaum, 2004; Hingson, 2002, Senate, 2002)

### **1. Underage Drinking**

"Illegal" drinking in college dates back to the early days of the nation's first educational institution. During prohibition, drunken, rebellious Harvard students were known to terrorize the town of Cambridge, blowing up buildings with gunpowder (Nuwer, 1999). These offenses were not taken lightly; the consequence of any rowdiness at that time was expulsion. It appears that college-age drinking is not a new phenomenon.

In 1975 the legal drinking age was lowered to 18 years of age, from 21 (Nuwer, 1999; Wechsler, 2002). In the 1980s, the number of deaths as a result of drivers under the influence of alcohol, under the age of 21 skyrocketed. By the time the drinking limit was raised back to 21 years

of age in 1985, a culture of drinking had already taken residence on college campuses nationwide (Nuwer, 1999; Wechsler, 2002). Although the law changed, a degree of entitlement still existed for those who were allowed to vote or serve their country in war, but were not yet 21. While this law may be difficult for college administrators to enforce, it has resulted in a decrease in the number of fatal automobile accidents that involved drivers under the age of 21 (Nuwer, 1999; Wechsler, 2002).

Research indicates that patterns of drinking are often initiated well before high school. Over the last 35 years, the mean age at which young people start drinking alcohol has steadily decreased (Wechsler, 2002; Zeigler, 2005). Statistics show that more than half of all eighth graders have tried alcohol (Wechsler, 2002). Further, four out of five high school seniors admit to trying alcohol and 30% of high school seniors admitted to binge drinking - defined as consuming five or more drinks in a row (Wechsler, 2002). These behaviors do not end with high school. Most likely, if students drink underage in high school, they will continue to do so in college as well (Zeigler, 2005).

Students who start drinking before age 21 have an increased risk of unintentional injuries and involvement in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes as adults (Wechsler, 2002; Zeigler 2005). The total cost attributed to the consequences of underage drinking was estimated to be \$53 billion in 2002, based on Dr. Henry Wechsler's national College Alcohol Studies conducted for the Harvard School of Public Health (The College Alcohol Studies (CAS), 2005).

## **2. Binge Drinking**

As mentioned previously, the definition of alcohol abuse includes recurrent substance use that results in interference with work or school, legal problems associated with disorderly conduct, or social problems (fights). Any one of these behaviors can lead to a clinical diagnosis of alcohol abuse. Historically, "binge" drinking referred to a period of heavy drinking (approximately three days) characteristic of alcoholic patients (NIAAA, 2005).

A standard definition of binge drinking started by the Harvard College of Alcohol Study defines binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks in a row for males, and four or more for females (CAS, 2005; NIAAA, 2002; Nuwer, 1999; Wechsler, 2002; Weitzman, 2004; Zeigler, 2005). This has become a key measure in estimating the prevalence of binge drinking on college campuses. This new standard definition of binge drinking has proven to be directly correlated with negative consequences on campus. "Light" or "moderate" drinking is not as strongly associated with the negative consequences that "heavy" or binge drinking generates.

While the definition does not specify a certain period of time, the words "in a row" indicate a pattern of use within a discrete time period rather than a specific blood alcohol level. Although individuals become intoxicated at different rates, based on body weight and the period of time during which alcohol is consumed, the intent of the definition is to focus on a pattern of drinking more than several drinks "in a row," meaning over a short period of time (NIAAA, 2002; Wechsler, 2002).

Research suggests that two in five college students, including freshmen, engage in an episode of binge drinking at least once in the past two weeks (CAS 2005; NIAAA, 2002, Wechsler, 2002). A recent study indicated the number of frequent binge drinkers (defined as three times or more in the past two weeks) is on the rise, while paradoxically the number of students who do not drink is also growing (CAS, 2005; NIAAA, 2002; Wechsler, 2002).

The College of Alcohol Survey data (CAS, 2005; Wechsler, 2002) showed that 6% of college students have already acquired an alcohol dependent diagnosis (similar to alcoholism). Forty-four percent of students reported at least one symptom of either abuse or dependence. Eighty-six percent of the women and 76% of the men who were frequent binge drinkers actually thought they were just moderate to light drinkers.

Heavy drinking has become steeped in the culture, beliefs, and customs in many colleges across the nation. Alcohol overdoses have been the direct cause of numerous fatalities on college campuses. Among the biggest proponents of binge drinking are college and university fraternities and sororities.

### **3. Case Studies**

The following are case studies of "famous" instances of accidental death as a result of binge drinking. The cases were chosen from a substantial number of cases that drew national attention, and includes one that hit hard in the heart of Annapolis at the United States Naval Academy. The first three were drawn from a book called, *Wrongs of Passage*, which studied fraternities and sororities and

their devastating hazing practices. The problem with studying statistics is that they do not adequately show the impact of the loss of just one individual. Each of the statistics previously mentioned is associated with a human life, and the devastation to friends and family. Here are several examples of lives altered as a result of this epidemic.

**Daniel Reardon, 19 - died 14 February, 2002**

Danny was a freshman at the University of Maryland when he was found unconscious at his fraternity house in February of 2002. He was in cardiac arrest and not breathing when paramedics arrived at the Phi Sigma Kappa house on College Park's Fraternity Row, just hours after having accepted a bid to pledge there. Excessive drinking caused him to fall into a coma. His blood alcohol level was 0.50. Daniel was in bed for a week before his parents made the decision to take him off life support (Dentzer, 2002; Senate, 2002). Danny's father, Dr. Reardon, addressed the Senate on 15 May, 2002, pleading for change. He mentioned that there was a previous death at a fraternity house just two houses down from Danny's, five months previous to Danny's death (Senate, 2002).

**Chad Saucier, 19 - died 10 Dec, 1993**

Chad was pledging at Auburn University's Phi Delta Theta chapter. After a ritualistic night of drinking for the pledges, Chad was found snoring near some bushes next to an air conditioning unit outside the fraternity house. He was covered in vomit. Members carried him to a bed where they put a pillow under his head and covered him with

a comforter. He was bleeding from broken glass that had cut into his skin as he was dragged along the floor. Members were reassured that he was fine since he was snoring.

When a member checked on him later, his breathing had become shallow and vomit covered the pillow. Members tried CPR, hoping to revive him. Once the paramedics arrived, they ranked Chad's condition as "unresponsive," the lowest value on a four-point scale. He did not have a heart beat and was unresponsive to sounds or pain. The snoring had actually been a sign that his respiratory system was shutting down. After death his blood alcohol level was determined to be .353 (Nuwer, 1999).

**Gabriel "Gabe" Higgins, died 1998**

Gabe was a freshman at the University of Texas being initiated into a prestigious organization called the "Cowboys." On a camping trip, groups of pledges or "Newmen" were required to chug bottles of MD 20/20 while kneeling or sitting on the ground. The one who could down the most without vomiting would be declared the "winner." Although friends seemed concerned as Gabe got more and more drunk, the games continued and he continued to compete. After much more drinking, the spirited Newmen made a run for the river. It was dark but as one of the members said,

Everyone was helping each other out, making sure everyone was safe and not hurt and pointing out dangers for each other. It made me feel close to the other guys and was a neat experience I will remember forever (Nuwer, 1999, p. 213).

Although Cowboy members realized Gabe was missing at 2:30AM, nobody called for help until 11:30, nine hours later. Gabe's body was recovered from the river at 4:46PM. Later his blood alcohol level was determined to be .21.

**Midshipman Jay Dixon, 21 - died 9 April, 2005**

Midshipman second class Dixon climbed out his fourth story window of Bancroft Hall at the United States Naval Academy, to smoke after a night of drinking. Shipmates knew he was intoxicated and he was also known to smoke on the ledge outside his window. An NCIS investigation determined that his fall was accidental and perhaps due to the fact that he was intoxicated (Kelly, 2005).

Although each of these unfortunate and avoidable deaths was accidental, in each case alcohol was either the direct cause of their death or a contributing factor. In each of these cases, the friends of the victims thought they were "taking care of" each other. In many cases, emergency care is available, yet students fear consequences such as expulsion, so authorities are not notified until it is too late to do anything for the victim. This fear is applicable whenever there is a party with underage drinking involved at civilian, and especially military, schools.

**4. School Rituals**

Every college seems to have unique rituals within its culture. Some of these rituals promote heavy drinking as part of tradition or as one component of initiation procedures. Texas A&M had their bonfire until a dozen students were killed and 27 injured after it collapsed November 19, 1999 (Wechsler, 2002). Students had not used strong enough bailing wire and had skipped the use of

auxiliary cables. While the actual accident was blamed on the weakness of the superstructure, significant drinking was involved despite student leaders prohibiting alcohol.

At the University of Dayton, Homecoming had to be suspended in the fall of 2000 (Wechsler, 2000). The celebration had attracted over 7,500 people to a weekend-long party that resulted in students and alumni terrorizing neighborhoods, setting fires, acting lewd and drunken in public.

Some rituals include games that require players to consume a certain number of shots or drink a certain number of beers in a set amount of time. Other drinking games call for drinking whenever the rules dictate. With this kind of forced intoxication, students are less likely to pay attention to physical limits, and continue drinking when they would have normally passed out (Wechsler, 2002). A Google search for the phrase "drinking games" on the internet resulted in 4,650,000 hits with sites offering drinking game ideas and instructions.

## **5. College Myths**

Henry Wechsler's book, *Dying to Drink* (Wechsler, 2002) outlines several myths often associated with heavy drinking. These myths are prevalent throughout research on this subject matter and are likely to fuel pathologic drinking patterns.

*Work hard, play hard* (Wechsler, 2002, p.19)

Students often take pride in their "work hard, play hard" motto, but research has shown that those who play hard are less likely to work hard. Binge drinkers are more likely to miss class, fall behind with school work, and

tend to have lower grades than those who do not binge drink (Wechsler, 2002). Studies have revealed drinking was associated with 15 minutes less studying per day per drink on each occasion (Wechsler, 2002). Academics were determined to be affected as much as a half a grade on a person's GPA for those who drank approximately five drinks per occasion (Wechsler, 2002). The Core Drug and Alcohol Survey, conducted by the Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, discovered that students who reported D and F grade point averages consumed an average of 11 alcoholic drinks per week while those who had an A average consumed only three drinks a week (Core Drug and Alcohol Survey, 1996).

Not only do the individuals who chose to binge drink suffer academically, their roommates do as well. A recent study conducted at a large state university determined that males were significantly affected by their roommates' drinking habits (females were not). Male students whose roommates were frequent drinkers had GPAs 0.18 points lower in their first year and 0.43 lower in their second year (Kremer, 2003).

*As an individual, it's up to me to drink responsibly. I'm in control. I can handle my liquor.* (Wechsler, 2002, p.20)

Unfortunately, the nature of alcohol does not support this myth. First of all, alcohol is a mood altering substance that impairs judgment. As a person drinks more and more, they are in less able to judge when they have had enough to drink. Second, alcohol is an addictive drug that changes brain chemistry in a way that makes a person

dependent on alcohol (Wechsler, 2002). As mentioned earlier from the results of the College of Alcohol Survey, 6% of college students have already acquired an alcohol dependence diagnosis similar to alcoholism. Based on the previous statistics of college students who abuse alcohol and become dependent, most students cannot "control" their alcohol.

*Everybody does it.* (Wechsler, 2002, p.21)

Actually, research shows that 56% of college students choose not to binge drink (CAS, 2005; Wechsler, 2002). Twenty percent abstain from alcohol altogether. Of the schools surveyed, one in four schools had binge drinking rates of 33% or lower; and one in three schools had a rate of 51% or higher. While some students believe that it is prevalent, the reality is that most college students do not engage in binge drinking.

*Smart people don't binge drink; academically demanding schools are safe from binge drinking.* (Wechsler, 2002, p.22)

Studies have not found any link between SATs and drinking behavior (Wechsler, 2002). In fact, as academic environments become more stressful, the likelihood that students will drink as soon as they get to the weekend or a holiday, may increase (Greenbaum, 2005). This type of drinking can be even more dangerous, as a result of the lack of experience or tolerance. This pattern may result in an overdose which could range in outcome from alcohol poisoning to death.

*Alcohol is not that harmful; there are lots of things that are worse. After all, it's only beer. (Wechsler, 2002, p.23)*

Although alcohol seems harmless enough in a fun setting, many harmful outcomes are directly related to alcohol consumption. While drinking is often associated with celebration and social interaction in a light manner, there is another side to this drug. Alcohol is a depressant and is also associated with impaired judgment, sullenness, gloominess, and irritability (Dawson, 1998). While the lighter, more fun, influences are harmless, the darker side-effects can cause serious behavioral problems. It is not surprising that alcohol consumption is significantly correlated with episodes of suicidal and violent behavior (Dawson, 1998).

*My drinking is my own business; it doesn't hurt anyone else. (Wechsler, 2002, p.23)*

While drunkenness can seem fun for those inebriated, 75% of college student report having bad experiences due to someone else's drinking (CAS, 2005; Wechsler, 2002). Those bad experiences can range anywhere from having sleep or study time interrupted to being humiliated, insulted, or physically assaulted.

*Drinking is a rite of passage. Boys will be boys. They'll grow out of it. (Wechsler, 2002, p.26)*

While some students do grow out of the drinking stage, many grow into a pattern of behavior that haunts them for the rest of their lives. A large number will sustain

injuries, trauma, loss of education opportunities, and even death as a result of this "rite of passage" (CAS, 2005).

## **6. Sexual Assaults**

As mentioned previously, in 2001, 70,000 college students were victims of sexual assault or date rape by another drinking college student (Hingson, 2002; CAS, 2005). About half of all sexual assault incidents among college age individuals involve the use of alcohol or other drugs by the perpetrator, the victim, or both (Testa, 2004; NIAAA, 2002). Alcohol is associated with aggressive behavior in men, sometime leading to sexual assaults. For women, alcohol can impair cognitive abilities, reducing capability to recognize sexual aggression risk. In an interview with CBS Radio News, Henry Wechsler, director of College Alcohol Studies at the Harvard School of Public Health, said,

Women need to be alerted to dangerous situations where there's a lot of drinking and men need to be alerted to the fact that having sexual relations with a woman who is intoxicated is rape. (Binge Drinking, Rapes are Related, 2004, p.1).

From this interview, Wechsler also revealed that almost one in 20 of the women who participated in the College Alcohol Survey reported being raped, and 72% of the victims reported being intoxicated while being raped.

## **C. ALCOHOL IN THE MILITARY**

The "Right Spirit" and De-glamorization Campaign is the Navy's Alcohol Abuse Prevention program. This Navy-wide program was established to support the fleet in fighting alcohol and drug abuse. The program's website

emphasizes education as the key to this campaign. Although alcohol abuse is prevalent in the fleet, it is not widely assessed or well-documented.

Sailors take pride in the motto, "work hard, play hard." Studies comparing military personnel to their civilian counterparts show an increased tendency to use and abuse alcohol in the military (Bray, 1995; Federman, 2000). This was most pronounced when the female population in the military was compared to their civilian counterparts.

