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University of Maine Students' Family Income and Its Relation to Alcoholism

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE STUDENTS' FAMILY INCOME AND ITS RELATION
TO ALCOHOLISM

by

Vincent Stephen Lo Conte

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Public Administration)

The Honors College

University of Maine

May 2014

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Abstract

This study was designed to address the issue of alcohol abuse among University of Maine students' families and to look for correlating factors, mainly income. The project used an online, anonymous survey of on-campus students at the University of Maine to examine a possible correlation between (a) having a family member with alcoholism and (b) their family's social economic status. One purpose of this research study was to find if there is accurate, adequate education or counseling for students who have alcohol abuse problems or family members who are alcoholics. A non-research byproduct of the survey was that, for students who were seeking counseling, this project could help to connect them with a professional who can help.

A secondary objective of the study is to have a better baseline for continued research on the relevance of alcoholism in these students' families. The hypothesis of this study was that there would be no correlation between income and rate of alcoholism found in students' families. This is due to the estimated high rate of alcoholism with a student population made up of low-to-middle income families. Of about 2,700 students who were emailed, 649 students participated in the study, and the results showed that almost half of participants claim that they have a parent, sibling, or grandparent who shows signs of alcoholism. In Addition to these results, other interesting data were also found.

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Introduction

In the fall of 2012, Bud Walkup was looking for a student to work on obtaining data on the extent of alcoholism in University of Maine students' families. Walkup is the University of Maine's drug and alcohol counselor. In a series of past surveys given out by Walkup in some Introduction to Psychology classes, he found that close to half of students who claimed that there was a history of alcoholism in their immediate family. Walkup was looking to do the same study with a much larger sample size to see if the same results would be found. This was a great opportunity to not only continue Walkup's research, but also to compare that information to social economic-status of the students. Not only would this information show just how many students at the University have a history of alcoholism in their families, but also help identify students who were at higher risk of developing this problem. After further discussions with Walkup, it was decided that using a survey would be the best method of yielding the highest return. The next step was to start a literature review and learn more about alcoholism and past studies that compared alcoholism to income. This study is much more interested in this comparison of alcoholism and income rather than the disease itself as reflected in the literature review.

Literature Review

The percent of adults 18 years of age and over who were current regular drinkers (at least 12 drinks in the past year) was 51.5% in 2011 in the U.S. Children of alcoholics are four times more likely to develop a chemical dependency with alcohol or drugs than any other group of people. Studies also show that higher lifetime income levels along with higher wealth are more likely to be regular drinkers. (U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services 2011) This paper investigates the connection between alcohol addiction and income, both generally and on the University of Maine campus. The project's hypothesis is that on the University of Maine campus, this correlation will not be consistent with a non-academic setting and, instead, will show a higher rate among middle class families. The following literature reviews attempt to demonstrate the rationale underlying this hypothesis.

A case study done by Sandra Cristina Pillon (2008) observed two patients chosen from Alcoholics Anonymous. Pillon visited each family five times. During these visits, meetings were held to plan care for the user and the family according to their needs and health education activities on alcoholism. The subjects were interviewed individually in places and periods determined by the researcher, and each session lasted one hour. The two families were followed for six months and these observations made by the researcher were made into a narrative. The first family experienced a drastic change after seeking help for the problem. After attending Alcoholic Anonymous, the father of this family saw drastic changes in his life. Before this treatment, he used to change jobs often because he could not work or arrived late and was often absent or fought with co-workers. After he quit drinking, he was able to hold a steady job and start to work on improving relations

with his neighbors.

Family two consisted of a 36-year-old man, Gustavo, who had been an alcoholic for 20 years. He worked temporarily as a delivery person in a city market and had never had a steady job. Drinking did not allow him to have a steady job, due to its harmful effects on his life. After refusing to consider his alcohol addiction a problem, Gustavo gave in to his family's concerns and started to attend AA meetings. Despite this attempt, Gustavo often skipped his meetings and never was able to give up drinking. Pillon later pointed out that problems due to alcohol abuse harm the family members, contributing to high levels of interpersonal conflicts, domestic violence, parental inadequacy, child abuse and negligence, separation and divorce, financial and legal difficulties, as well as clinical problems associated to alcohol abuse. While this study focused only on members of poor neighborhoods, alcohol abuse in these families clearly had a negative effective on their abilities to hold steady jobs or become financially successful.

The next study done by Amy L. Tobler examines how environmental factors can play a role in obtaining alcohol for minors. Unlike the previous study, this study looks much more into environmental factors and alcohol availability. By looking at different factors, each neighborhood was graded in terms of alcohol use. Neighborhood measures included number of alcohol outlets per capita per community area; alcohol purchase attempt rate by pseudo-underage youth; average number of alcohol advertisements per school per community; and a Census 2000-based area deprivation index. Then, determine how membership in these risk classes influenced trajectories of alcohol use, and explored how alcohol-related neighborhood context directly influenced alcohol use. The findings showed that alcohol availability in the lower and middle-class neighborhoods was much

higher and that these neighborhoods measured higher in all of these categories. While the data do deal with looking at availability of alcohol for youths, there is still a stronger connection with lower-income areas.

Next, a study done by Magdalena Cerdá in 2011 that looked at whether and to what extent lifetime patterns of income were an important driver of alcohol use. This study evaluated the relationship between long-term and short-term measures of income and the relative odds of abstaining, drinking lightly-moderately and drinking heavily.

Researchers used data from the U.S. Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID) to help determine the lifelong income of the members of the study. Alcohol use was measured in 1999, 2001 and 2003, using categories based on the self-reported number of drinks respondents had on average per day. Looking at drinks per day, each case was grouped into non-drinker, light drinker, or heavy drinker. These years were selected based on the set up of the PSID in those years and its ability to track these stats in these years. The analytic sample included 3,111 respondents who met inclusion criteria of respondents who were household heads or spouses and 30 to 44 years old in 1997.

The results showed that families having lived in a household with middle or low income over 30 years of life were associated with higher odds of heavy drinking in comparison with having inhabited a household with constant high-income for the past 30 years. Finally, having lived in a household where the household head had, on average, a higher number of years of education was associated with lower odds of abstinence and heavy drinking. This study brings an interesting look into this question by adding in life income patterns. The data also showed that having a lower income led to a higher chance of being a heavy drinker or, being a non-drinker and abstain from drinking.

The next study, done by Brian Kasper (2006), looked at the mode of decreasing alcohol abuse by looking at the effect of the income level on alcohol abuse and then comparing counties that are wet and allow the sale of alcohol and dry that do not sell alcohol. Similar to the previous study (Cerdá 2011) where income was compared to alcohol use, but this study uses a few more variables such as accident rate and looking at dry counties as well. To find data for this study, a quantitative analysis on statistics obtained from the Texas Department of Health and the *Texas Almanac* was done. It was found that as income decreased, alcohol accidents increased and driving while intoxicated arrests decreased for wet counties. For dry counties, as income decreased, alcohol accidents decreased along with DWIs. With the exception of the dry counties, the data follow the trend found in the previous study (Cerdá 2011).

The next study looks at the same idea but once again adds a new element to the study. (Brempong 2005) The paper used census tract data and instrumental variables (IV) estimations to investigate whether alcohol availability had differential crime effects in low and high-income neighborhoods. Brempong pointed out that over-concentration of alcohol outlets leads to loss of social control, hence excessively higher crime rates than would be predicted by "crime fundamentals." First, the correlation between alcohol availability and income was examined and found that it was positive at low-income levels but became negative at high-income levels. Then, the relationship between crime rates and alcohol availability showed considerable discontinuity. Brempong and Racine (2005) found that the effect of alcohol availability on crime rate doubles when alcohol availability, as measured by the number of liquor licenses, reaches 10 in a census tract.

To sum up this study, the results found that the effect of alcohol availability on

crime in low-income neighborhoods was stronger than its effect in high-income neighborhoods. It seems clear that there is a correlation between alcohol use and abuse with income; however, it is not always the same correlation in every case. Different factors in the population can often change the data such as wet or dry counties, crime rates or the age of the population. The best way to help treat this problem is to be able to know how different populations correlate with factors like income to be able to spot it and give help early.

