

Public Abstract

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Title: Selection and Socialization Effects of Greek Affiliation on Heavy Drinking across Transition to College and into the College Years: The Effects of Personality Traits and Drinking Norms

Although heavy drinking among fraternity and sorority members has been well documented, it is less clear whether the Greek environment facilitates Greek members' involvement in heavy drinking or whether high school students who were heavy drinkers select into Greek environments that reinforce their prior drinking pattern. Also, the mechanisms underlying the relation between Greek environment and heavy drinking rarely have been studied. The selection and socialization effects of Greek affiliation on drinking and the potential effects of personality traits and peer drinking norms on those associations were investigated using longitudinal data from 2,376 full-time college students assessed during the summer prior to matriculation and six subsequent semesters of college.

Both selection and socialization effects were found. Specifically, individuals who already were engaged in heavier drinking at precollege were more likely to join Greek organizations in college but also Greek members tended to increase heavy drinking more than nonmembers, even after the selection effect was controlled. Extraversion and novelty seeking were associated with Greek affiliation but in fundamentally different ways: Extraversion was associated with Greek affiliation independent of precollege drinking, whereas the effect of novelty seeking on Greek affiliation was partially mediated by heavier precollege drinking. Additionally, drinking norms mediated the effect of Greek affiliation on heavy drinking during the first semester of college, but not afterward. These selection and socialization processes and effects of personality traits and drinking norms were largely invariant across gender. Theoretical and clinical implications are discussed.