Women in the military were much more likely to drink heavily (Federman, 2000). One-third of the men in the military reported binge drinking on a regular basis (Bray, 1995). These rates are shown to increase when members of the military are in a deployment status. The deployment statistics are especially disconcerting because they directly affect military performance in the fleet. During deployments, women are three times more likely to report heavy alcohol use (Federman, 2000). Military deployments are supposed to reflect a maximum level of military readiness. It is troubling that deployments are associated with such an increase in heavy drinking.

Of course heavy drinking affects health, social life, family relationships, and work performance. Military life is already stressful on families due to long periods of time away from home. Alcohol abuse often complicates these situations, placing more stress on the military members, while the original reason for drinking might have been to relax.

A recent study on the prevention of alcohol abuse in the Navy was released in March of 2006. It appears that

alcohol abuse has declined 25% from 1980 to 2002, according to the DOD Survey of Health Related Behaviors (Naval Inspector General NAVINSGEN, 2006). Despite this drop in abuse, 40% of Navy personnel still reported moderate to heavy drinking in 2002. The Navy also had an increase in reported alcohol related incidents (ARIs) and driving under the influence (DUIs) between the fiscal year 2002 and 2005 (NAVINSGEN, 2006).

The Navy spends over \$175 million per year in direct costs combating alcohol abuse (NAVINSGEN, 2006). These costs include training, screening, replacement and treating alcohol abuse. Other indirect costs are lost productivity, legal costs, damage to property, and injuries, which add approximately one billion dollars per year in additional costs. Yet, these estimates do not capture the pain and suffering that accompanies the loss of a loved one. The Navy's official policy is "responsible use" of alcohol. Currently, the Navy is taking a stance against alcohol abuse and working to improve prevention programs.

#### **D. USNA AND ALCOHOL**

The United States Naval Academy is unique among American colleges. Every summer approximately 1200 of America's best and brightest are carefully selected to join the Brigade of Midshipmen. After a thorough admissions process, they report to the Academy on Induction Day, where they are stripped of everything civilian within hours.

I-Day starts with freshly graduated high school students lined up outside Alumni Hall in civilian clothes, and ends with "Plebes" in crisp uniforms and identical haircuts being marched around by upper class midshipmen.

The first thing they are taught are their five basic responses: "yes, Sir/Ma'am; no, Sir/Ma'am; I'll find out, Sir/Ma'am; Aye, Aye, Sir/Ma'am; and No Excuse Sir/Ma'am."

Plebes are the most restricted of all of the classes at the academy. With each year, midshipmen gain new privileges. With punishment, they lose privileges. Plebes are not authorized to drink alcohol the entire first year (even if of age) unless they are on leave. Plebes are not authorized to have civilian clothes or cars. Youngsters (sophomores) are not authorized to wear civilian clothes or drive cars, unless they are on "weekend" and outside 22 miles from the Academy perimeter. Youngsters are permitted to stay out overnight on Saturdays only a few times each semester. When they do, they sign out with their company so they are accounted for. Second-Class (Juniors) have liberty on Tuesday and Friday night during the week, usually from their last military obligation until midnight. First-Class have liberty Tuesday, Thursday and Friday during the same time periods. During the week, midshipmen must wear their uniform for liberty, but they are permitted to drink alcohol. Usually they walk downtown Annapolis for drinks and socializing. All midshipmen reside in one dorm, Bancroft Hall. Alcohol is not authorized in Bancroft Hall. (U.S. Naval Academy 3<sup>rd</sup> Company Officer, Personal Communication with LT Ghislaine Stonaker, May 23, 2006).

Midshipmen conduct is governed by the Commandant's Instruction COMDTMIDNINST 1610.2C. This manual spells out conduct and includes process and procedures relating to all violations. Violations are graded by severity with a 1000-level offense being the lowest (e.g., wearing deteriorated/discreditable uniform or improperly shaven) to

the maximum, a 6000-level offense (e.g., hazing or fraternization). The most common violations associated with alcohol include:

- Under the influence of Alcohol and bringing discredit upon the Naval Service 5000-6000
- Obscene, profane, provoking, or improper language or gestures 3000-4000
- Aiding/Abetting an alcohol offense 5000-6000
- Drinking, possessing, or introduction of alcohol into Bancroft hall or aboard ship 6000
- Drinking or under the influence while on duty 5000
- Drunk Driving, or driving under the influence of alcohol 6000 (COMDTMIDINST, 2005, p.9-10)

A 6000 level offense can be a separation-level offense, but at the minimum includes marching tours, standing restriction, and being assigned demerits. In addition, midshipmen are penalized with a negative grade on their semester military fitness reports which count toward their service selection.

Of the 1854 conduct offenses so far in the 2006 academic year, 102 have been alcohol related (U.S. Naval Academy Conduct Officer, Personal Communication with LT Timm Heisey, May 11, 2006). Five of the six midshipmen separated by the Superintendent so far for academic year 2006, were separated for alcohol-related incidents.

Recently, the Naval Academy has been in the national media as a result of two on-going investigations for alleged sexual assault. In the most high visibility case, the star-quarterback for the Naval Academy's football team has been charged with raping a female midshipman in her dorm room (Holley, 2006; Olson, March, 2006). The alleged

victim had consumed eight to ten drinks in less than two hours at a bar in Annapolis. She is underage. The accused had also been drinking prior to the incident.

In the second case, another football player is accused of indecent assault, indecent acts, and conduct unbecoming of an officer. In this case, both the victim and the accused had been drinking significant amounts of alcohol. He is being accused of committing the offenses listed above after picking her up out of a bed in a hotel room where other midshipmen were sleeping and putting her in another bed where he allegedly assaulted her (Olson, May 2006).

Literature has shown that alcohol abuse is widespread across colleges nation-wide. There are prevalent themes among young adults revolving around the perceived harmlessness of binge drinking. In an effort to evaluate drinking behaviors at the Naval Academy, behaviors at other schools were first researched. Statistics from both the Navy and the Naval Academy were reviewed as a first indicator of how prevalent the abuse is. It is a known fact that midshipmen frequently get in trouble (with the conduct system) for alcohol related incidents. This study attempts to further explore: 1) *Why do midshipmen drink?* (2) *Do midshipmen think alcohol abuse is problematic at the academy, and if so, how?* (3) *Are the pressures to drink at the academy different from other institutions?* (4) *How do students at USNA compare to the national averages of other colleges?*

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### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The research in this study focused on the abuse of alcohol in the form of underage drinking and binge drinking. The methodology used for research was both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data were collected from surveys, while the qualitative data were collected through short interviews and focus groups.

The overall methodology used consisted of the following steps:

Literature review

1. Analyze survey data
2. Design and conduct focus groups
3. Conduct interviews
4. Analyze focus group data themes using qualitative inductive data analysis procedures
5. Discuss results with emphasis on prevalent themes

#### B. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

##### 1. Values Survey

This survey was administered in the Fall to all midshipmen except the new freshmen. For the purpose of this study, data were used for academic years 2002-2005. The specific question used for this research was:

*"Is alcohol abuse is a serious problem at USNA?"*

The responses were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree,

to strongly agree. Table 1 illustrates the number of participants of the survey by academic year.

Table 1. Values Survey Participants.

2002			2003		
Class	Male	Female	Class	Male	Female
2004	860	170	2005	912	167
2003	773	134	2004	828	146
2002	787	127	2003	807	134
Total	2420	431	Total	2547	447
N		2851	N		2994

2004			2005		
Class	Male	Female	Class	Male	Female
2006	849	158	2007	847	175
2005	758	141	2006	741	130
2004	763	148	2005	746	138
Total	2370	447	Total	2334	443
N		2817	N		2777

## 2. NAAA Survey

This survey was administered to all varsity athletes in the fall, winter and spring sports seasons of their last year of eligibility. Most of the participants were senior athletes, although underclassman could be eligible if they used eligibility prior to coming to the academy. For the purpose of this study, data were used for sports seasons 2002-2005. The specific question used for this study was:

*"In your view, to what extent is alcohol abuse a problem among athletes at USNA?"*

Responses were given in a three-point Likert scale ranging from not at all, to some extent, to great extent. Table 2 illustrates the number of participants of the survey by graduating class.

Table 2. NAAA Survey Participants.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Male	151	147	139	151	0
Female	31	26	40	39	1
Total	182	173	179	190	1
					725

### 3. Brigade Climate Survey

This survey was administered to half of the student body (brigade) after the 2005 Spring break in order to provide "real time" data on the climate of the brigade. Since this survey was created after the focus groups, more specific questions applicable to this research were incorporated. The survey included 57 questions regarding satisfaction with company leadership, fraternization, alcohol use and abuse, discrimination and overall climate. Here are the questions pertaining to alcohol use and abuse:

Table 3. Climate Survey Questions

<i>How often have you observed alcohol stowed in company spaces?</i>
<i>How often have you observed midshipmen consuming alcohol in your company spaces?</i>
<i>How often have you observed underage drinking by midshipmen in your company?</i>
<i>How often have you observed members of your company binge drinking (defined as having more than five beers, or five glasses of alcohol or wine in one sitting)?</i>
<i>If drinking became a problem with anyone in my company, I feel confident my company mates would appropriately address it.</i>

All of these questions were answered on a six-point Likert scale with the options:

Table 4. Climate Survey Responses

Never
Rarely (once or twice since the Fall reform)
Occasionally (about 3-5 times since the Fall reform)
Often (about once a month since the Fall reform)
All the time (regularly observed)
No opinion

Table 3 shows the number of students who participated in the Climate Survey.

Table 5. Brigade Climate Survey Participants.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Male</b>	235	278	324	270
<b>Female</b>	54	54	74	78
<b>Total</b>	289	332	398	348
<b>N</b>				1367

**C. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

In order to capture more in-depth information regarding midshipmen behavior and alcohol abuse, focus groups were designed using qualitative inductive data analysis research methods (Patton, 1997).

**1. Participant Selection**

Participants were randomly selected by company officers by class and gender. Appendix A contains a list of the 61 participants broken down by age gender and class. The company officers were not informed of the subject of the topic of the research.

**2. Conduct of the Focus Groups**

The focus groups were conducted in a classroom in Luce Hall. The facilitator began by thanking the participants for their time and explaining the purpose of the research. Next, the facilitator explained the procedures by which questions would be asked and answered. Each participant

was assigned a number that would be associated with their demographics (age, class, and gender), which were written on an index card. The discussions were recorded and transcribed using numbers for identification in the place of names. This procedure was explained in order to assure the confidentiality of the discussions. Participants were encouraged to be open and honest in their discussions.

**a. Index Card Activity**

Participants were asked to start off with writing one word or phrase that described their overall feeling about underage drinking here at the Naval Academy. Below the word or phrase they were asked to indicate with a number 1 through 5, how prevalent they thought underage drinking was here (1 - low, 5 - high). Each question was presented on an MS PowerPoint slide as the facilitator asked them.

Next, "binge drinking" was defined as five drinks for men and four drinks for women in one sitting. Several groups asked for clarification of this definition. It was explained that binge drinking is described that way as a behavior rather than a specific blood alcohol level. One sitting was explained to be, for example, one night of liberty, rather than a set period of time. Once again participants were asked to write one word or phrase that described their overall feeling about binge drinking here at the Naval Academy and then rank the prevalence.

After each index card activity, participants were asked to state their assigned number and then describe what they wrote and why. While the index card information

provided quick reference answers, transcripts from the discussions provided more in depth explanations for their reasoning.

**b. Roundtable Activity**

Participants were asked to break off into groups of three to four students. With one blank sheet of paper and one pen per group, students were asked to write a response on the sheet of paper and say it out loud and then quickly pass the paper to the next person in their group. Appendix B includes the questions asked during this activity. The students were instructed to keep passing the paper around the group for two minutes. Participants could say "pass" after writing at least one response.

**c. Ranking Activity**

After each of the roundtable activities, participants were asked to discuss their list and rank-order the top three answers with the most common first. Once the activities were finished, each team was asked to designate one person to vocalize their results.

**d. Minute Paper**

In order to gain personal information from each participant, a minute paper was designed. Prior to passing out this questionnaire, it was explained that these answers would not be discussed as a group since they asked for more personal responses. This minute paper is included in Appendix C.

**D. DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS**

**1. Survey Processing**

Data from each of the surveys were analyzed using SPSS to break down the responses by gender, age, and class. Several Descriptive analyses were used in order to

determine how each group answered the various questions about alcohol abuse. Chapter IV will display tables and graphs with these results.

## **2. Qualitative Analysis**

Each focus group was tape recorded and transcribed following each session. The transcriptions were reviewed in order to identify common themes throughout the focus groups. By consolidating similar ideas and analyzing the frequency of the themes, the author was able present the most prevalent data presented (Patton, 1997). These results are presented in Chapter IV.

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## **IV. DATA ANALYSIS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to organize, display, and analyze the data collected in this multi-method study. The data were grouped into two categories. First, quantitative data collected through various surveys are presented. Second, data collected in focus groups and personal interviews are presented. Third, emerging themes across the diverse data sources are highlighted and discussed.

### **B. QUANTITATIVE DATA**

#### **1. Values Survey**

Data collected through the Values Survey were categorized by the academic year the survey was given. Figure 1 illustrates midshipmen responses to whether or not alcohol abuse is perceived as a problem at the Naval Academy. Responses were consolidated into categories of "strongly agree or agree" and "strongly disagree or disagree," with neutral answers omitted, to look for trends over the past few years.

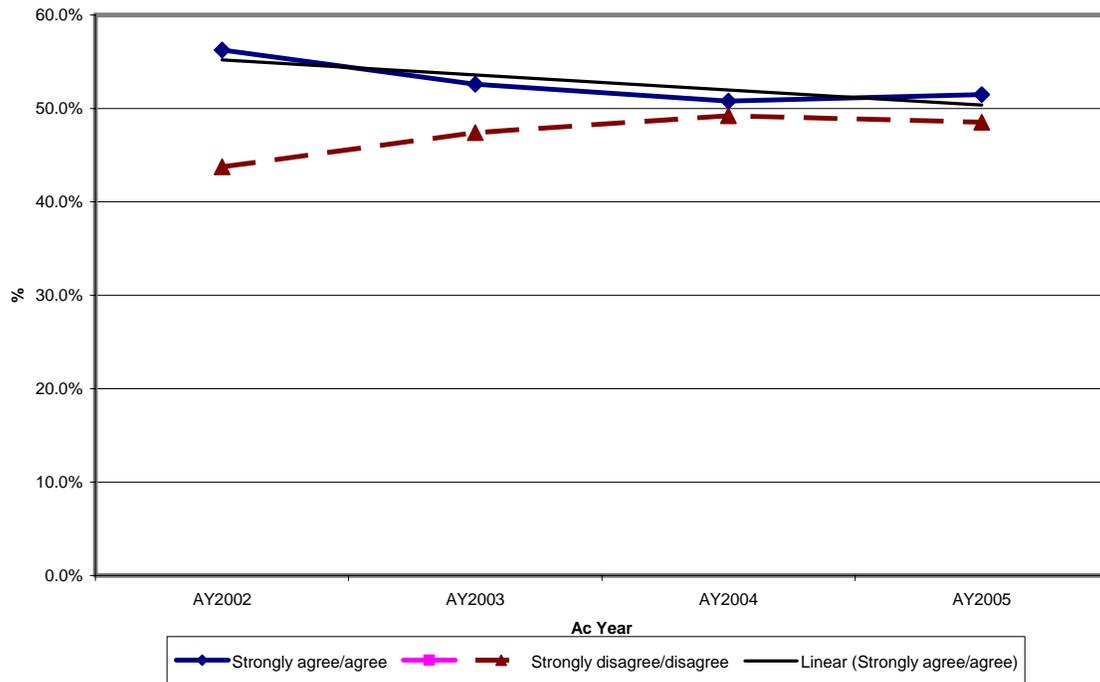


Figure 1. Alcohol abuse is a problem at the Naval Academy.