On the University of Maine campus, the Alcohol and Drug Education Programs (ADEP) put out annual reports to see the level of alcohol consumption on campus along with other statistics such as if students are being educated on subjects of drugs and alcohol or where are places that drinking occurs most often (Sidelko 2010). This report reflected findings of a study conducted at the University of Maine, Orono, that report the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs on the campus as reported by participants.

This survey was electronically distributed through email to all enrolled students. The questionnaire included topics such as use of alcohol and consequences of alcohol. This study also looked at other aspects such as availability of education and help to students as well as habits of students when drinking and how they respond to alcohol policies and enforcement. The survey gathered 1,747 responses and found that about 70% of responses showed that the student had consumed alcohol within the last month. Of these students, the demographic then broke down this information into different categories such as where consumption took place and what semester students reported drinking more. It was also found that over 500 responses reported drinking more than 6 drinks in one night within the last month. Another important statistic found was that over

400 surveys came back from on-campus students who had consumed alcohol in the past month, and Residence Life students showed an increase in alcohol consumption at 6+ drinks in a single day when compared to all participants, regardless of where they live, over the past month

Taken together, the results show that there are many factors or reasons that go along with heavy drinking and alcohol abuse. Often, higher-income families drink more often, but lower-income families abuse alcohol or are alcoholics. Heavy drinking is present at the University of Maine, but further research as to family history of alcohol addiction needs to be studied in more detail. Because children of alcoholics are four times more likely to develop a chemical dependency with alcohol or drugs than any other group of people, identifying these individuals in order to educate and help as soon as possible could prove very valuable. If income also shows a strong correlation to alcohol addiction in student families, it may make it easier for campus alcohol counselors to recognize who could be in need of help in the form of counseling or education in the subject.

Hypothesis

Entering this project, my first thought was that students from lower-income families would have a higher rate of alcoholism in their families. After thinking more about the demographic of students at the University of Maine, I realized that the vast majority of this campus is made up of lower-middle to middle-class students. Walkup's previous studies suggested that there is likely a high rate of students who have alcoholism present in their immediate families. With this in mind, I felt that there would be no correlation between alcoholism and social economic statuses. Even with this hypothesis, I felt that if there were a correlation, it would be very useful to the Student Wellness Center in helping identify students who are more at risk to develop drinking problems. Also, by doing a project like this where a survey would be sent out to thousands of students, anyone looking for more information, education about alcohol or counseling here at the University of Maine would know how to reach a professional counselor. The overall potential benefit of the research would be to provide a better understanding of how many incoming students each year have alcoholism in their families and, thereby, allow drug and alcohol counselors on campus to have a better understanding of their students. Also, potentially, it will put students looking for counseling or information in contact with Bud Walkup.

Designing the Survey

At first, the goal was to get back as many surveys as possible and the best way to do that was to table in dorms to distribute the surveys. By doing this, participants could be actively recruited to take the survey rather than passively waiting and hoping by means of an electronic survey. Also, adding compensation, it would hopefully drastically increase the probability for participation. The hope was to add a few 50-dollar gift cards as possible incentives. After the first submission to the UMaine Institutional review board, there was clearly a flaw with this plan. While participation was very important, confidentiality needed to be treated as the number one priority. Having surveys filled out in person would compromise this and made it impractical. While still providing more incentive for survey takers would have been beneficial, distributing them in person would have led to an end of confidentiality. Because of these factors, the survey had to be done electronically and sent via email. The surveys themselves would be available and collected using Survey Monkey, where no names or other identifying data would be sought or captured. The survey invitation and link would be sent out on First Class to on-campus students by a selected member of Residents Life who would forward the IRB-approved study to students so that their names would never be seen by the PI or the project advisor. Kyle McAuliffe was selected to send out the surveys and a date was set for December 2013 to have the emails sent out.

The next step was designing the survey questions and the informed consent page. After working with the thesis committee, the following is what was designed for a survey and informed consent page.

Informed Consent and Survey

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Vincent LoConte, a senior majoring in Public Administration at the University of Maine and the faulty sponsors Bud Walkup, a licensed alcohol and drug counselor who has practiced for 30 years, and Dr. Kenneth Nichols who is Professor Emeritus of Public Administration at the University of Maine. He has been part of the faculty since 1996. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. The purpose of this research study is to see if there is accurate, adequate education or counseling for students who have alcohol abuse problems or family members who are alcoholics.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey may take approximately two minutes to complete.

Confidentiality

The study is anonymous. Your name and other personal identification are not used anywhere on the questionnaire. The only individuals having access to the data are Vincent LoConte, who is the principal investigator, and his advisers for this project. Data will be kept on a password-protected computer until May 2104, then destroyed.

Risks

The survey contains sensitive questions dealing with alcohol consumption and family alcohol use that may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions that make

you uncomfortable. Anyone looking for more information on these subjects and anyone who feels negatively affected by this survey is encouraged to contact Bud Walkup, Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor. Education Specialist, Student Wellness Resource Center Phone: (207) 581-1423 Fax: (207) 581-3488 bud.walkup@umit.maine.edu

Benefits

Although this study may have no direct benefit for you, it can help put you in contact with alcohol counselors and education on the subject of alcohol consumption as well as help us learn more about this health issue here at the University of Maine.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You may stop at any time during the survey, or you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Vincent Loconte at Vincent.Loconte@umit.maine.edu or Bud Walkup at Bud.Walkup@umit.maine.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board, at 581-1498 (or e-mail gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu). By choosing to participate below, you indicate that you have read and understand the above information and are ready to begin answering questions. Thank you for your time.

1. Are you at least 18 years old?

Yes

No

2. Please state your gender.

Male

Female

Other

3. Are you an in-state student?

Instate

Out of State

4. How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine?

One Year

Two Years

Three Years

Four Years

Fifth or longer

5. How often do you consume alcohol?

Never used

Have but not in the last month

1-4 days in the last month

5-9 days in the last month

Over 9 days in the last month

6. How would you describe your family's financial standing?

Getting by is extremely tough being a 1 and 6 never having any problems

1 2 3 4 5 6

7. What would you say is closest to your total household income?

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 to \$29,999

\$30,000 to \$59,999

\$60,000 to \$99,999

\$100,000 to \$149,999

\$150,000 or more

Unsure

According to the Center for Disease Control, dependency on alcohol, also known as alcohol addiction and alcoholism, is a chronic disease. The signs and symptoms of

alcohol dependence include—

A strong craving for alcohol.

Continued use despite repeated physical, psychological, or interpersonal problems.

The inability to limit drinking.

8. Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?

Yes

No

Unsure

9. Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers?

Never

Once

1-3

3-5

More than 5 times

10. Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?

Yes

No

Rationale Behind Each Survey Question

This is an explanation of the reasons behind each question in the survey and what is hoped to be achieved from the questions as well as how the data will be used. This is to help give a better understanding of where each question came from and how it can be used.

1. Are you at least 18 years old?

This question was added to make sure all survey takers were over 18.

2. Please state your gender.

This Question was put into place based on the survey put out by University of Maine's Alcohol and Drug Education Programs (ADEP) that asked university students their gender and found trends that showed often women were more likely to have never used substances such as alcohol and tobacco. When looking at whether there is a correlation between income and alcoholism in families, it is also important to see if the correlation is spurious or could be a dependent variable that makes a difference.

3. Are you an in-state student?

This question is asked also based on the ADEP survey that asked if subjects were in state or out of state. Also, based on reports put out from the Center for Disease Control, Maine residents have a higher rate of alcoholism than other states. This question will be compared with responses to question 8 to see if there is a higher rate for in-state students.

4. How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine?

This question once again comes from the ADEP survey that found that first and second year students have a much higher rate of drinking than third fourth or fifth year students. This question will be compared with question number four to see if there is a correlation with 5 in college and drinking and explain possible causality for number 5.