Figure 1 shows that over 50% of the students surveyed think that alcohol abuse is a problem at the Naval Academy, while slightly less than half disagree. The linear line represents a trend over the past three years, showing a 5% decline in perceptions of abuse.

Since drinking behaviors differ for men and for women, data were further broken down by gender. Figure 2 shows the responses of women surveyed and Figure 3 shows the responses of the men surveyed.

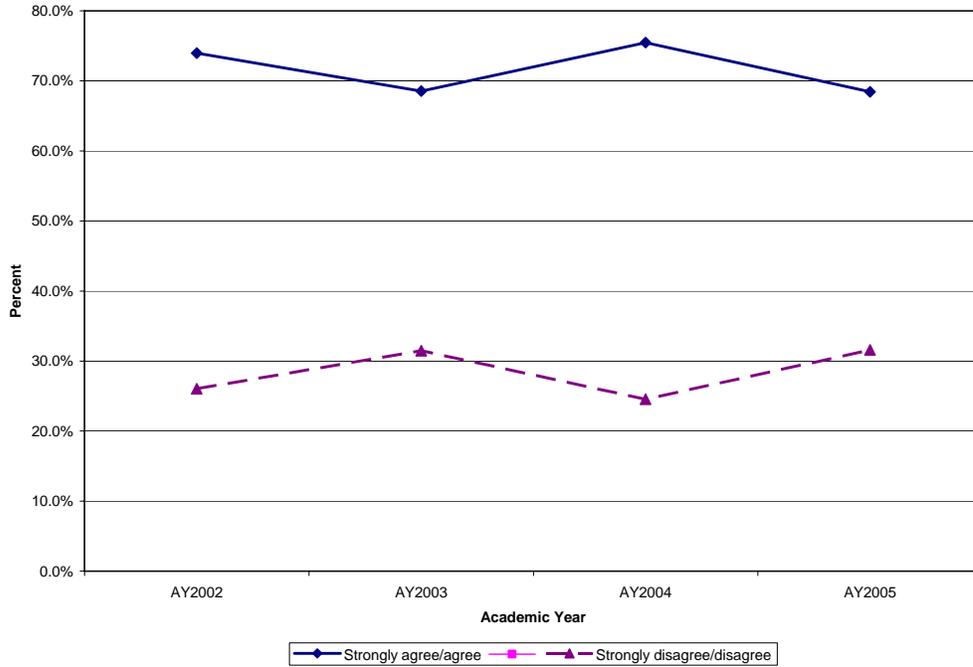


Figure 2. Alcohol is a serious problem at the Naval Academy - Females.

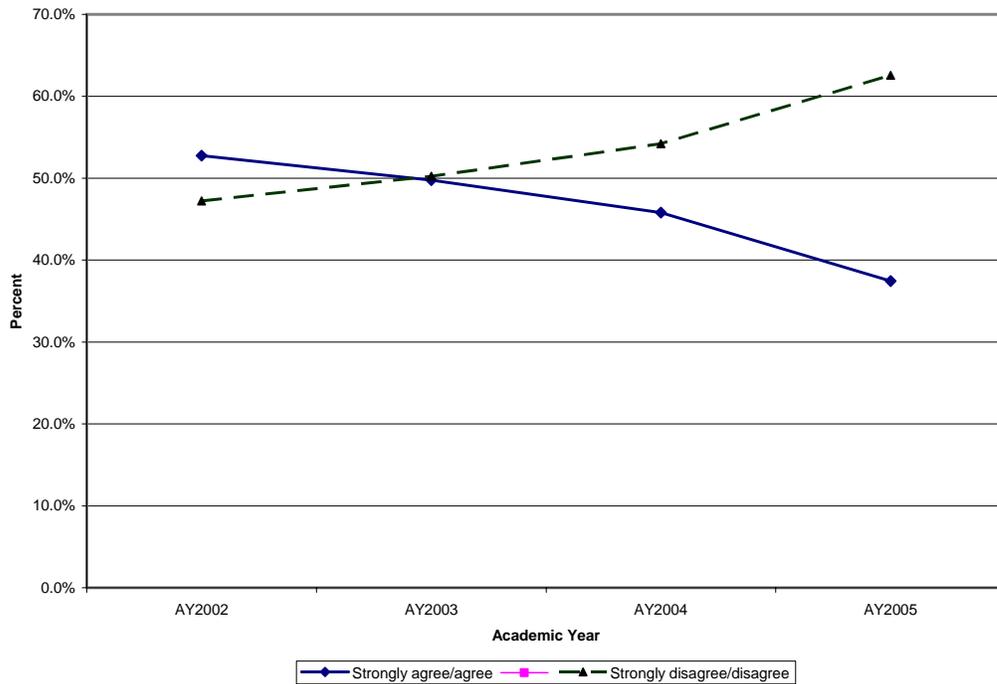


Figure 3. Alcohol is a serious problem at the Naval Academy - Males.

Figure 2 shows that approximately 70% of the females surveyed consistently thought alcohol abuse is a serious problem at the Naval Academy. Figure 3 shows that the percentage of males that perceived alcohol to be a problem decreased steadily over three years.

## 2. NAAA Survey

Figure 4 below shows the responses of athletes surveyed during the fall, winter and spring sports seasons of their last year of eligibility. The responses "to some extent" and "to great extent" were combined as "at least sometimes" for this illustration. The following figure shows that on average, fewer than 50% of athletes think alcohol abuse is a problem among athletes at the Academy.

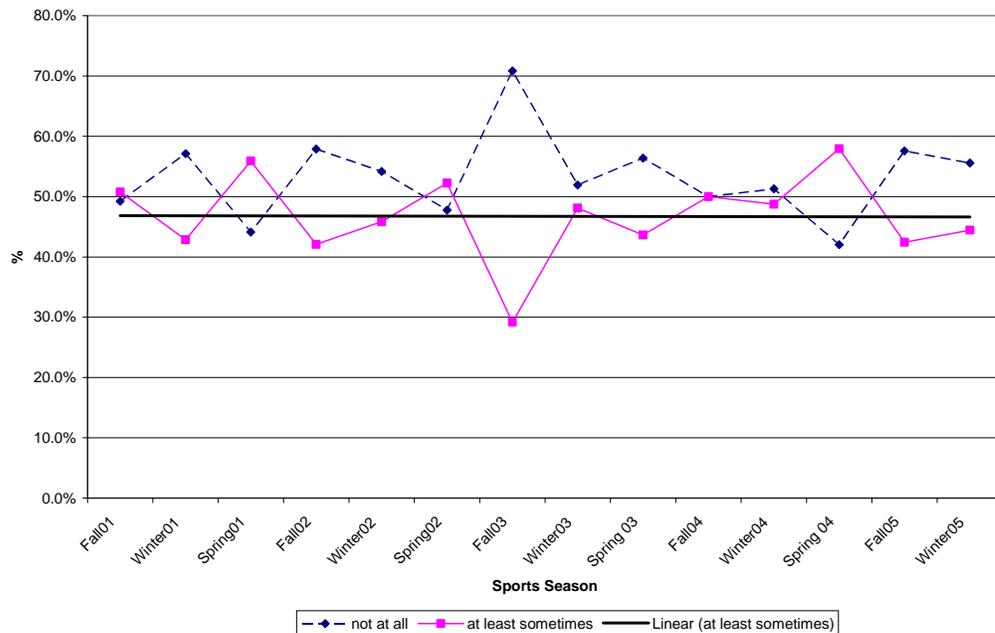


Figure 4. In your view, to what extent is alcohol abuse a problem among ATHLETES at USNA.

Responses to the NAAA Survey were then broken down by gender. As illustrated in Figure 5, a higher percentage of women than men have consistently perceived alcohol as a problem among athletes. Each year about 20% more women than men perceive alcohol as a problem, with the exception of 2003, where the responses were only about 5% apart.

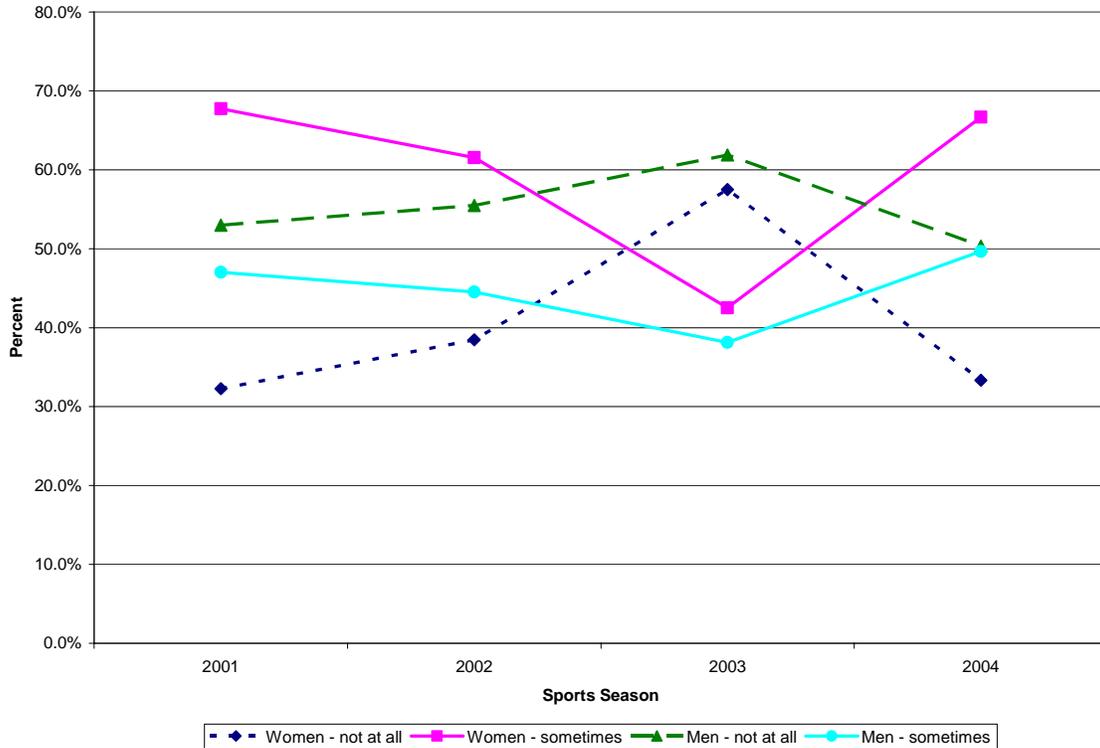


Figure 5. NAAA Survey - in your view, to what extent is alcohol abuse a problem among athletes at USNA, by Team.

Figure 6 shows the responses of the NAAA survey question, "In your view, to what extent is alcohol abuse a problem among athletes at USNA?" broken down by the most popular sports teams. It is notable that less than 50% of the participants on the Soccer, Wrestling and Baseball teams perceived alcohol abuse as a problem among athletes,

which was significantly lower than the alcohol abuse problems perceived amongst the Football, Lacrosse, and Other teams.

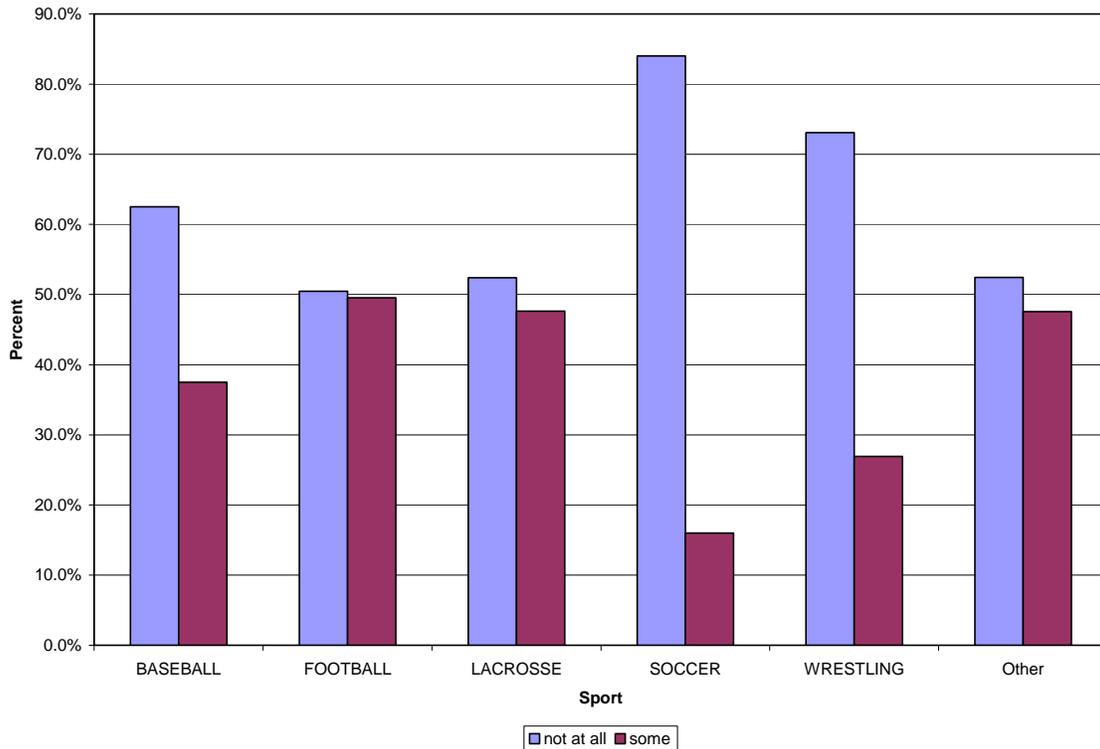


Figure 6. NAAA - in your view, to what extent is alcohol abuse a problem among athletes at USNA, by Team.

### 3. Climate Survey

In light of the fact that the climate survey was a new survey, only recent data were available. Only 1.9% of those surveyed had ever observed alcohol stowed in company spaces. Only 1.3% of those individuals surveyed had ever observed midshipmen consuming alcohol in company spaces. The responses to the question "How often have you observed underage drinking by midshipmen in your company?" are illustrated in Table 4 below. Notice that 47.3% have

observed underage drinking at some time (combining rarely, occasionally, often and all the time).

Table 6. How often have you observed underage drinking by midshipmen in your company?

Never	46.7%
Rarely (once or twice since Fall reform)	26.0%
Occasionally (about 3-5 times since Fall reform)	13.1%
Often (about once a month since Fall reform)	4.7%
All the time (regularly observed)	3.5%
No Opinion	5.9%
Total	100%

These responses were further broken down by class and illustrated in Figure 7.

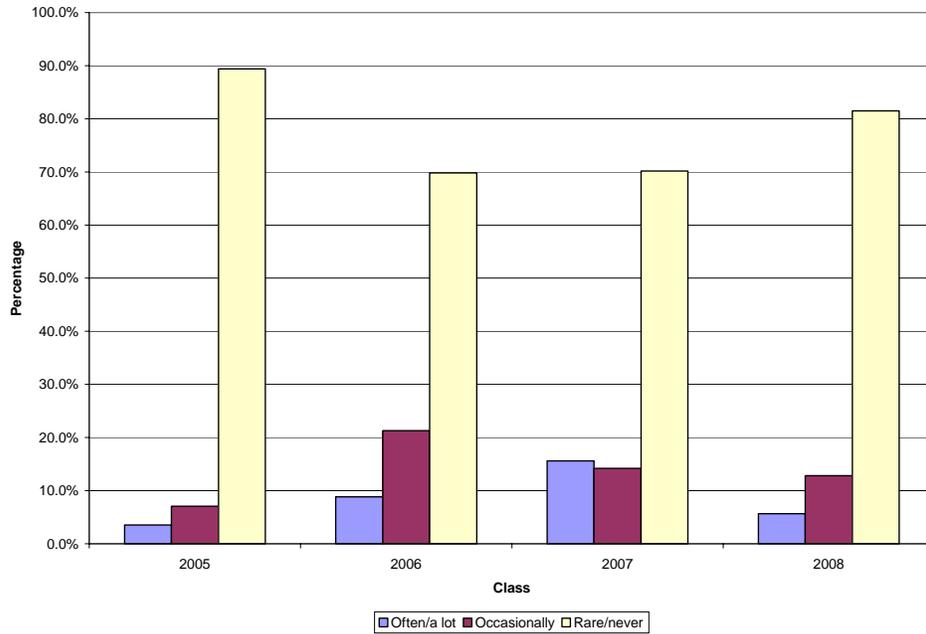


Figure 7. How often have you observed underage drinking by midshipmen in your company?

The Class of 2006 had the highest observed underage drinking percentage at 30.2% at least sometimes. The Class of 2007 was not far behind with 29.8% of those surveyed observing underage drinking.

Figure 8 illustrates the percentages of observed binge drinking by class. The classes vary significantly with 78.7% of the Class of 2005 participants observing binge drinking and only 39.5% of the Class of 2008 participants observing binge drinking.

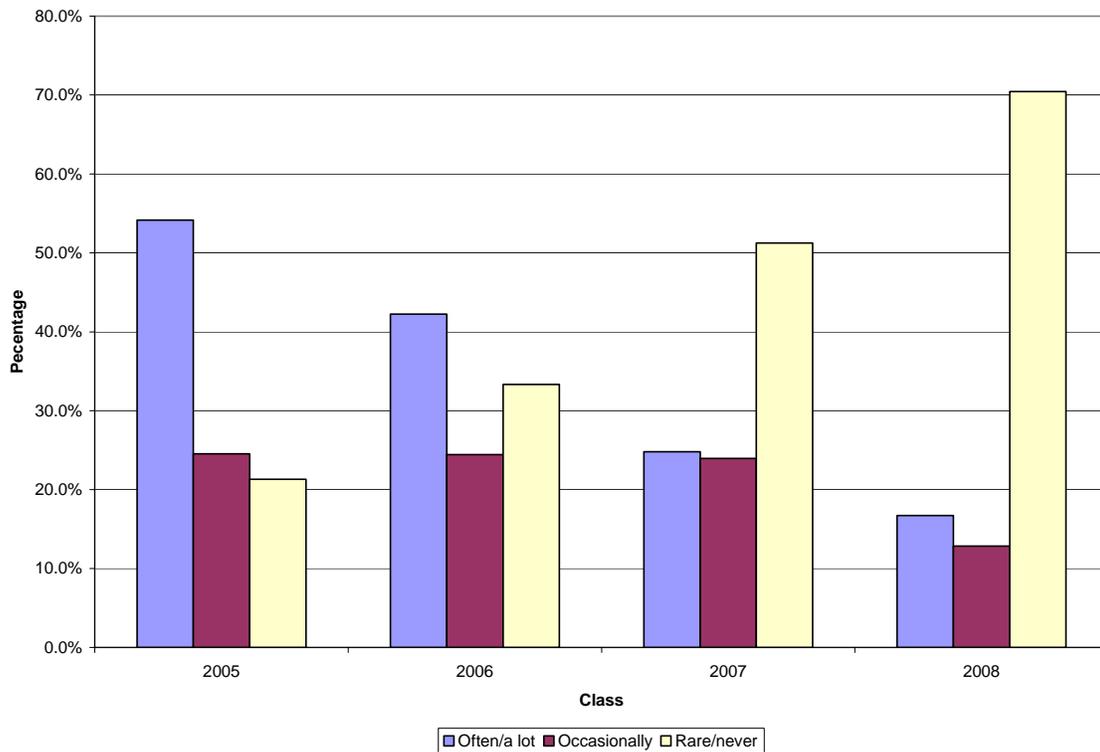


Figure 8. How often have you observed members of your company binge drinking?

Figure 9 illustrates the climate by class in response to the question, "If drinking became a problem with anyone in my company, I feel confident my company mates would appropriately address it." The percentages range from the

Class of 2006 with the lowest percentage at 55.5% and the Class of 2008 with the highest at 67.1%.

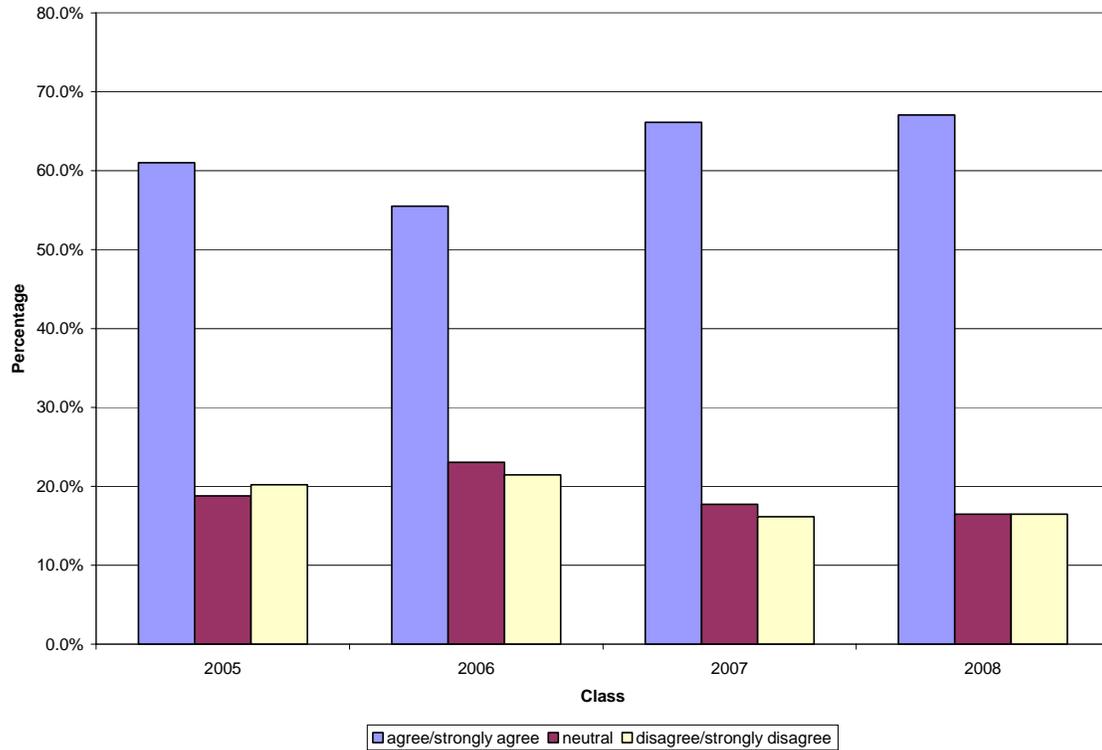


Figure 9. If drinking became a problem with anyone in my company, I feel confident my company mates would appropriately address it.

Most of the climate survey responses discussed so far were consistent for men and women. This particular question had significant difference with 27.8% of the women surveyed disagreed that the company would handle it appropriately, while only 16.2% of the men disagreed.

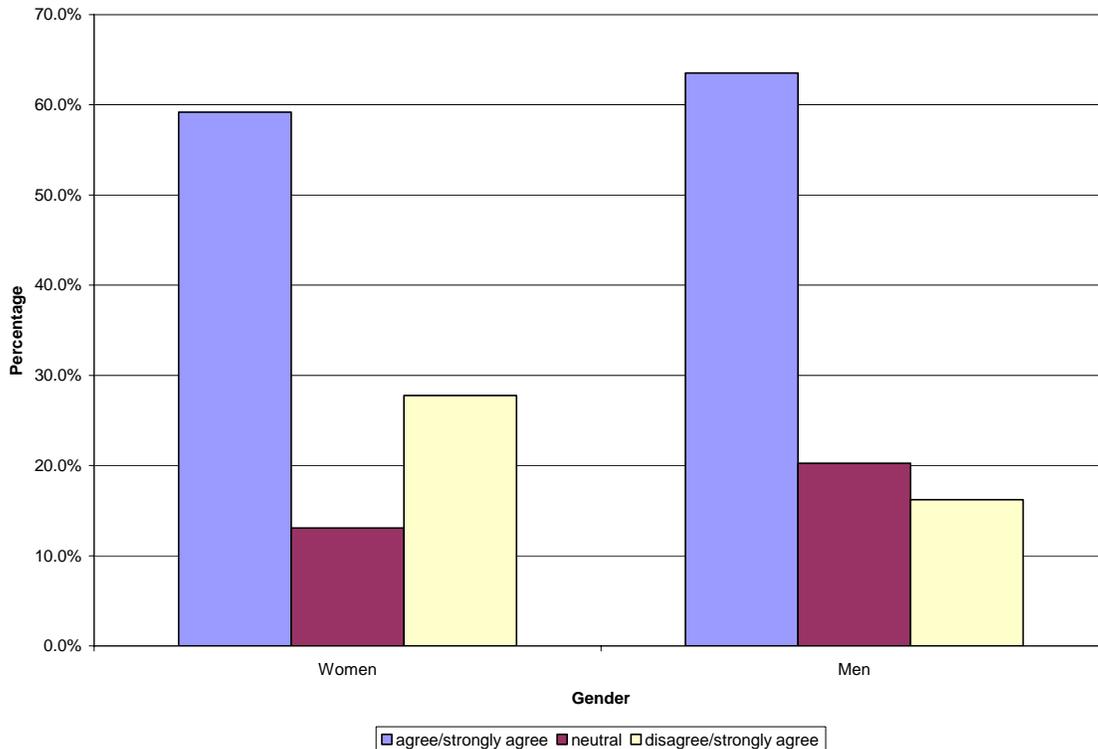


Figure 10. If drinking became a problem with anyone in my company, I feel confident my company mates would appropriately address it, by gender.

### C. QUALITATIVE DATA

#### 1. Focus Groups

In order to obtain rich data on the subject of alcohol abuse, five focus groups were conducted. Each group was organized by class and gender. The first activity focused on both underage drinking and binge drinking.

##### a. Index Card Activity

In the Index Card activity, midshipmen wrote one word or phrase to describe the topic and then ranked it according to prevalence. Discussions that followed were recorded, transcribed and the author has taken themes from those transcriptions and presented them in Appendix D. The average prevalence scores are shown below in table 5.

Table 7. Mean prevalence ratings for underage drinking and binge drinking (1 = low, 5 = high).

	4/c Females (15)	4/c Males (11)	3/c and 2/c Mixed Gender (16)	1/c Females (10)	1/c Males (9)
Underage Drinking	3.97	3.3	3.15	2.9	3.1
Binge Drinking	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.95	3.5

The freshman females rated underage drinking as most prevalent at 3.97 on a scale of 1 to 5. The senior females rated it with the lowest prevalence with a mean of 2.9. For binge drinking, the senior females identified it as most prevalent, with a mean rating of 4.95, while the senior males did not think it was as prevalent rating binge drinking at 3.5.

(1) Underage Drinking. Further discussion on the subject of underage drinking revealed several themes present throughout all classes with some more consistent than others. Each of these themes was compiled from the transcripts of conversations and is summarized by the facilitator in Appendix D. The most prevalent themes which came up in discussions, based on the transcripts and the summaries are provided in Appendix D.

### Acceptance

Some of the words used to describe midshipmen attitudes toward underage drinking were "accepted," "overlooked," or "tolerated." These were all words used by the female plebes, but they were consistent with all of the

other focus groups. The majority of this group described this drinking as common practice, "just part of reality for kids our age." Underage drinking was described as a normal social activity for midshipmen planned around not getting caught.

The mixed gender sophomore and junior group described underage drinking as, "fine," "common," "normal," and "frequent." They also thought it was normal for this age group to drink underage. They did not think the plebes drank that much because of all of their restrictions, but thought it was common amongst the other classes. Several agreed that many midshipmen plan their weekends around drinking.

One male senior stated,

At other schools, no one cares if you drink underage.

Several of the male seniors were not sure why the Academy administration makes such a big deal of drinking. It was mentioned that the Naval Academy is among one of the most sober schools in the nation, and that drinking at USNA is not nearly as bad as drinking at other schools.

### **Restricted**

Since there is a risk a being tested with a breathalyzer over the weekend, most underage students planned to be sober before they have to return to Bancroft Hall. One male senior described underage drinking as stupid and stated,

Most of the conduct offenses here at the Academy stem from people drinking. And usually, the people who are drinking are underage drinkers.

Beyond the risk of the Naval Academy administration finding out, the midshipmen said that they do not really think of the activity as illegal. Several of the male plebes stated that they did not see much underage drinking because their life was so regimented.

Several male seniors thought frequency of underage drinking had decreased due to the surprise breathalyzer tests. Most agreed that underage drinking is limited to long weekends and Spring break. When it happens, it happens in binges. Although not everyone partakes, those that do tend to do it with high intensity and over a short period of time.

### **Encouraged**

Several plebe females stated that upperclassmen offered them alcohol or had knowledge of their underage drinking (as a plebe). One female did mention that drinking is so "over-hyped" that individuals who might not have used alcohol before are compelled to because it is so glamorized.