5. How often do you consume alcohol?

This question is asked based on several different studies including ones done by the CDC and ADEP and is used based on the CDC's finding that children of alcoholics are at a much higher rate of becoming alcoholics themselves. This question can be contrasted with number 8 to see if positive answers to number 8 lead to higher responses on this question. Also to see if students who are consuming more alcohol would consider themselves educated in alcohol use since coming to UMaine (question 9 and 10).

6. How would you describe your family's financial standing?

This question comes from many studies I have looked at and is the key issue I would like to see if this question has any correlation with number six. Based on several different studies, some would find it more likely that lower income would lead to higher use of alcoholism while other would suggest that higher income would lead to higher and more regular use of alcohol.

7. What would you say is closest to your total household income?

This question was added to get a better sense of social economic status. It was added

rather than put in to replace 6 because for many students who may have no idea where their family falls in terms of income, they should have a sense of how easy it is to get by. The hope is that the combination of these two questions makes it easy for survey takers to convey SES.

8. Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?

This question is the independent variable in the project that almost all of the data can be compared with to look for criteria of causality.

9. Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers?

This question is put in place to see if current alcohol education programs are effective. If the answers come back with very high or very low answers, the program here at UMaine could be adjusted to reflect this question.

10. Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?

This question is used to see if people who before taking this survey would have known where to receive counseling. This can help show if this survey was effective in connecting people with positive responses to questions 5 and 8 to counseling options such as Bud Walkup.

Email From Resident Life

This email was sent out by Kyle McAuliffe, an assistant community coordinator in Gannet Hall, and it reads:

Hello,

Bellow is a link to a survey being sent out by Vincent LoConte, a senior here at the University of Maine as part of his honors thesis. This survey will take under two minutes and will focus on questions dealing with alcohol use and education. This survey is completely voluntary and can be stopped at any time. However, it would be greatly appreciated and helpful if you were to fill it out by December first. The survey is also confidential and your identity will not be traced to your answers.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Bud Walkup at Bud.Walkup@umit.maine.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board, at 581-1498 (or e-mail gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu). By choosing to participate below, you indicate that you have read and understand the above information and are ready to begin answering questions.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LoConte>

Retrieving the Data

The first round of surveys was sent out December 2, 2013 to all first-year on-campus students. Due to a miscommunication with McAuliffe, no one besides first years got the survey. After contacting McAuliffe, the misunderstanding was resolved and on December 9, the survey was sent out to all on-campus students. There were around four hundred responses after the first round of emails. As planned, a second follow-up email was sent out January 14 2014, after the end of winter break and the survey was no longer available after January 28. There were a total of 650 responses and 608 that were over 18 and were able to be studied. While the goal was to get 1,000 students, 608 is still a very good sample of the campus to go off. However, there are some problems with the data. First is that it is all on-campus students who took the survey, which could lead to an inconsistent sample pool of the school. The majority of on-campus students are first or second-year students and are much younger. Other factors that could lead to a misrepresentation of the campus would be the number of females to take the survey was 20% higher than males.

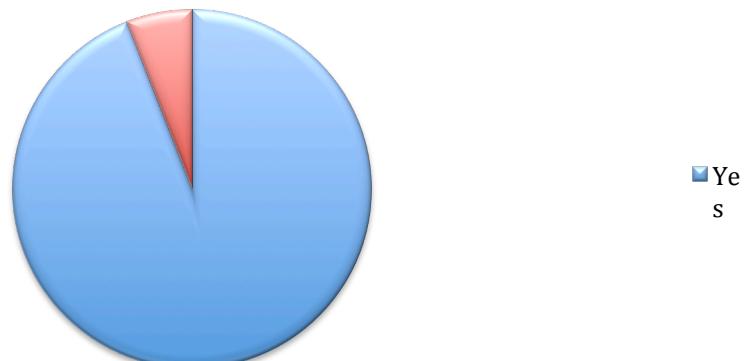
Results

University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Are you at least 18 years old?

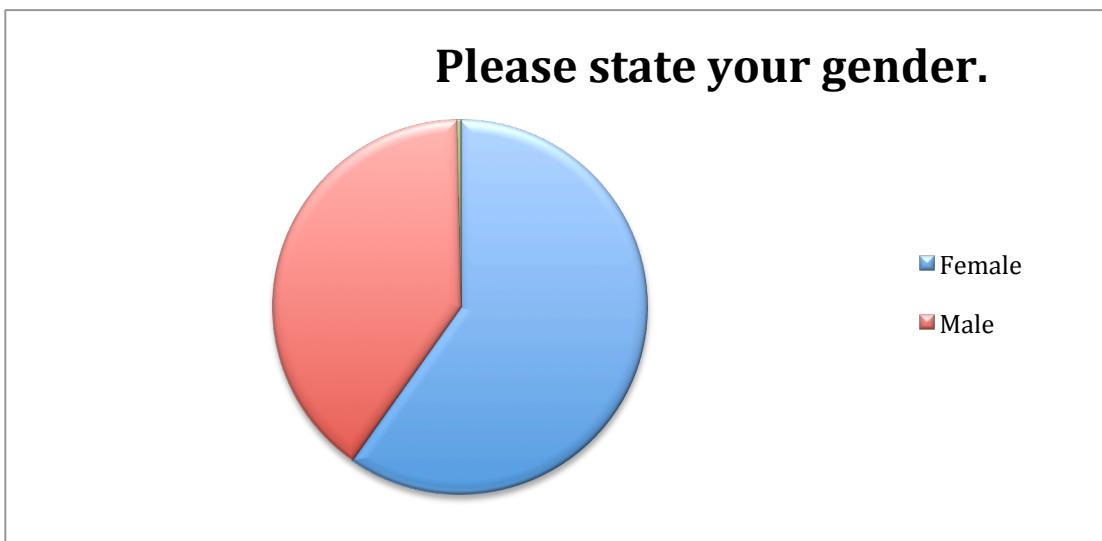
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	94.1%	609
No	5.9%	38
	<i>answered question</i>	647
	<i>skipped question</i>	2

Are you over 18 years old?



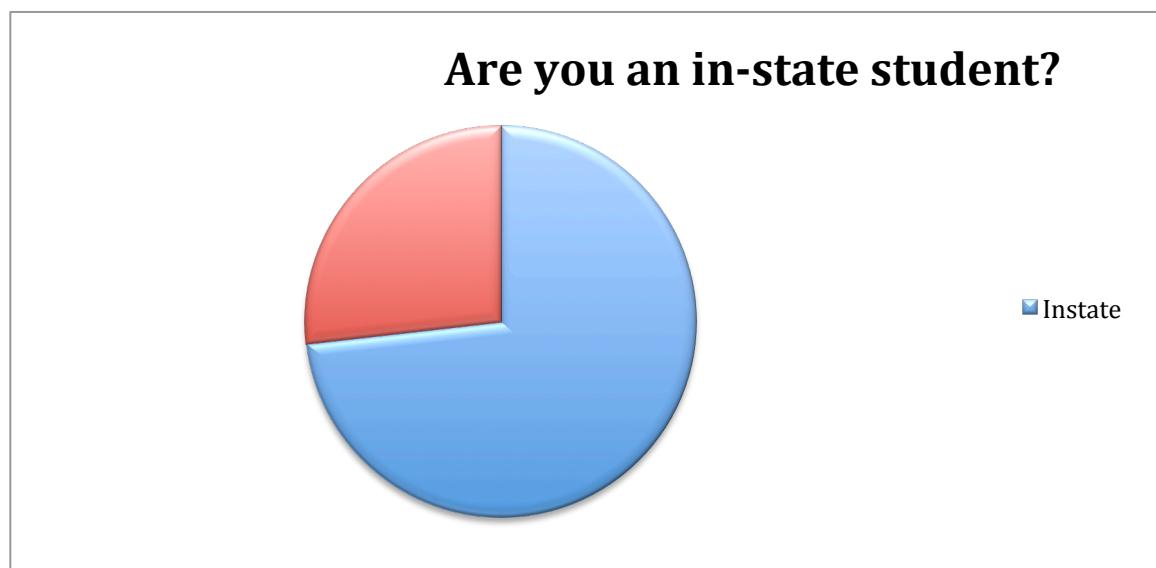
University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Please state your gender.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	59.7%	362
Male	39.9%	242
Transgendered	0.3%	2
Other	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	606
	<i>skipped question</i>	3