*My firstie offered to buy me a beer in D.C.*

My friend just had an upperclassman help her through it this weekend when she was completely drunk.

### **Over-glorified**

Several plebe males and senior females emphasized that underage drinking was glorified. Upperclassmen brag about

drinking adventures, and then the underclassmen do it underage. It seemed to be the "cool" thing to do. It is accepted, yet midshipmen can not really be open about it, so it sets them up to keep things hidden. Many midshipmen just do not care enough to get involved.

### **Stress Relief**

Several of the ladies mentioned the motto,

We work hard we play hard.

They referred to the restrictions at the academy as stressors. By the time they get to a weekend when they can drink, they acknowledged that many midshipmen go over the top with it. All of the focus groups tended to support the idea that the use of alcohol was an escape from the regimented lifestyle at the academy.

### **Making up for lost time**

Many of the midshipmen stated that there is pressure to make up for the drinking that their peers at civilian schools get to do. Several mentioned that it was a means of sampling the "normal" college experience that they believe they are missing out on. Restrictions at USNA tend to amplify the drive to drink hard when the restrictions are lifted.

### **Entitlement**

Several male plebes thought they were entitled to be able to drink. They did not think it was a big deal to drink underage.

If you can be trusted with an M-16, you should be trusted with the responsibility of drinking.

We are old enough to vote, who cares if we have a beer?

### Harmless

Underage drinking was sometimes described as harmless. Several individuals thought that midshipmen drink underage much less than students at other schools. It was mentioned that next to Brigham Young University (BYU), the academy is one of the most sober schools in the country. One student described the subject as an overstated problem with too many bad outcomes attributed to it. Most did not see underage drinking as being problematic.

### Harmful

Several of the male plebes thought upperclassmen needed to be more responsible in their drinking behavior. They sited drinking in general as harmful both professionally and physically.

(2) Binge Drinking. The same index card activity was conducted using the term *binge drinking* as the topic. Before starting the activities, binge drinking was defined as: Five drinks in one sitting for men and four drinks for women.

Both senior groups (male and female) disagreed with the definition of binge drinking, but understood the spirit of the definition. One female stated that she could have four drinks over four hours in an evening and it was far different from someone having four drinks in one hour. Both groups tended to downplay the

number of drinks and focused on the intent of binge drinking, which is to get extremely drunk (usually without placing any limits on drinking).

### **Only kind of drinking**

The plebe females overwhelmingly described binge drinking as the only kind of drinking they were familiar with among USNA midshipmen. As a rare exception, two plebes did mention that some upperclassmen do go out and just have a few drinks; they blamed most of the binge drinking on underage drinkers. Binge drinking was attributed to the fact that midshipmen are rarely exposed to alcohol. Discussions indicated social acceptance of midshipmen drinking excessively when they have the chance to. The motto "we work hard and play hard," was mentioned once again as a justification for binge drinking.

Because of the work rules we have, people just want to forget it...they drink until they can't remember and then they come back on deck to sleep it off. They put their rack on the floor and they are good to go the next day.

Several plebes attributed the overwhelming perception that everyone binge drinks to the popularity of bragging about it. They recognized that few students tended to brag about just having a few drinks.

Not everyone binge drinks, you just don't hear about the other drinking.

### **Normal**

Once again, the theme that binge drinking is normal for this age group was prevalent in participants' responses. Midshipmen experience some expectation to

behave this way because they want to take advantage of what they have been missing for the past few months (understood to mean plebes going on leave and binge drinking).

Once again the regimented lifestyle was blamed for wanting to make up for lost time by binge drinking. This form of drinking was also described as a sort of rebellion. Another explanation for the prevalence of binge drinking was that it remains the only way midshipmen know how to drink because they are inexperienced. The group still thought the behavior at the academy is still better than other colleges. The mixed gender group of sophomores and juniors did not see binge drinking as a big problem. It is an expected behavior.

One of the male seniors blamed binge drinking on the academy, for not giving them enough discretionary time. He stated,

*All my friends that go out to drink usually go out to binge drink. I blame it on the Academy not giving us enough free time to relieve stress. You can't do responsible drinking in an hour and half of liberty, knowing you has[sic] homework to finish.*

Several others from the same group agreed that the restrictions the Academy has along with the lack of a social life, breeds binge drinking behavior. It was mentioned that it is popular for midshipmen to chant, "College," when down town Annapolis at bars. One senior mentioned,

*This is our youth and maybe we are squandering it in service of our country and there's some kind of attempt to reach out and grasp, you know, the requisite responsibility that some of our civilian counterparts get to enjoy all the time.*

## **Macho**

Ironically, several of the senior females described binge drinking as a way to be macho. The more they drink, the more they have bragging rights. It was not uncommon to brag about it.

*Hey, you're late, we've drank this number of drinks, you need to catch up!*

They emphasized that this was not a gender exclusive pressure to be macho, but more of a midshipmen pressure that tended to cross gender lines.

## **Coping Mechanism**

Several of the groups identified binge drinking as an escape from the regimented life at the academy. One female stated that she drank to forget and looked forward to getting "wasted." Another senior female described binge drinking an escape from her professional self. The drinking allowed her to do things she normally would not do. Another female agreed that it helps "take the edge off."

## **Destructive**

The male plebe focus group was quick to mention repeated occasions where they had seen some "crazy" behavior while upperclassmen were intoxicated. The belligerent behavior was considered appalling and caused many of these young men to lose the respect that had taken six weeks of discipline (plebe summer) to build. This experience was nicely summarized by one male plebe when he stated,

*It is disillusioning when you have someone who holds you to strict standards by day and then at night they lose all control.*

Another plebe expressed frustration stating,

*I'm just tired of seeing alcohol glorified here.*

One of the female seniors described binge drinking as underestimated by the administration. She stated,

*The weekends are filled with binge drinking over two days rather than over the course of a week (at a normal college).*

She thought the behavior here was far worse than at a normal college. Another senior female indicated that fewer binge drinkers here cause more problems than at a normal institution, because they are actually held accountable for their actions. At a civilian college, they would not be.

(3) Liberty Effects. The plebe focus groups agreed that their class primarily limits drinking alcohol to overnights, three-day weekends, and leave. Drinking during any other liberty period is too risky because there are random breathalyzer tests conducted when they return to Bancroft Hall. The goal is for them to have the alcohol out of their system before a possible breathalyzer test. Their opinion of the upperclassmen is that they drink as much as possible before that last minute when they have to return for taps.

The male plebes specifically made the association that binge drinking is inversely proportional to the amount of liberty. They thought the more liberty they have the less people would drink because the novelty wears off. They said, since liberty is limited, binge drinking occurs as soon as the midshipmen get liberty.

The upperclass focus groups agreed that liberty restrictions and breathalyzer tests stop a lot of people from underage drinking. They agreed with the plebe group that those who can drink tend to consume as much alcohol as they can in those last few minutes before they return from liberty to Bancroft Hall. Once again, discussions revealed the pressure to make up for lost time when liberty is restricted. One person did mention that if liberty were completely restricted, they would just find a way to bring alcohol onto the yard.

(4) Pressure to Drink. When asked whether or not there was pressure to drink, each group had a slightly different response. The majority of the plebe females said there was pressure to drink, but that people respect them when they do not drink. It was brought up though, that those who do drink are really careful with whom they talk to about what they did over the weekend, so it separates them. While someone may be respected for their decision not to drink, they may be excluded socially from those who do drink. One female plebe in particular said the pressure was from being a minority in a school with the guys as a majority. She said she was much more likely to agree to drink with her sponsor brothers, just to feel accepted.

The male plebe group all agreed there is no pressure at all for them to drink. One plebe voiced that there is more pressure to chew tobacco than there is to drink. He reasoned that it is more efficient, easier to conceal, and less expensive. It can also be used either in their room or in class to keep them awake.

The mixed gender group had different responses, with both males and females offering diverging perspectives. Two males and one female were of the opinion that there was not any pressure to drink and thought everyone seems to respect the decision. The rest of the group described the pressure as a social pressure. Numerous individuals described it as an activity that starts out because they want to be around friends. Some wanted to know what it was like and some just wanted to fit in. One person said that it started out as a social pressure and then it became an avenue to get rid of problems.

Both senior groups agreed there is a great deal of pressure to drink. The females tended to describe the pressure as a way to break the professional barrier and do things they would not normally do. Another pressure described was just to get away and escape. The males described the macho pressure that was mentioned as a theme under binge drinking. They also agreed that there is a social pressure to drop what they are doing (homework), and go out in town when they have the chance. Once they get downtown, there is pressure to "catch up." One senior male said it was kind of a test of manhood, and that he would often hear things like,

*Hey, your beer is getting cold. You need a nipple for that?*

(5) Alcohol-Related Incidents. All participants in the freshman women's focus group seemed to agree midshipmen do not turn in other midshipmen. This fits with a long-standing USNA tradition in which students do

not "bilge" or turn in peers. Most alcohol incidents that are entered into the conduct system are because an officer or someone on watch happened to run across someone doing something stupid. The small number of midshipmen who have turned in their shipmates have been shunned by their classmates, whether or not their complaint was valid. The consequences of turning someone in are much greater than just "letting it go."

Those questioned in the male plebe group were divided as to whether they thought the upperclassmen would turn them in for underage drinking (or just drinking as a plebe). It depended on the climate of the company. Some stated that a particular class, for example the Juniors (2/c), might be harder on them than the other two classes in company. Some said there was no accountability. While they emphasized that few alcohol-related infractions ever getting reported, they did mention that they like to take care of things themselves. They make a concerted effort to really take care of each other. The individuals who were known to turn others in were referred to as, "Joes."

*There are a lot of Joes in my company that don't really look at it that way.*

The mixed gender group agreed that midshipmen do not turn in midshipmen, with the exception of plebes. They decided that plebes are held to a higher standard. It was mentioned that most underage drinking does not happen in downtown Annapolis, so it was perceived that it generally diverts the problem to every other college (that midshipmen visit to party).

Alcohol incidents were described as such a common occurrence that they are really not considered a big deal. There is an understanding that maybe someday an individual might do the same thing (consume alcohol and make a mistake), so they do not turn each other in hoping someone will give them the same courtesy.

(6) Seeking Medical Attention. When asked who normally cares for midshipmen who have had one too many drinks, the responders were proud to say they are good at taking care of each other. Sometimes the caretakers are friends who have not had as much to drink. Sometimes they are roommates. And if all else fails, the Company Mate of the Deck (CMOD) can get them to their room and post a "drunk watch" on them.

One plebe did mention that it is awkward to have to take care of the upperclassmen. They are used to looking up to the upperclassmen and looking to them for decisions and expect them to make decisions as to whether or not someone needs medical attention. If none of the upperclassmen are making the call that someone needs help, it is difficult for a plebe to make that decision. This might leave a CMOD understandably concerned. While they are intoxicated themselves, upperclassmen might not be in any condition to take care of anyone.

There is a real hesitance to get help if someone is sick. The facilitator posed this question with two parts. The first form of being sick was the one time event where someone has had too much to drink and they are physically ill. The second scenario is where a midshipman has a possible dependency and an obvious trend of abuse

over time. For each scenario, participants were asked if they would seek medical attention.

When someone is physically ill from one night of drinking, midshipmen are not only concerned about their health but must also consider any others that were a part of the drinking and whether or not they were of age. There is a fear that not only will the ill person be punished if they seek medical attention, but there will be an investigation and those who contributed to the situation will be punished as well. One senior female stated,

*Unless they stopped breathing, you know, and were in a coma state, she would not do anything. She regarded vomiting and sleeping it off as pretty normal and un-alarming.*

There is also a fear of reporting a person who consistently comes back to the dormitory intoxicated. Every individual in each group could identify one person in their company that fit this description. Some said they did not want to risk hurting that person's future career by affecting their service selection. Some said that they thought it would not do any good anyway, because until that person realizes they have a problem, it really would not help them anyway. One male senior stated,

*It's stupid when people criticize others here for having a drinking problem, the restrictions here don't really allow room to be an alcoholic.*

Seven of the nine members (by a show of hands) of the male senior focus group admitted knowing a student at the academy whom they would consider an

alcoholic. They remain silent about their concerns though for fear of consequences that would stay with that person's career.

**b. Roundtable Activity**

For the Roundtable activity, students were divided up into groups of three or four people. Each group was given one minute to pass a piece of paper around while verbalizing and writing down responses. The first question was to list reasons midshipmen drink. The second question was to list stupid things they had seen midshipmen do under the influence of alcohol. The lists that resulted from this activity are displayed in Appendix E.

**c. Ranking Activity**

This activity entailed taking the lists that were created in the last activity and ranking the top three most prevalent subjects. The responses that were identified as top three responses are highlighted in bold in Appendix E.

**d. Minute Paper**

Each student was given a short questionnaire with questions about personal experiences. This minute paper is displayed in Appendix C. The responses were compiled and are displayed in the figures below.

When midshipmen were asked to write down if they drank more than 5 drinks for men (4 for women) in one sitting, in the past 6 months, 71% of the focus group participants admitted they had. As shown in Table 6, over 50% of the plebes admitted to binge drinking and almost 90% of the seniors binge drank.

Table 8. Self-Reported Binge Drinking Frequency by class.

<b>Class</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>% YES</b>
<b>2005</b>	2	17	19	89.5%
<b>2006</b>		7	7	100.0%
<b>2007</b>	3	6	9	66.7%
<b>2008</b>	13	14	27	51.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	18	44	62	71.0%

Table 7 illustrates the frequency of binge drinking by age. Over 30% of the participants of the focus groups who responded that they had participated in binge drinking were underage.

Table 9. Self Reported Binge Drinking by Age.

<b>AGE</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>Grand total</b>	<b>% underage</b>	<b>% by age</b>
17	1		1	0.0%	0.0%
18	6	5	11	13.9%	45.5%
19	5	5	10	13.9%	50.0%
20	3	11	14	30.6%	78.6%
21	1	11	12		91.7%
22	2	10	12		83.3%
23		2	2		100.0%
Grand Total	18	44	62		71.0%

Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the focus group responses in terms of gender. Keep in mind that one focus group with the Class of 2006 and 2007 was mixed gender. Eight of the 20 (40%) female participants who responded "yes" were under the legal drinking age. Six (47%) of those were plebes, who are unauthorized to drink alcohol under the conduct system. Thirteen of the male participants who responded "yes" were underage. Seven (58%) of them were plebes.

Table 10. Female Midshipmen Reporting Binge Drinking by Age and Class.

<b>AGE</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
18				4	4
19				2	2
20			2		2
21	6	2		1	9
22	3				3
Yes Total	9	2	2	7	20
Focus Group Total	10	2	4	15	31
% Drink	90.0%	100.0%	50.0%	46.7%	64.5%

Table 11. Male Midshipmen Reporting Binge Drinking by Age and Class.

<b>AGE</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
18				1	1
19			1	2	3
20		3	3	3	9
21	1	1			2
22	5	1		1	7
23	2				2
Yes Total	8	5	4	7	24
Focus Group Total	9	5	5	12	31
% Drink	88.90%	100.00%	80.00%	58.30%	77.40%

When asked, "What was the occasion?" for binge drinking, the responses varied by class. Both plebe groups specified "at parties" over "leave periods," (such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's or other occasions when they were away from the academy - for example, when attending a wedding). The responses for the other focus groups addressed more common occasions, from weeknights socializing to weekends and every celebration in between (such as holidays, birthdays, end of exams, football games, etc.). One female sophomore wrote,

*I was with friends and just wanted to have a drink. We were at our sponsors both times. I was doing it more to try and fit in with the boys, I was the only girl and so I felt like I didn't want to be left out.*

When asked "How often do you drink that amount?" the responses varied again by class. Of the plebes that responded "yes" to binge drinking, all of them responded that they only drink that amount very rarely (usually only when on leave). For the sophomores and juniors, the responses for frequency ranged anywhere from rarely to a couple times a month (for those who binge drank). One of the seniors admitted to binge drinking four times a week, but most responded with one to two times a week.

Two female plebes and one male plebe admitted that they got sick. Among all of the focus groups, only two male seniors admitted to missing military obligations as a result of drinking (morning quarters formation and class); neither of them got in trouble for missing those obligations. Fifty percent of the participants in the mixed gender group admitted to getting sick at some point as a result of binge drinking. Two of the 10 female firsties, and four of the nine male firsties admitted to getting sick. They were either cared for by a roommate, friend, or by another midshipmen.

The last question on the minute paper was, "Have you ever personally done something you would not normally do under the influence of alcohol, if so, what?" Three of the female plebe responses indicated that they were intimate (made-out with/almost slept with/lost inhibitions) with another midshipmen (either close friend or someone

they did not know). One plebe female mentioned that she almost got into a fight with someone. Several of the male plebes also wrote phrases like, "beer goggles." One admitted to buying drinks for an entire bachelorette party in a club in Vegas.

Several of the males in the mixed gender group admitted to urinating in public or in the wrong place (on people, on government property, etc.). Others admitted to getting in fights, passing out in the shower and flooding a hotel room, and participating in sexual activities as things they would not normally have done sober.

Four of the 10 firstie females admitted to kissing or making out with people they normally would not, as a result of binge drinking. One admitted to fraternizing and regretting it. One firstie male admitted to engaging in sex with his girlfriend in Bancroft Hall and said he learned from his mistake. Another admitted to engaging in sex with girls he would not normally consider. The other seniors confessed to more urinating in public places, fighting, and breaking things.

## **2. Interview with Deputy Commandant**

Colonel David Fuqua, USMC was interviewed as the U.S. Naval Academy's current Deputy Commandant. The summary of this interview is included in Appendix F. COL Fuqua's views were not far from some of the midshipmen in that he did not think underage drinking was as prevalent here as at other civilian universities. He also thought that the midshipmen, who chose to underage drink, probably chose to binge drink as well.

His major concerns were DUI's, injury or death, and secondarily the embarrassment these incidents cause the Academy. He recently changed the conduct system to offer more harsh punishments to alcohol related incidents that show irresponsible behavior. Underage drinking is a conduct violation, but not as severe as one in which a midshipman displays irresponsible behavior under the influence of alcohol. He really wanted to make a distinction between an offense where a midshipman is in violation of a rule and when a midshipman breaks all of the rules because they have lost all control.

#### **D DATA SUMMARY**

This study has utilized a multi-method research design. The surveys offer some insight regarding the extent to which midshipmen perceive an alcohol abuse problem at the Academy. They also afforded an opportunity to break down the data by class, gender, and athletic team in order to determine if those variables make a difference. As it turns out, women are more inclined than men to think that alcohol abuse is a problem at USNA. They also tend to be less confident than men that their company mates will handle problematic drinking appropriately. As expected, each class monitored different levels of binge drinking. Fifty-five percent of the first-class reported observing company mates binge drinking often or a lot, with 25% observing this behavior sometimes.

The focus group participants provided some rich narrative information regarding drinking behavior. Those discussions opened the doors to why midshipmen drink underage and why they binge drink. Several themes were identified as prevalent throughout the Brigade. The level

of acceptance for both behaviors was tremendous. Again, class and gender were carefully monitored in these groups in order to provide the most helpful information.

Gender did not seem to influence whether or not participants chose to drink underage or binge drink. The reason midshipmen drank did vary slightly by gender. Females tended to focus more on acceptance. They also tended to identify actions like sexual advances and fraternization as problematic results of drinking more quickly than their male counterparts. Overall, this research has generated several types of data on the drinking behaviors of midshipmen.

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## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. OVERVIEW

Needless to say, alcohol has played an important role in some high profile negative events at USNA. Because there is little tolerance for misconduct associated with alcohol as an officer in the fleet, the Naval Academy is working to adopt an equally tough policy regarding alcohol incidents. It is an embarrassment to the Naval Academy and a disservice to the tax payers when the training of midshipmen is disrupted by the illegal or inappropriate use of a controlled substance—in this case alcohol.

The purpose of this study was to conduct exploratory research in order to determine the extent to which alcohol abuse is a problem at the United States Naval Academy. Prevalence of both underage drinking and binge drinking were investigated as two of the most common forms of abuse rampant across colleges nationwide. The secondary questions were: (1) Why do midshipmen drink?, (2) Do midshipmen think alcohol abuse is problematic at the academy? (3) Are the pressures to drink at the academy different from other institutions, and if so how? and(4) How do students at USNA compare to the national averages with respect to drinking practices?

A multi-faceted methodological approach was utilized to gather information. Surveys provided quantitative data regarding midshipmen perceptions, while focus groups enabled analysis of midshipmen answers and perceptions in greater depth and provided richer explanations of midshipmen behavior. The interview with the Deputy

Commandant provided one perspective of the USNA administration's concern regarding underage drinking and binge drinking.

## **B. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. Underage Drinking**

Underage drinking itself is not adequate evidence of alcohol abuse, but at the academy when midshipmen are underage, they are not only in conduct trouble (or should be if reported), they are also more likely to binge drink. The conduct violations and the inexperienced intense drinking are problematic and in many cases at USNA, would result in a formal diagnosis of alcohol abuse. The Climate Survey results showed that 30% of the second-class observed underage drinking. Almost 30% of the third-class observed underage drinking, while over 10% of the fourth-class observed underage drinking within their own companies.

The focus groups revealed a general acceptance of underage drinking. Most midshipmen did not see it as problematic. In fact, several thought they were entitled to drink because they could vote and carry a weapon. Underage drinking was said to be planned around not getting caught. This means most drinking activities do not take place downtown, but at someone's house where access to alcohol is unlimited.

The restrictions on underage drinking are not a result of midshipmen enforcing the rules, but a result of officers and senior enlisted who administer random breathalyzer tests in Bancroft Hall when the midshipmen return from liberty. According to the focus groups, this is the biggest deterrence for underage midshipmen not to drink on

a routine weekend. Several indicated that anytime a long weekend is available, they plan that weekend around drinking.

Several of the plebe females stressed how encouraged drinking was. There was pressure to drink just to fit in to conversations upon returning from liberty as well as pressure from upper class to drink. This is interesting because the plebe males were frustrated by how over-glorified and harmful it was. Among the plebe sample groups, 47% of the females and 58% of the males that were underage admitted to binge drinking. It was not determined where all of the underage drinking took place though, so it might have been over leave periods.

It may be a paradox that is not only illegal by law, but also under the Naval Academy's conduct system to drink under the age of 21. Although some midshipmen do not really equate drinking with breaking the law, it sets them up to see rules as breakable from the first day they start to see underage drinking as "normal" behavior. The other confusing part of the observed behavior is that the plebes receive mixed messages about drinking; they are told "under the table" that they can drink, but are cautioned not to get caught. Covering up evidence of underage or binge drinking is implicitly encouraged from the start.

*Everyone has this great idea about the Academy and how great it is and how we are elite. We are on the list for the top five most sober colleges, but I don't think it's true...we are just like every other college. We are 20-year-olds and under that, want to do something good, but also want to have a good time. - female plebe*

## 2. Binge Drinking

Overwhelmingly, binge drinking was described as the "only kind of drinking" at USNA. In fact, 65% of the females, and 77% of the men who participated in the focus groups admitted binge drinking in the past six months. Additionally, this is significantly higher than the 44% of students that responded that they had engaged in binge drinking in the past year from the College of Alcohol Survey (CAS, 2002; Hingson, 2002). Research from other schools shows that 56% of college students choose not to binge drink (CAS, 2002; Hingson, 2002). Alcohol abuse was perceived as a problem by over 50% of midshipmen surveyed over the past four years. Seventy percent of the females surveyed thought it was a serious problem. Even among the athletes that were surveyed with the NAAA survey, more women thought alcohol was a problem among athletes than men did.

One of the most concerning effects of both underage and binge drinking is the cynicism that begins when plebes see their leadership abuse alcohol.

*It is disillusioning when you have someone who holds you to strict standards by day and then at night they lose all control. - male plebe*

Midshipmen appear to hold the attitude that they need to make up for lost time. Since they are restricted to certain times/years that they are "authorized" to drink, they try to drink as much as they can when they are authorized.

*The weekends are filled with binge drinking over two days rather than over the course of a week. - senior female*

Appendix E shows the list of reasons midshipmen offer for drinking. The most popular is social interaction. They drink for the same reasons every other college student drinks. Perhaps only rebellion against Academy rules and regulations is likely to be distinct. Restriction on liberty and the stress at the Academy seem to feed more intense drinking when midshipmen have liberty.

### **3. Problematic Behaviors and Concerns**

Several concerns are apparent with the observed drinking attitudes and behaviors. Midshipmen who underage drink learn from the beginning to hide drinking. Many seem to feel the need to over-indulge in order to make up for lost time. Most do not see any harm in drinking underage or drinking too much. They will not report each other and because they hide problem behavior, they will not seek medical attention, out of fear of repercussions.

*Unless they stopped breathing, you know and were in a coma state. - plebe female*

In Chapter II, one of the case studies described how Chad Saucier at Auburn University died after a night of binge drinking as part of a pledge to a fraternity (Nuwer, 1999). His friends were "reassured" that he was ok by his snoring. In reality, the snoring was a sign that his respiratory system was shutting down. When his breathing did stop, it was too late.

An earlier quote referred to the Cowboy fraternity initiation as a bonding experience. A member said that they felt safe because everyone was helping each other out. That night Gabriel Higgins drowned. There is also reason to worry that midshipmen develop a false sense of safety

when they binge drink together; they take considerable pride in taking care of each other – clearly not a bad trait among shipmates until it enables illegal behavior and puts the very shipmates they intend to protect in harm's way from when excessive alcohol intake becomes life threatening.

#### **4. USNA and Alcohol**

Midshipmen are not just college students. They are candidates being trained to be officers and leaders in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Their responsibilities will include driving ships, leading USMC troops, and flying planes and helicopters.

Currently, the Naval Academy has an Alcohol Drug Education Officer (ADEO) with a staff of approximately 38 midshipmen who run the Academy's prevention program. These individuals, led by one officer, carry training and education to companies in attempt to raise awareness. The program's goals reflect the Navy's goals to promote "responsible use."

Obviously, the stakes are higher for a midshipman who binge drinks than for the average college student. The "problems" that sometimes follow binge drinking can affect the rest of a student's life. The negative marks, if found in violation of conduct regulations, can affect their service selection. They are responsible under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to follow the law. Finally, they are in close proximity to the Nations capital which, for better or worse, draws considerable public attention in the media.

## C. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Prevention Efforts

Colleges across the nation are trying many different approaches to reduce alcohol abuse. One recommended method has been to "Play it Down" (Wechsler, 2004). Midshipmen currently brag about drinking exploits and how much fun it is, when in reality, the focus groups identified more problems with binge drinking than they do reasons for binge drinking itself. Another strategy for reducing the problem at other schools has been to restrict its use. Because the Academy is already a dry campus and the midshipmen have limited opportunities to drink, perhaps efforts should be to further limit alcohol use during the times they are most likely to binge.

Another option is to provide more deliberate "models" by which to learn moderate and appropriate drinking. In order to learn responsible use, they need to be authorized to drink in social settings, where it is inappropriate to binge. If drinking is merely restricted, without opportunity for appropriate social use, there is a good chance midshipmen will binge when they become officers in the fleet. It is not uncommon for officers from other commissioning sources to comment on Academy graduates' drinking behaviors at flight school or when they first get to the ship, because they have not had the same freedoms that others had in college. By not actively promoting responsible use, we may be diverting the problem to the fleet. If first-class midshipmen can learn to adopt moderate drinking behavior, they will serve as more effective models for underclassmen.

*Reporting Avenues*

One major concern is that students do not always get medical help when they need it. This hesitance is not unique to the academy, but probably intensified here because of the role of the conduct system. Developing multiple avenues for reporting may help to address this issue. Plebe CMODs should know what to do before they are faced with intoxicated midshipmen who need medical attention. Currently, because of the power differential, each individual is going to make a decision based on their own experience (which may be none for some 17 and 18-year-olds).

There should be a standard procedure for watchstanders when someone returns with certain symptoms; routine medical screening of intoxicated midshipmen should be considered. Intervention must be framed as a "duty" and not a judgment call. Hereby making screening and reporting mandatory and routine, USNA may also reduce the risk of alcohol-related deaths.

There needs to be several avenues for reporting abusers. Seven of nine male first-class midshipmen knew of a peer who they thought had a dependency problem. They were unwilling to report them though, for fear of hurting the peer's service selection outcome. If those individuals with dependencies did get help here, their condition would be addressed earlier and perhaps spare the fleet a plane or ship mishap.

## **2. Ownership**

As Colonel Fuquea emphasized in his interview, the first class need to take ownership of the alcohol abuse in the brigade. This is their year to stand out as leaders.

By not reporting underage drinking and even encouraging it, they are fostering an environment that promotes problematic behavior. Until the first-class midshipman leadership is able to take a stand and not tolerate behaviors that are an embarrassment to the U.S Naval Academy, the culture is unlikely to change.

### **3. Education**

Consideration should be given to hiring a consultant or education specialist to review the substance abuse training pipeline midshipmen go through in their four years at the academy. Currently the ADEO staff is profoundly limited in terms of background and expertise in substance abuse. Every two to three years that officer rotates into another job in the fleet and is replaced by someone new, who may have a different approach to training, or more often, no experience at all with the science of substance abuse education and prevention. It would be helpful to that fleet officer to have a professionally designed curriculum that is geared towards becoming an officer in the fleet.

### **D. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited by the questions asked in the surveys and the focus groups as well as by the size of the focus groups. The surveys queried perceived alcohol abuse problems and not personal experience. Hypothetically, a small number of midshipmen could be influencing the perception of a larger number of people exaggerating the prevalence of the problem. However, the percentages of the personal experiences from the focus group participants are consistent with those perceptions, and tend to support the objective survey findings.