University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Are you an in-state student?			
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Instate	73.2%	445	
Out of State	26.8%	163	
	<i>answered question</i>	608	
	<i>skipped question</i>	1	

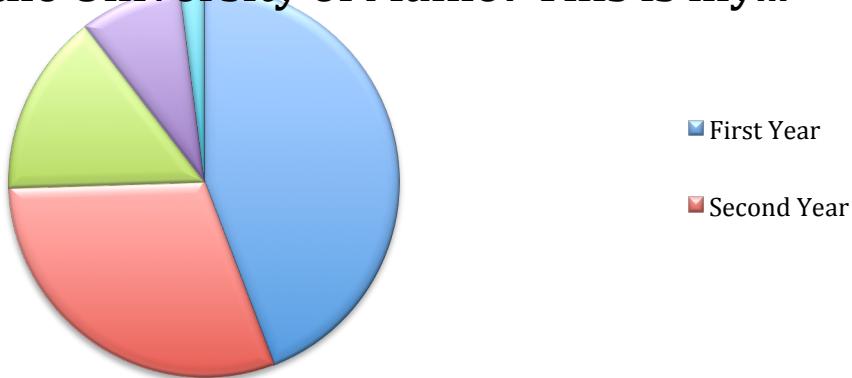


University of Maine Alcohol Survey

How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine? This is my...

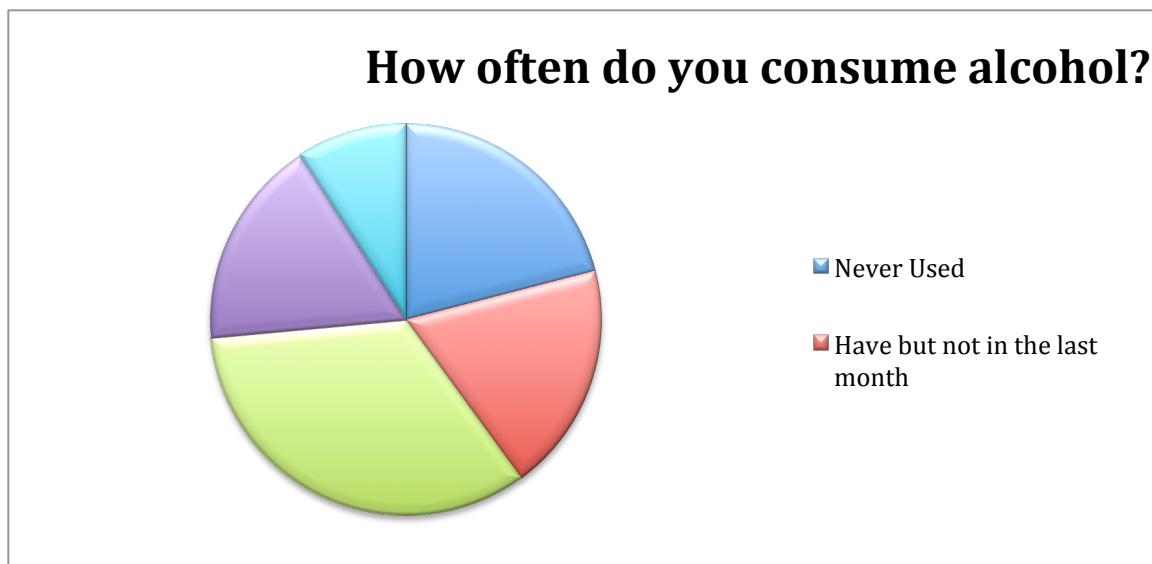
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
First Year	44.2%	269
Second Year	30.3%	184
Third Year	15.1%	92
Fourth Year	8.4%	51
Fifth Year or Longer	2.0%	12
<i>answered question</i>		608
<i>skipped question</i>		1

How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine? This is my...



University of Maine Alcohol Survey

How often do you consume alcohol?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never Used	21.0%	127
Have but not in the last month	19.0%	115
1-4 days in the last month	33.6%	203
5-9 days in the last month	17.4%	105
Over 9 days in the last month	9.1%	55
	<i>answered question</i>	605
	<i>skipped question</i>	4

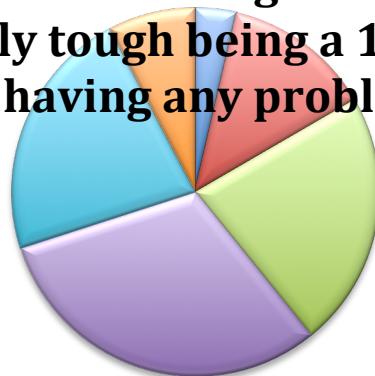


University of Maine Alcohol Survey

How would you describe your family's financial standing? Getting by is extremely tough being a 1 and 6 never having any problems

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	3.6%	22
2	13.0%	79
3	22.5%	137
4	30.9%	188
5	22.2%	135
6	7.7%	47
<i>answered question</i>		608
<i>skipped question</i>		1

How would you describe your family's financial standing? Getting by is extremely tough being a 1 and 6 never having any problems



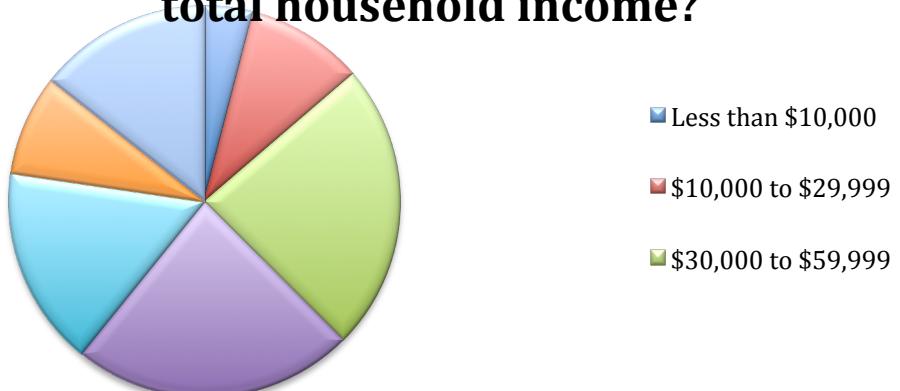
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

University of Maine Alcohol Survey

What would you say is closest to your total household income?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than \$10,000	4.0%	24
\$10,000 to \$29,999	9.7%	59
\$30,000 to \$59,999	23.8%	144
\$60,000 to \$99,999	23.4%	142
\$100,000 to \$149,999	16.5%	100
\$150,000 or more	8.3%	50
Unsure	14.4%	87
<i>answered question</i>		606
<i>skipped question</i>		3

What would you say is closest to your total household income?

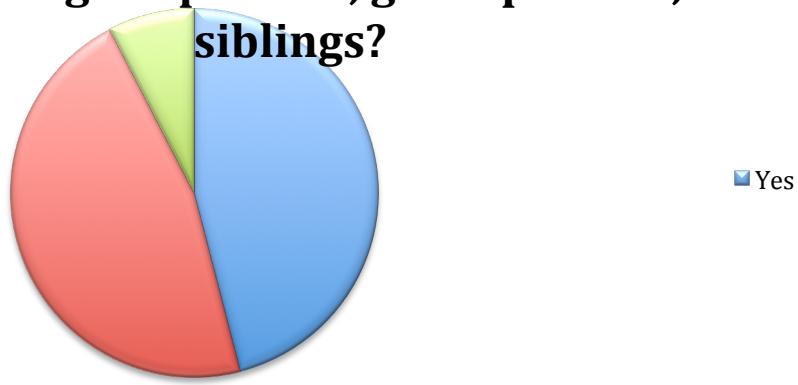


University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	46.0%	280
No	46.5%	283
Unsure	7.6%	46
<i>answered question</i>		609
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?