Although focus groups were comprised of only 62 students from among 4,200, the fact that random selection was employed heightens the probability that these subsequent results are valid and reliable. The information provided, while rich, is limited by the extent to which this small group of midshipmen is representative of the Brigade. Hopefully, this "snapshot" of behavior will help to serve as the baseline for future inquiry.

#### **E. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

There are myriad studies that could be conducted as follow-up studies to this research. It would be helpful to evaluate the efficacy of the ADEO program. With constant change in the program, it is difficult to tell what has been effective. Are current efforts of education and prevention having any tangible impact? There are currently no data to address this question. Also, how has the conduct system affected change?

Perhaps a closer look at the high school students being admitted to the academy may shed light on subsequent underage drinking behavior. Studies show that students who drink underage in high school will most likely drink underage in college (Zeigler, 2005). Studies using high school variables to predict later USNA alcohol-related behavior would be quite instructive.

Research should be considered comparing the drinking behaviors of Academy graduates compared to their counterparts from OCS and ROTC once all graduates begin their careers in the fleet. This would also help to either

confirm or discredit apocryphal reports that midshipmen are less mature and controlled with regard to early career drinking behavior.

Another study that may be enlightening would be to study other cultures, in particular European cultures where drinking is less novel among college-age adults and therefore less problematic. How do American military academies compare to those of our allies with respect to policies and problems with alcohol and can we learn anything from their experiences?

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## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Group 1 - Freshman (Plebe) Females

Age	Number of Participants
18	9
19	3
20	1
21	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

Group 2 - Freshman Males

Age	Number of Participants
17	1
18	2
19	4
20	3
22	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Group 3 - Sophomore and Junior Mixed Gender

Age	Female	Male	Total
19	1	1	2
20	3	7	10
21	2	1	3
22	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>

Group 4 - Senior Females

Age	Number of Participants
21	7
22	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

Group 5 - Senior Males

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
21	1
22	6
23	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

Overall Participants

<b>Age</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
17	0	1	<b>1</b>
18	9	2	<b>11</b>
19	4	5	<b>9</b>
20	4	10	<b>14</b>
21	10	2	<b>12</b>
22	3	9	<b>12</b>
23	0	2	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>61</b>

## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. On index card write:  
Your number  
Gender  
Age  
Class
2. Write one word or phrase to describe your overall feeling about underage drinking here at the Naval Academy. Below the word or phrase, please indicate with a number 1-5 (1-low to 5-high) that describes how prevalent you think underage drinking is here.
3. Write one word or phrase to describe your overall feeling about binge drinking here at the Naval Academy. Below the word or phrase, please indicate with a number 1-5 (1-low to 5-high) that describes how prevalent you think binge drinking is here.
3. Do liberty restrictions impact the amount of alcohol consumed in set periods of time?
4. Is there pressure to drink?

### Roundtable questions / Ranking

5. Passing the paper quickly from person to person, please jot down all of the reasons midshipmen drink.
6. Passing the paper quickly from person to person, please write down all of the negative things you have observed midshipmen do under the influence of alcohol.

### Discussion Questions

7. What percent of alcohol incidents get reported? How?
8. Who typically takes care of those who have had too much to drink?
9. What are the concerns with seeking medical help if someone might need it? (both for alcohol poisoning or even dependency)

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**APPENDIX C: MINUTE PAPER**

**Number#**\_\_\_\_\_

In the last 6 months have you:

Drank more than 5 (4 for women) drinks in one sitting?

Why? What was the occasion?

How often do you drink that amount?

Did you get sick?

Who took care of you?

Did you miss any military evolutions?

Did you get in trouble?

Have you ever personally done something you would not normally do, under the influence of alcohol / what?

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## APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP THEMES

### Tape #1 - 4 /c Females (15)

**Underage drinking** - 4,4,4,4,3,5,3,4,4,3,5,3.5,5,4,4 Avg. prevalence 3.97

Accepted/Overlooked/Tolerated (7)  
despite breathalyzers "unwritten rule that if it's a long weekend, you don't drink before you come back on Monday."

"It's not a big deal. You don't even think about it as something illegal. At other colleges they can do it and it's easier to get away with."

"my firstie offered to buy me a beer in D.C"

"my friend just had an upperclass help her through it this weekend when she was completely drunk"

"we work hard, we play hard"(iii)

"Just don't get caught." (ii)

Over-hyped

"the mentality here is that people have to drink - people who have never thought about drinking before they came here, want to drink because that's all anyone ever talks about"

Stress Release

It Happens - "everyone has this great idea about the Academy and how great it is and how we're elite. We're on the list for the top five most sober colleges. But, I don't think that's true...we are just like every other college. We're with 20 year olds and under that, want do something good but also want to have a good time."

The thing to do

"just part of reality for kids our age"

fulfills a desire to go out and have fun

because we can normally drink like you could at a normal college, when they do they really go out and binge drink/ over do it (ii)

**Tape #1 - 4 /c Females (15)**

**Binge drinking** -3,4,3,5,4,5,4,4,3.5,4,4,5,5,4,4 AVG 4.1

Normal/socially acceptable/Common

The places where you go to drink when you are under 21 are not somewhere where you're going to go and drink wine and talk to people

Less prevalent than underage drinking - "upperclass talk about just going out and having a couple of drinks to relax. Not everyone binge drinks. I really think that much of the problem is underage drinking."

Less acceptable than underage drinking  
Not everyone does it

The Only type of drinking - (5)  
Because mids are rarely exposed, they overdo it when they drink

"Because of the work rules we have, people just want to forget it. That's like the best thing that has happened to me all week...they drink till they can't remember and then they come back on deck to sleep it off. They put their rack on the floor and they're good to go the next day."

This is especially popular with plebes and people underage they drink to get drunk

All you hear about  
Nobody brags about having a glass of wine with dinner

What Academy kids do/cool thing to do-

Not as bad as other colleges  
Other colleges, fraternities have parties every night. Those opportunities don't exist here.

Work Hard Play Hard

***Liberty affects...***

Plebes drink on overnights and on three-day weekend in order to avoid being caught by breathalyzers. The goal is to get the alcohol out of your system before a possible breathalyzer.

Upperclass have to be back by 2400, so they cram it all in until they come back

### ***Pressure to drink...***

21<sup>st</sup> birthdays are a big deal around here  
Joked about a roommate who doesn't drink being the designated driver for the class of 2008  
Usually everyone drinks but people respect you even if you don't

The people who do drink can be really careful about talking about what they did on the weekends around here. People respect the decision not to drink, but that *separates* you and what you're willing to talk about.

It's harder for them to respect your opinion not to drink. I know that there are two or three people in our company who we know don't drink and the *upperclassmen will pick on them for it*.

"I don't drink and I don't feel like people really want me to just because, but they want to be the first one I drink with. I feel like they appreciate me because I take care of them when they drink"

As a female at a school where we are the minority I definitely feel pressure to say yeah to drinking - sponsor brothers etc.

### ***Alcohol Incidents...***

A small number get reported because nobody wants to get anybody in trouble

When they do get reported it is not by mids (conduct related/ they are caught by authorities)

Mids who have been know to "rat out" classmates are usually shunned

"I'd rather be on restriction than not have any friends here. You just can't survive here without them"

### ***Who takes care of drunks?***

Friends that haven't had as much alcohol

### ***Seeking medical attention?***

There is a hesitance to get help if someone is sick, if others around are underage - is better to just take care of them

There is a fear of reporting someone who consistently comes back drunk and may have a dependency problem because they might be jeopardizing everything they have here.

There needs to be some kind of safety for reporting someone so that you know you are helping them and not just getting them in trouble (hurting them in the long run/commission)

**Tape #2 - 4 /c Males (11)**

***Underage drinking*** - 4,5,3,3,1,4,4.5,4,4,1,3 Avg. prevalence  
3.3

Overglorified (ii)

An Escape

A means to let loose from a regimented lifestyle  
- there is nothing wrong with that

Inevitable (ii)

Midshipmen upon getting out of here are known to  
take advantage of what they've been missing for the  
past few months

Indifferent/Don't Care (iii)

Had not personally seen much of it

Don't Care - we are old enough to vote, who cares  
if you have a beer?

If you can be trusted with an M-16, should be  
trusted with the responsibility of drinking

Controlled/Stringent/Restricted

Prior enlisted student said it was not prevalent  
at all (third college)

It's very restricted, limited opportunities, no  
time

Harmful

Upperclasss need to be more responsible - I don't  
think it's cool

Tape #2 - 4 /c Males (11)

**Binge drinking** -4,5,5,4,1,4,4.5,4,5,5,4 AVG 4.1

Crazy/Harmful

Plebes have definitely seen some crazy behavior while upperclass were extremely intoxicated (loud, cursing, loss of control) - appalling, lose respect

Maybe disillusioning to see your upper class drunk, who holds you to such standards...flushing that down the toilet - it causes a lot of cynicism

Midshipmen upon getting out of here are known to take advantage of what they've been missing for the past few months

Binging less often seems less harmful than more frequent drinking that might lead to dependence

Natural (ii)

Response to regimented life

I think mids are just known to when they get home want to consume as much as possible to *make up for lost consumption*(ii

What Midshipmen do, if they drink, they Binge (ii  
Rebellion

Novelty

Escape from the environment (makes the Right Spirit campaign a joke)

The only way - people drink to get drunk  
inexperience

Overglorified

"I'm just tired of seeing alcohol glorified here."

Controlled

It's better here than at other colleges

The academy needs to either take a chance or take a stance...if we are going to really restrict it, we need to mean it

### ***Liberty affects...***

"Plebedom is so restrictive that it creates the environment for someone to create really bad habits" - refers to dipping - "you've got all this stuff going on and if you don't have someone there that can teach you how to deal with the pain or whatever / being stuck here, the boredom, then I think it sets you up for addictive behavior."

Academy grads are famous for going crazy one they get to Pensacola right out of flight school because they have been restricted for so long. Suddenly they are set loose and they don't know how to handle themselves.

"The more you experience liberty, the less drinking goes on, obviously, because it's tougher when you are here...the more you're restricted, the more binge drinking is going to happen as soon as they get libert."

The more opportunities you have to drink, the more responsible you become with it.

### ***Pressure to drink...***

No pressure at all for 4/c. (iiii)

There is more pressure to dip than there is to drink -.more efficient, easier to conceal and cheaper. You can use it in your room or in class and it keeps you awake.

### ***Alcohol Incidents...***

The room was divided as to whether they thought the upperclass would turn them in for underage/plebe drinking. Some companies varied by class...3/c and 1/c were cool, 2/c would turn them in.

There is no accountability... "I fell pretty confident that I could get pulled over for drunk driving, tell them I go to the Academy and have them tell me to drive home safe, at least in North Carolina"

If I got caught, I would be in serious trouble, but if I came back and bragged about it, I don't think anyone would care.

Nothing ever gets reported, but we do make a concerted effort to take care of each other when something happens.

"There are a lot of "Joes" in our company that don't really look at it that way."

### ***Who takes care of drunks?***

Friends that haven't had as much alcohol

CMOD

It shows an environment when the people that are given the power to train you and - become hypocritical of the fact that they don't seem to care about themselves.

It's extremely tough and very frustrating to take someone seriously when they came up on deck trashed the night before.

### ***Seeking medical attention?***

It's seen as the perception that if you report a drinking incident, you have to seek medical help, then it's likely that that incident is going to be reported as an incident and then you're going to get in trouble.

There is apprehension as a "plebe" to help an upperclassman, even if you are just helping them down the hallway because they are drunk. You expect other upperclassmen to make the call if the person needs serious medical attention (but they are probably drunk too). It is awkward.

It seems that the CMOD is left concerned while drunk upperclassmen are taking care of each other...but they are not really capable of taking care of each other.

It would be hard to call out someone who is becoming dependant on alcohol because it would be hard to differentiate how they are doing anything different from everyone else

People know who the people are who have problems with alcohol, but not a lot of people seek medical help because that's something embarrassing to ruin your career.

The Navy is quick to assign a really staunch punishment...if it's more like a stepping stone or three strikes and you're out sort of thing, somebody can correct the problem and have accountability rather than just jumping straight to the maximum punishment.

**Tape #3 - 3/c and 2/c mixed Gender (16)**

**Underage drinking** - 2,4,2,4,3,3,4,2,3,3.5,4,4,3,2,5,2 Avg. prevalence 3.15

Fine/Common(ii)/Normal/Frequent

It is normal for this age group.

Complacent

Controlled/Restricted (ii)

Several thought it was not very common with the plebes.

While the plebes are so restricted, for the other classes underage drinking is pretty prevalent.

Next to BYU, we are well below average. We don't create many problems with it.

Midshipmen underage drink a lot less than our peers (at other schools).

It happens, but no negative affects

"I only know of two people off the top of my head that haven't drunk underage." Although it's prevalent, it is an overstated problem. Too many things here are attributed to underage drinking and I don't think it is a source of all we make it out to be.

Excessive

A lot of people plan their weekend around drinking and not getting hit by breathalyzers. It happens a lot on the weekends or just whenever they get away from Bancroft.

Apathetic/Carefree

Understandable

Based on the age group and all of the pressure and stress at the academy, it is understandable that so many people "dabble" in it.

**Tape #3 - 3/c and 2/c mixed Gender (16)**

***Binge drinking*** -2,4,4,3,3,3,4,5,3,4,4.5,4,5,5,4,3 AVG 3.8

All/Dominant/Favored Technique (v)

When you get back from weekend it is all you hear about.

If you are underage and drink, it is going to be binge drinking.

With the overage crowd a lot of it has to do with just getting out and having fun with your friends

They make up for lost time...feel like they have to have as many drinks as they can

Of those who drink it is a favorite technique, but not everyone does it (3 prevalence)

Common (iii)

But not a big problem

Underage drinkers tend to binge more...of age drink more responsibly, except maybe on the weekends (others disagreed with this - 21 and over still binge)

Expected (iii)

There are so many restrictions on drinking here that it seems like whenever people get out they seem to make up for lost time.

It is just expected when you go out to bars in and around here on a Saturday night, everybody goes out to get drunk. And it's not even like a controlled drunk...people get so drunk they have to be carried back by friends.

It's a social thing

Partying

While upperclassmen may have one or two drinks with dinner on week nights, the weekends are for partying and it is all about binge drinking.

Excessive/Rampant

Friday and Saturday nights they (over 21) go out to the bars and stuff and usually just come back stumbling all over the place

Needs Improvement

***Liberty affects...***

The liberty restrictions tend to stop a lot of underage people from drinking.

For those that are of age those, it is popular to take as many shots as they can in the last five minutes before they have to go back to Bancroft Hall.

There is a feeling that they have to make up for lost time while restricted...if restricted/liberty limited for a while, they find ways to bring alcohol onto the yard.

***Pressure to drink...***

None (2 males, 1 female)- everyone seems to respect that decision and always appreciates a d.d.