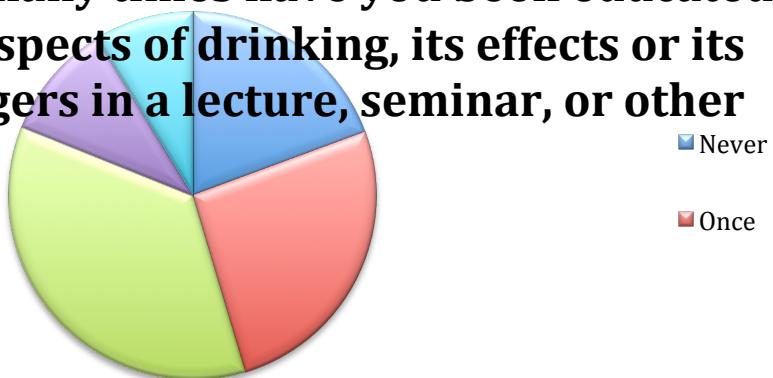


University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other venue?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Never	19.4%	118
Once	26.0%	158
1-3	35.7%	217
3-5	10.2%	62
More than 5 times	8.7%	53
<i>answered question</i>		608
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Since attending the University of Maine,
how many times have you been educated
on aspects of drinking, its effects or its
dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other

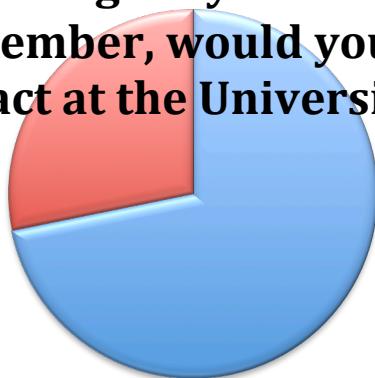


University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.8%	436
No	28.2%	171
<i>answered question</i>		607
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?



■ Yes
■ No

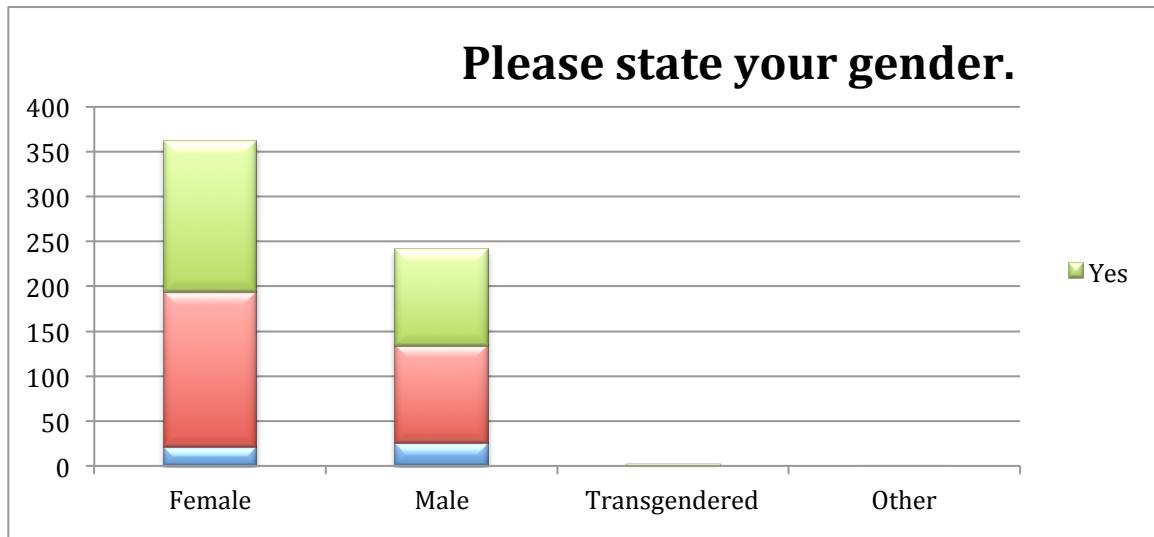
Analyzing the Results

The section above is all the data after the survey takers who were under 18 were removed. This can be seen from question one and the drop from 649 total takers to 609 in every other question. The most striking of all of the results was question number 8: “Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?” The data for this question was hypothesized to be around 30% of survey takers that would respond with a yes answer. It was an astounding 46% of the survey takers and just 0.5% less than people who answered no. The question leaves it up to the survey taker to determine if alcoholism is present, using the CDC’s definition; “According to the Center for Disease Control, dependency on alcohol, also known as alcohol addiction and alcoholism, is a chronic disease. The signs and symptoms of alcohol dependence include — a strong craving for alcohol; continued use despite repeated physical, psychological, or interpersonal problems; the inability to limit drinking.” With this in mind, there is clearly a margin of error that must be taken into account. However, the fact that there is almost and equal amount of University of Maine students who feel that they have a family member with alcoholism as the number who do not was very unexpected. The next step was to look at data trends that showed up from the survey. The best was to do this was to compare question number eight with all of the other questions after anyone under 18 was removed.

The first question that made this comparison was made was question two looking at gender. This is what was found:

University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Please state your gender.		Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?			
Answer Options	Yes	No	Unsure	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	169	172	21	59.7%	362
Male	108	109	25	39.9%	242
Transgendered	2	0	0	0.3%	2
Other	0	0	0	0.0%	0
			<i>answered question</i>		606
			<i>skipped question</i>		3



As the data show, there is really no difference from gender. There is never a bigger difference than three from yes or no in any of the genders. With these results, it is fair to conclude that in this study, gender does not play a role. The only two transgendered answered selected yes, there is so little data here to make any conclusions or draw from the data in any way concerning transcended people and alcoholism.

The next question, question three, showed the same lack of difference as question number two. Both yes and no were never split by a margin of more than five percent.

University of Maine Alcohol Survey

Are you an in-state student?					
Answer Options	Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?			Response Percent	Response Count
	Yes	No	Unsure		
Instate	208 (47%)	205 (46%)	32 (7%)	73.2%	445
Out of State	72 (44%)	77 (47%)	14 (9%)	26.8%	163
				<i>answered question</i>	608
				<i>skipped question</i>	1

Question four once again shows little to no trends. At first, the trend that shows is as time in school increases, the number of yes answers decreases. In first years, the difference is 5% more yes answers than no. However, in year four, while the difference looks smaller, it is actually a higher percent of people said yes than as it is at 10%.

University of Maine Alcohol Survey

How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine? This is my...					
Answer Options	Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?			Response Percent	Response Count
	Yes	No	Unsure		
First Year	130 (48%)	116 (43%)	23 (9%)	44.2%	269
Second Year	84 (45%)	87 (47%)	13 (8%)	30.3%	184
Third Year	34 (37%)	52 (56%)	6 (7%)	15.1%	92
Fourth Year	27 (53%)	22 (43%)	2 (4%)	8.4%	51
Fifth Year or Longer	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	2 (16%)	2.0%	12
				<i>answered question</i>	608
				<i>skipped question</i>	1

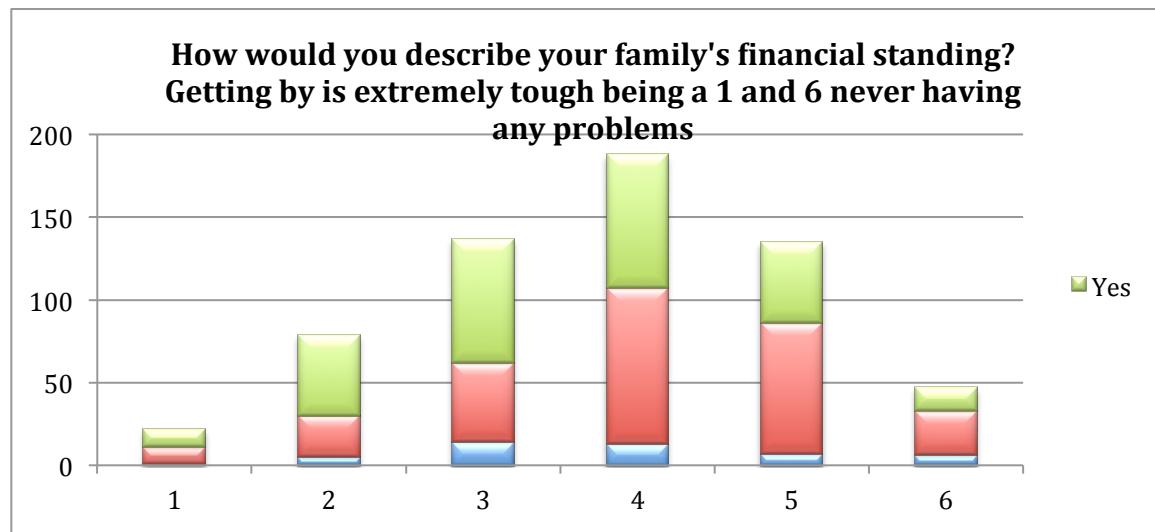
Question number five asked how often do you consume alcohol, but there are a few problems with this question. This question examined whether the amount students drink has any correlation with alcoholism in their family. The problem is that it is hard to see just how much someone drinks. The amount that someone drinks is very individualized as 10 drinks could cause one person to be heavily intoxicated while another person with a higher tolerance and a bigger body mass may not even be affected from the same amount of alcohol. This question purposefully left out the number of drinks for this exact reason. The question instead asked how often do you consume alcohol and used days rather than drinks as a marker. The problem with this is that someone could have a single glass of wine every day for dinner but never anything more and never get intoxicated but would still fall in the “over nine days in the last month” answer. Because the target of this survey was college students and mainly ones that were under 21, the question was asked in this manner assuming that with the exception of a few people, “days in the last month” would translate to a night of drinking rather than a glass of wine. Once again, there was no real trend that showed itself when compared to question number eight.

How often do you consume alcohol?		Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?				
Answer Options		Yes	No	Unsure	Response Percent	Response Count
Never Used		57 (45%)	56 (44%)	14 (11%)	21.0%	127
Have but not in the last month		50 (43%)	58 (50%)	7 (7%)	19.0%	115
1-4 days in the last month		93 (45%)	97 (48%)	13 (6%)	33.6%	203
5-9 days in the last month		53 (53%)	47 (47%)	5 (5%)	17.4%	105
Over 9 days in the last month		25 (45%)	23 (42%)	7 (13%)	9.1%	55

answered question **605**

The next question is the first that looked at social economic status. The question alone showed that the majority of students say that getting by is between at 3 and 4 in terms of difficulty getting by financially. This makes sense as most people no matter their income think they fall into the middle class. However, when compared with question 8, something stands out.

Answer Options	Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?			Response Percent	Response Count
	Yes	No	Unsure		
1	11 (50%)	10 (45%)	1 (5%)	3.6%	22
2	49 (62%)	25 (32%)	5 (7%)	13.0%	79
3	75 (55%)	48 (35%)	14 (10%)	22.5%	137
4	81 (43%)	94 (50%)	13 (7%)	30.9%	188
5	49 (36%)	79 (58%)	7 (5%)	22.2%	135
6	14 (30%)	27 (57%)	6 (13%)	7.7%	47
			<i>answered question</i>		608
			<i>skipped question</i>		1



What happens between option 3 and option 4 is very interesting. Answers 1, 2 and 3 all have a higher amount of yes responses than no. Then, at option 4, there is a swap and for

4, 5 and 6, there is a higher number of no responses than yes. This trend seems to suggest that families with a harder time “getting by” have higher rates of alcoholism. Question number 7 also asks about income but gives a more exact way of looking at household income. The same trend as in question 6 is also present. People who reported having lower family income were more likely to report having a family member who was an alcoholic.

What would you say is closest to your total household income?		Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?				
Answer Options		Yes	No	Unsure	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than \$10,000		13 (54%)	8 (33%)	3 (12%)	4.0%	24
\$10,000 to \$29,999		33 (56%)	20 (34%)	6 (10%)	9.7%	59
\$30,000 to \$59,999		75 (52%)	60 (42%)	9 (6%)	23.8%	144
\$60,000 to \$99,999		65 (46%)	65 (46%)	12 (8%)	23.4%	142
\$100,000 to \$149,999		45 (45%)	51 (51%)	4 (4%)	16.5%	100
\$150,000 or more		16 (32%)	32 (64%)	2 (4%)	8.3%	50
Unsure		32 (37%)	45 (52%)	10 (11%)	14.4%	87
					<i>answered question</i>	606
					<i>skipped question</i>	3

While many students do not know their household income, they are able to know a rough guess. This does give less credit to some of these answers but there is still clearly a trend of students who reported lower income being more likely to pick yes for number 8. This question, along with question 6, seem to show the same pattern making it seem even stronger. The switch seems to happen around \$60,000 to \$99,999, similar to question number 6 where the switch happened between answers 3 and 4.

The next two questions on the survey were asked see the direct impact of the survey

and looked at how well students are given resources and education on the subjects of drinking while here at UMaine. Here is how the data looked when matched with question number 8.

Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other venue?					
Answer Options	Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?				
	Yes	No	Unsure	Response Percent	Response Count
	Never	57 (48%)	50 (42%)	11 (9%)	19.4% 118
	Once	66 (42%)	84 (53%)	8 (5%)	26.0% 158
	1-3	95 (44%)	108 (50%)	14 (6%)	35.7% 217
	3-5	35 (56%)	20 (32%)	7 (11%)	10.2% 62
	More than 5 times	27 (51%)	20 (38%)	6 (11%)	8.7% 53
<i>answered question</i>					608
<i>skipped question</i>					1

Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?					
Answer Options	Is there any history of alcoholism among your biological parents, grandparents, or siblings?				
	Yes	No	Unsure	Response Percent	Response Count
	Yes	205 (48%)	197 (45%)	34 (7%)	71.8% 436
	No	75 (44%)	84 (49%)	12 (5%)	28.2% 171
	<i>answered question</i>				
	<i>skipped question</i>				

The results from question number nine seem to show that there is a good amount of chances for students to be educated about alcohol, but not a number that would be too much where the information becomes redundant. While 107 students reported never having been educated, there does seem to be a good balance in place right now of education that is available. Less than 20% of students have never been through any kind of education, which is very impressive. Another very impressive statistic comes from

question 10. If nothing comes out of this survey data then at the very least 171 students who before would not have known where to go if they needed counseling now have the contact for Bud Walkup the Drug and Alcohol Counselor at the University of Maine and the Student Wellness Resource Center. Among that 171, seventy-five of the students feel that a family member has alcoholism.