Yes - (female) It is like a social pressure, not necessarily negative. Chose to drink after never drinking before because she wanted to know what it was like.

(female2) agrees - it's hard to relate to people if you aren't doing what they are, you feel left out...but then you just start doing it to get rid of problems

(male) I don't drink and my friends innocently joke about it. They would never try to force me to drink though

(male) moderate pressure - self induced/trying to fit in socially

***Accountability? Who takes care of drunks?***

Mids don't turn in mids, except for the plebes - they are held more responsible

There is an understanding that we're all going to do the exact same thing - maybe one day we might be doing the same thing

Alcohol incidents are such a common occurrence people really don't think that much of it. It's no big deal  
"You just kind of shoo them away in their room and hope everything is okay."

If you are underage, most likely you are not drinking DTA...so the Academy pretty much pushes its drinking problem out to every other college in the nation when people go do it with their friends.

"Sober walkers" - take care of everyone

***Seeking medical attention?***

Friends did try to keep one guy in check and eventually hounded him enough about having a problem...he ended up going to rehab on his own

That is one thing about here, different from college (prior year of civ school) - mids really take care of each other

**Tape #4 - 1 /c Females (10)**

***Underage drinking*** -3,3,3,3,4,3,2,2,3,3 Avg. prevalence 2.9

Unacceptable Acceptance - illegal/conduct system, but  
mids accept it

It happens/Common

Doesn't usually affect work

Less than at regular colleges (ii)

Not problematic

Although they know it definitely happens, one mid  
said she felt a bit out of touch with the underclassmen

OK - as long as you don't get caught

Glorified

upperclass set the example by bragging about  
drinking, then underclass do it, underage - cool thing to  
do

Destructive

It is accepted, yet mids can't be open about  
underage drinking, so it sets them up for keeping things  
hidden

Ambivalence

A lot of people just don't care or want to get  
involved (ii)

**Tape #4 - 1 /c Females (10)**

***Binge drinking*** -4,4,5,5,3,5,3.5,5,5,5 AVG 4.95

Underestimated

As far as the administration goes...the weekends are filled with binge drinking over two days rather than over the course of a week (at a normal college) - "worse than at a normal college"

Problematic - Incidents

Because of the environment it seems fewer binge drinkers cause more problems here than at a normal institution, because they are actually held

accountable for their actions

What happens when you go out

Less liberty = more drinking (binge)

Last call for liberty...down everything you can

Uneducated

Not many mids would categorize drinking five drinks (4 for a girl) in a night out as binging

Highly prevalent

Macho/Pride/Cool

Bragging rights - amount of alcohol consumed

We've drank # drinks, you're late, you need to catch up - not exclusive to guys

Coping mechanism/Escape

Drink to forget, look forward to getting wasted

Escape to do things you would not normally do (take the edge off the professional front)

***Liberty affects...***

You have to plan ahead...can't miss class, can't come back drunk on Sunday.

When you get the opportunity...avoid breathalyzer or just to stay out late, you don't want to waste the chance to get drunk without getting caught or interfering with work

***Pressure to drink...***

Getting away

Having the courage to do things you normally wouldn't do - break the professional barrier

### ***Alcohol Incidents..Accountability?***

Alcohol incidents are rarely reported by mids

Justice is not always done for the parties that help you out (design driver or as a bystander trying to do the right thing). Everyone gets punished, so usually a lot of the instances don't get reported, because if you're doing the right thing, sometimes you get punished too.

This applies to turning in subordinates (plebes) too. Usually it is handled on a lower lever - counseling them.

Several 1/c referred to a recent event where firsties turned in a plebe for alcohol related misconduct and they were fried just for being present - mids perception - so by doing

Now that they are close to graduation...more likely to turn their back on misconduct than report anything for fear of being connected to the misconduct and punished - unanimous agreement on this subject

### ***Who takes care of drunks?***

Roommates take care of everything.

The next in line would be the CDO, a firstie

### ***Seeking medical attention?***

There is an overriding fear of getting someone in trouble

Nobody wants to be the one to tell someone they have a problem

- they kind of have to realize it for themselves anyway

-don't want them to have that black mark

-fear of affecting service selection

Maybe seek help outside of the academy for a dependency problem

Unless someone stops breath, as long as they puke and sleep it off...they should be fine.

One mid told a story about when she was a plebe on CMOD and was left to watch a firstie who had passed out. She just checked that he was still breathing every five minutes.

**Tape #5 - 1 /c Males (9)**

***Underage drinking*** - 3,3,4,4,3,3,2,1,5 AVG 3.1

Insignificant/Overly exaggerated/Not a big deal

At other schools no one cares if you drink  
underage

According to some survey (referring to the  
Princeton Review) we are the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> driest campus in  
this country behind BYU and some other religious  
school. Not sure why the administration puts so much  
focus on it.

When parents don't have a problem buying beer for  
their son it seems silly that the academy makes such a big  
deal about it.

The Academy makes too big of a deal out of it,  
and I think they should focus on other things.

Average, Normal

It is not as bad here as at other schools

It happens, in spurts - weekends, leave etc - not  
and everyday thing

Only done among friends

Restriction

Due to the breathalyzers...it is too risky. As a  
previous underage drinker (prior to  
breathalyzers), I know it has really cut down on the  
drinking...limits it to weekends and spring  
break.

Stupid

Most of the conduct offenses here stem from  
people drinking. Many of those involved underage drinkers.

Tempered

It happens in binges, in a sense, like weekends  
and leave. Not everyone partakes but those that do, tend  
to do it with high intensity and in short  
duration.

**Tape #5 - 1 /c Males (9)**

***Binge drinking*** - 4,3,4,3,4,4,2,4 AVG 3.5

\*although the 1/c males thought the definition of binge drinking was a little strict, they 6/9 agreed that most of them go out drinking to "get drunk."

Normal/Acceptable

"All my friends that go out to drink usually go out to binge drink." I blame it on the academy for not giving us enough time - free time to relieve stress. You can't do responsible drinking in an hour and half of liberty knowing you have homework to finish.

All or nothing

Caused by system

The restrictions that the academy has along with the lack of a social life breeds binge drinking behavior.

Once 2/c and 1/c get liberty it seems appropriate to be able to blow off steam after two years of restrictions.

"Early 20s" /Encouraged/College years

A combination of this age group with a lot of tension and stress, it takes time to learn how to handle it. You get to the bars and everybody is having a good time...drinks just keep flowing. "This is our youth and maybe we're squandering it in service of our country and there's some kind of attempt to reach out and grasp, you know, the requisite responsibility that some of our civilian counterparts get to enjoy all the time."

Out at the bars it is popular for everyone to chant, "college"

Mids are trying to just grasp for a second or a night what they think they are missing.

It's not every night, one a week or once every two weeks.

There is a maturing process too. It gets old to be hung over all of the time.

Reason

The main reason mids drink is to get drunk. It sets you free/ kind of release.

### ***Liberty affects...***

The liberty restrictions directly impact the urge to make up for lost time by binge drinking...in limited amounts of time

### ***Pressure to drink...***

Yes

There is a lot of pressure not to drink in order to make sure there is a design driver. So there is a lot of pressure between buddies for someone to take that hit.

Social pressure...once you turn 21, everyone goes downtown and that is just what everyone does when they go downtown.

Peer pressure - when guys go out they grab other guys who might be doing school work and encourage them to drop it and just come out for a few beers.

Once you get out there...there is pressure to "catch up" with whoever beat you to the bar and already started drinking. - a test of manhood "Hey, your beer is getting cold. You need a nipple for that?"

### ***Alcohol Incidents..Accountability?***

We really take care of our own.

Usually if someone gets in trouble it is because a authority figure (officer) has caught them.

Because I once got in trouble for not knowing the rule...I'm not going to turn someone in if I see them doing something wrong, I'm just going to leave.

As long as nobody is getting hurt...if someone passes out, I would take care of them, but not turn them in.

If a plebe came back drunk I would make sure they went straight to their rack and talk with them the next day about how stupid they were.

Others said they would just look the other way, as if they had not noticed. - because if that kid got in trouble and

word gets out that you turned him in and that you didn't know the rules, you'd probably be in worse trouble.

Sometimes having an upperclass talk to you is all you need...probably scares them more than having to stand restriction and become bitter.

Peer pressure seems more effective than the conduct system for teaching people lessons.

(example...guy about to go in a female room to pee instead of head)

One of the reasons things don't get reported is because nobody is perfect and it is hard to get through four years without breaking a rule. So, nobody wants to be hypocritical.

It is also about how much you like a person and whether or not you think they are receptive to "talking." If they don't care, then you are more inclined to let the system take care of them.

#### ***Who takes care of drunks?***

Roommates

"My plebe has taken care of me."

#### ***Seeking medical attention?***

It's stupid when people criticize others here for having a drinking problem - the restrictions here don't really allow room to be an alcoholic.

7/9 admitted knowing a student at the academy who they would consider an alcoholic.

Don't want the label to stick with your...career - afraid it stays in your record

## APPENDIX E: ROUNDTABLE ACTIVITY

### "Top Reason Midshipmen Drink"

**1/c Males**

**Social**  
**Escape**  
**Fun**  
**Relieve Stress**  
**Friendship**  
**Birthday**  
**Pickup Girls**  
**"College"**  
 Bored  
 Free stuff  
 Frustration  
 Friend support  
 Lessen girls  
 inhibitions  
 Relax  
 Buzz  
 It tastes good  
 Ice breaker

**1/c Females**

**Social**  
**Acceptance**  
**Stress Release**  
**Social**  
**Thing to do on**  
**liberty**  
**Celebration**  
**Fun**  
**Feel Good**  
**Nothing else to**  
**do**  
 Loosen up  
 Convenience  
 Pressure  
 Get Drunk  
 Limited liberty  
 Bars are the  
 thing right  
 downtown  
 Convenient

Football games  
 Fit in  
 Party

**3/c and 3/c**  
**Mixed Gender**  
**Social**

**Problems at**  
**school**  
**Stress**  
**Be a man**  
**Fun**  
**Boredom**  
**Escape**  
**Experimenting**  
 Relax  
 Impair Judgment  
 Pressure  
 Cool  
 Something to do  
 Drown problems  
 Exciting  
 Within a block  
 of academy  
 Low grades  
 Celebrate

**4/c Males**

**Stress Relief**  
**Escape**  
**Happiness**  
**Social life**  
**Why not**  
**Rebellion**  
**Celebration**  
**Grown up**  
**Cool**  
**Invincibility**  
 Depression  
 Enjoyment  
 Bullet proof  
 Poor test grades  
 Everybody else  
 does it  
 Pressured into

**4/c Females**

**Social**  
**Interaction**  
**Relax**  
**Fun**  
**Cool**  
**Forget school**  
**Stress Relief**  
**"College"**  
**Common**  
**experience**  
**Something to**  
**talk/brag about**  
 Free  
 Good Time  
 Escape  
 Acceptance  
 Meet new people  
 Forget  
 Excuse for  
 behavior

Most Observed "Stupid Things" Midshipmen do while  
intoxicated

1/c Males

Hook up in the  
hall  
Unidentified  
party injury  
(UPI)  
Urinate in the  
wrong place/on  
self  
Vomit  
Run around  
without clothes  
Fight  
Wake up with  
stranger  
Dance  
Broken bones  
Rip uniforms  
Kick each other  
in privates  
Broken glass  
Edge Dressing  
Cigarette burns

1/c Females

Vomit in  
public/on self  
Loud  
Disgrace uniform  
Urinate in  
public/wrong  
place  
Hit on people  
Say things you  
would not  
normally  
Flirt with  
plebes in hall  
(especially  
CMOD)

Defacing public  
property  
IM conversations  
Guys get  
aggressive  
Make out in bar  
with people you  
don't know  
Fight  
Sexual Advances  
Strip/Streak  
Frat  
Drive  
UPI  
Fall out of  
window  
Sex in the hall

3/c and 3/c

Mixed Gender

Vomit  
Sexual advances  
Fight  
Harass plebes  
Violent  
Tell the truth  
Yell at gate  
guards  
Harassment  
Hurt  
themselves/other  
Break things  
Urinate in  
public  
Jump out three  
story window  
Broke - debt  
Beer goggles  
UPI

4/c Males

Obnoxious  
Driving drunk  
Frat  
(upperclass-  
plebe)  
Disrespectful  
Harassing plebes  
Act  
unprofessional  
Provoke fights  
Self injury  
Belligerent  
Violent  
No control  
Urinate on  
wardroom  
couch/p-way  
Curse out plebes  
Presence at  
official 4/c  
function  
Vomit outside  
CMOD desk  
Fall asleep  
outside CMOD  
desk

4/c Females

Lose respect  
Overly friendly  
Break rules/laws  
Awkward  
situations  
Loud and  
obnoxious (on  
school nights)  
Forget  
boundaries  
Spill guts  
Embarrass selves  
Violent

Vomit  
Hurt others  
Loss of control  
Compromise  
position of  
authority  
Violating class  
rules

Argumentative  
Unwanted hookups  
Wake me up in  
morning

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## **APPENDIX F: SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT**

(notes - not verbatim)

### **1. How prevalent do you think underage drinking is here?**

Underage drinking - very prevalent. It is not as prevalent here as at other universities where there are not as many rules and regulations. This age group is prone to this kind of activity and it does go on here.

The administration has worked hard with the "Right Spirit" campaign, random breathalyzers, and education (through the ADEO program) to prevent underage drinking and deter midshipmen from breaking the rules.

### **2. How prevalent do you think binge drinking is here?**

If they are going to drink underage, they are probably going to binge drink. If you are going to break the rules, you might as well make it big / live it up. A lot of midshipmen feel they have making up to do, since they are not at a normal college. This is probably where a lot of binge drinking happens.

### **3. What are your concerns with these behaviors?**

The Deputy's major concerns are DUI's, injury or death, and embarrassment of USNA. One of the administrations goals has been to empower the 1/c midshipmen to take accountability of one another. These concerns should not just be of the administration but also of the senior midshipmen. By empowering them to be the leaders and hold each other accountable, really they can have a much more powerful affect on behavior.

The first semester this year had a 40% reduction in conduct violation from the previous year. Most of those offenses were 1/c offenses. Looking at the numbers, it looks like they are starting to embrace their own leadership and hold each other accountable.

### **4. How much of your time is spent dealing with such incidents?**

Maybe 5%, 5-6 hours a week are spent on conduct cases; one of those might be alcohol related.

**5. If you could make a change concerning this topic, what would it be?**

Drinking responsibly! This doesn't necessarily mean not getting drunk, it means behaving responsibly - not putting others at risk and not embarrassing the academy. The Deputy recently changed the conduct system so that an offense with a midshipman drinking underage is not treated as severely as a conduct offense where a midshipman displays irresponsible behavior under the influence of alcohol. He really wanted to make a distinction between an offense where a midshipman is in violation of a rule and when a midshipman breaks all of the rules or gets arrested or does something foolish because they are inebriated and have lost all control.

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