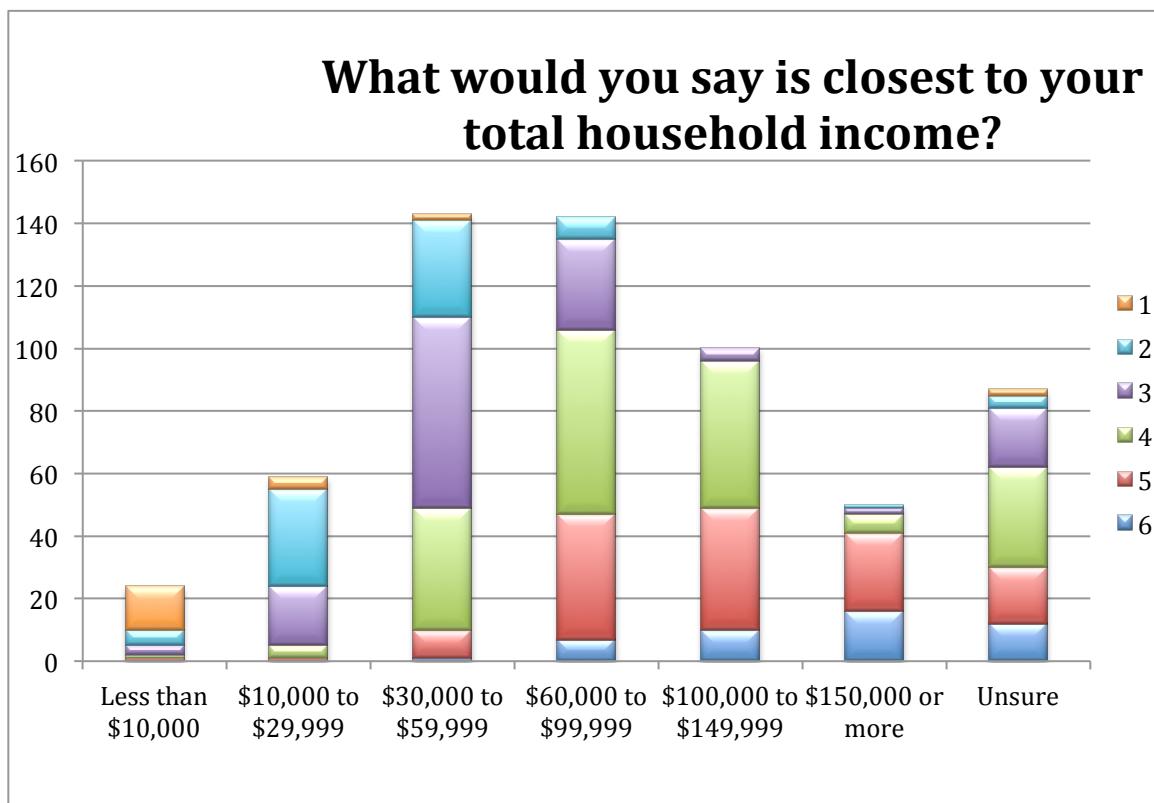
The next figures are beneficial to compare was number of years in school and how many times students have been educated on alcohol. This is what the data show:

Answer Options	Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other venue?					Response Percent	Response Count
	Never	Once	1-3	3-5	More than 5 times		
First Year	59 (22%)	86(32%)	87(32%)	24(9%)	12(5%)	44.2%	268
Second Year	35(19%)	47(25%)	71(38%)	16(9%)	15(8%)	30.3%	184
Third Year	13(14%)	17(18%)	29(32%)	16(17%)	17(18%)	15.2%	92
Fourth Year	9(18%)	7(14%)	25(50%)	5(10%)	5(10%)	8.4%	51
Fifth Year or Longer	2(17%)	1(8%)	4(33%)	1(8%)	4(33%)	2.0%	12
<i>answered question</i>						607	
<i>skipped question</i>							1

The data show a few very important things. Unfortunately, the number of students taking this survey who are fourth years or higher are less than 65 so some of the data would be a more clear with a more even number of older students. But what it does show is a steady decline from never having been educated in year one to year three in terms of percent of the survey takers. In year one, 22% of the takers say that they have never had any education on this subject while at the campus. Then in year two, it drops to 19% and the

to 14% in year three. This steady decline shows that there are more and more opportunities for students to receive these education sessions, whether in classes or on their own time. At the same time, the number of more than 5 does not rise nearly as fast. There clearly seems to be an effective system where there is enough education but not an overwhelming or redundant amount.

The next questions that were compared were the two on financial standings. While one was very vague and asked how difficult getting by was on a scale of one to six, the next question was much more exact but required a bit more of a guess from students on their household income. The question was how well difficulty of getting by would match up with lower income and vise-versa. This is what the data revealed.



This graph does a great job of showing how number one, shown as red, gets less and less as income increases and the opposite with 6 in purple going from not visible to the second biggest option. In this chart, it seems clear that the economic aspect of this survey was fairly accurate despite the speculative nature of the two questions.

How many years have you been enrolled at the University of Maine? This is my...		How often do you consume alcohol?						
Answer Options		Never Used	Have but not in the last month	1-4 days in the last month	5-9 days in the last month	Over 9 days in the last month	Response Percent	Response Count
First Year	63 (23%)	47(17%)	82(31%)	51(19%)	25(9%)		44.4%	268
Second Year	33(18%)	41(22%)	65(35%)	31(17%)	13(7%)		30.3%	183
Third Year	25(28%)	15(17%)	31(34%)	10(11%)	9(10%)		14.9%	90
Fourth Year	6(12%)	8(16%)	19(37%)	12(23%)	6(12%)		8.4%	51
Fifth Year or Longer	0	4(33%)	5(42%)	1(8%)	2(17%)		2.0%	12
							<i>answered question</i>	604
							<i>skipped question</i>	1

Hours could be spent comparing all of these questions, so only key comparisons have been looked at so far. This comparison looks at years in school and how often students drink. There was really no surprise with this question as the never drank before response steadily declines over years in school. At the same time, the peak year for having over five days in the month of drinking seems to be year one and two. This might be influenced by a maturing concept about the risks of excessive drinking, a higher dropout rate for excessive drinkers, or both – the survey results can not tell us. Again, due to less data for years 4 and 5, it is not a perfect indicator but still shows a good representation of campus.

The focus has mostly been on family history, but drinking frequency (Question 5) is also an indicator of potential alcohol problems. The following crosstab tables look to see how question five compares with other questions in the survey.

		How often do you consume alcohol?						
Answer Options		Never Used	Have but not in the last month	1-4 days in the last month	5-9 days in the last month	Over 9 days in the last month	Response Percent	Response Count
Female		85(24 %)	71(20 %)	129(36 %)	50(19 %)	25(7%)	59.7%	360
Male		42(17 %)	44(18 %)	72(30%)	54(22 %)	29(12 %)	40.0%	241
Transgendered		0	0	1	0	1	0.3%	2
Other		0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0
							answered question	603
							skipped question	2

		How often do you consume alcohol?						
Answer Options		Never Used	Have but not in the last month	1-4 days in the last month	5-9 days in the last month	Over 9 days in the last month	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than \$10,000		6(25%)	9(37%)	5(20%)	1(4%)	3(4%)	4.0%	24
\$10,000 to \$29,999		14(23%)	14(23%)	21(35%)	6(10%)	4(7%)	9.8%	59
\$30,000 to \$59,999		35(24%)	27(19%)	44(31%)	26(18%)	11(8%)	23.8%	143
\$60,000 to \$99,999		28(20%)	27(19%)	44(31%)	29(20%)	13(9%)	23.4%	141

Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other venue?

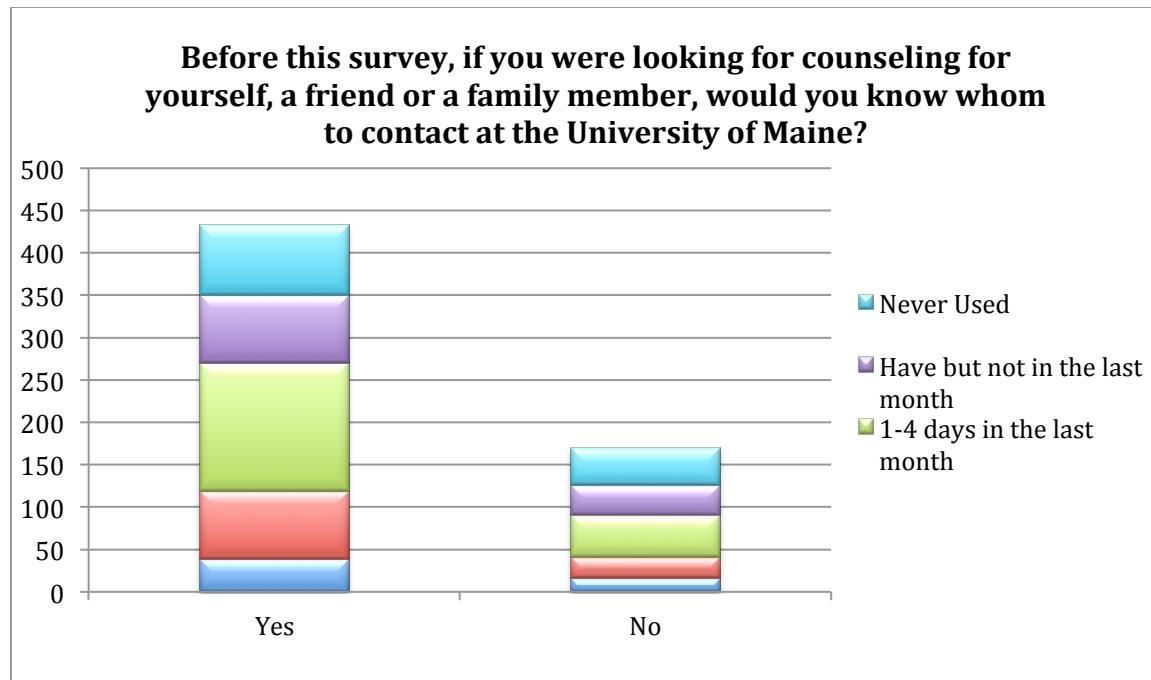
Answer Options	How often do you consume alcohol?					Response Percent	Response Count
	Never Used	Have but not in the last month	1-4 days in the last month	5-9 days in the last month	Over 9 days in the last month		
Never	38(32%)	20(17%)	34(29%)	14(12%)	11(9%)	19.4%	117
Once	37(23%)	31(20%)	54(34%)	23(15%)	12(8%)	26.0%	157
1-3	36(17%)	38(18%)	82(38%)	47(22%)	13(6%)	35.8%	216
3-5	10(16%)	17(27%)	14(23%)	13(21%)	8(13%)	10.3%	62
More than 5 times	5(10%)	9(17%)	19(36%)	8(15%)	11(21%)	8.6%	52
						<i>answered question</i>	604
						<i>skipped question</i>	1

Before this survey, if you were looking for counseling for yourself, a friend or a family member, would you know whom to contact at the University of Maine?

Answer Options	How often do you consume alcohol?					Response Percent	Response Count
	Never Used	Have but not in the last month	1-4 days in the last month	5-9 days in the last month	Over 9 days in the last month		
Yes	83(19%)	80(18%)	151(35%)	80(18%)	39(9%)	71.8%	433
No	44(26%)	35(20%)	50(29%)	25(15%)	16(9%)	28.2%	170
						<i>answered question</i>	603
						<i>skipped question</i>	2

The first two of these four charts really show no trends but the last two show some interesting data. Some positive data can be seen in both tables including in the top chart where only eleven people (under 10%) of people who answered never have been educated on alcohol also said they had drank over nine days in the last month. This shows just how low the number of students who are drinking in these high amounts are not receiving education from the university on the subject of alcohol education. In the second table, only 16 people (less than 10%) said that they would not have known whom to contact about alcohol education and also drank over nine days in the past month. One

good thing was just that this was such a low percent as the next highest was 25. Although this was great that such a high percent of people know who to contact, as was mentioned before, now all 170 more students who did not know before who they should contact now have Bud Walkup's name and email address.



Application to Public Administration

After looking though all of the data, there are some questions that were raised. The first is question number nine on the survey. "Since attending the University of Maine, how many times have you been educated on aspects of drinking, its effects or its dangers in a lecture, seminar, or other venue?" The reason this question is so important is due to the responses that came in. The concern was that there would be either a high number of students reporting that they had never had any education on the aspects of drinking or that there would be far too many who reported they had been to more than five. However, more than 70% of the survey takers fell in between once and fives times. While 19.4% of survey takers say they have never been, there is no way that this number can ever be at 0%. As of now the University offers many opportunities for alcohol education. These come usually in the form of speakers at new-student orientations, Greek meetings and guest speakers in such classes as psychology and sociology introductions. The Student Wellness Center may look to lower the 19.4% but over 70% falling in the right range is a strong reflection of their hard work already.

The next area that applies to public policy is the finding that students reporting lower incomes seemed to correlate with higher responses to alcoholism among their parents, siblings or grandparents. While this data would be more conclusive with more responses, a trend came up. If we assume there is a clear trend here, the trend does bring up a causal order question. Is it the low income that causes their families to drink or is it the drinking habit that makes it harder for them to get by or maybe keep a steady job? This is a question that cannot be answered in this thesis but a follow up study may prove beneficial.

Another question that applies to public policy is the high rate of students who answered yes to having a parent, sibling or grandparent that is an alcoholic. The data showed an almost equal number of students answer yes as no. Two things stand out from this information. The first is that there is an equal number of family members that have alcoholism as do not, and there should be a push to provide help to these families. This however, seems to be policy that would be more in the hands of the State of Maine rather than the University of Maine. The next key thing that can be taken from this question, on more of a positive note, is that there does not seem to be any trend showing that having an alcoholic in the family makes it any harder to make it into college. This is a very promising sign that although alcoholism seems to correlate with lower income, this has no effect on ability to attend the University of Maine.

Moving Forward

The next step in this project would be to address some of these areas of public policy. However, many of these policies would come in at the state level and are unrealistic based on such a small survey. The data that apply more to the University of Maine is the question looking at education on alcohol at the University of Maine. However, the data indicates that the programs in place are already doing an effective job with the education of students in this area. What would be a great next step for this project would be a follow-up study. This study would look at not only on-campus students but every student at the University of Maine. This would make the data a better representation of the entire campus and could show new trends. Another interesting thing this new study could look at would be to compare different groups at the University of Maine to see if any trends appear in from group to group. Some of these different groups could be on campus versus off campus. This would show if this study was a good representation of the entire University. The biggest reason a new study would be beneficial would be to see how Greek life compares with the rest of the University.

The Greek community at the University of Maine is unique and visible. Some feel that Greek life at the University fosters an environment of drinking and partying while doing more harm to the campus than good. While some of this may be true, Greek life gives back to the University and the community in so many ways. Many chapters also do hundreds of hours of community service as well as raise thousands of dollars for local charities.

While all of this may be true, there are many more opportunities for Greeks to drink and party. A follow-up study looking at how Greeks compare to the rest of campus

could prove very interesting. Some of the areas that would be beneficial to look at when it comes to Greek life would be to see how often they drink, the rate of alcoholism in their families and income. However, what may prove most surprising would be their responses to questions number nine and ten of this survey. As members of Greek life, these students are subjected to a much larger amount of risk management information and new member meetings where alcohol education is often the topic. Because Greeks are more likely to be involved in drinking and partying, they are targeted at a much higher rate in terms of education. Whether it is education they receive from their individual chapters or from the University of Maine, it is unlikely that there is a single member of Greek life that has not been educated on the aspects of drinking in some capacity. With Greek life making up around 10% of the University of Maine undergraduate student population, there are a high number of students who can almost be expected to have received this education. This follow up study could focus on the entire University of Maine student population and see how Greek life compares to the rest of the students or simply focus on just Greek life. If the study was done through the Office of Sorority and Fraternity Affairs, every chapter could be mandated to take this survey. While it would likely not include every Greek, a population of 1,000 students would not be unreasonable at all. This new data can then be compared against this study to see how the general population of on campus students measures up to the Greek population.

Conclusion

This study has examined the connection between a family history of alcoholism and social economic status. After analyzing all of the data, the original hypothesis that there would be no correlation between alcoholism and social economic statuses was proven wrong. Another key finding that was really more of an afterthought of this project was the last two questions of the survey asking about the effectiveness of UMaine's alcohol education programs. The information shows that there is a low percent of students who had either received no education or had been over exposed and had been to more than five. While some of the data found such a high percent of students that feel that there is a history of alcoholism in their families, making these students more at risk, the University has clearly already made the appropriate steps in keeping its students educated.

In the results section, one chart that was almost added in was a "proxy variable," which is a variable used in lieu of something for which a direct variable doesn't exist. This is a substitute for something such as a person's health or quality of life. It would have created as a scale or index variable that offered a sense of how likely or unlikely a survey respondent was to be prone to alcoholism. However, there were several problems with using this chart. First is that it would be a very crude scale and use mainly hypothetical information to draw these conclusions. This study uses all hard figures and really does not use many hypotheticals and this table would not really fit in with the rest of the data. The biggest reason that this chart was excluded from the paper was that it was looking for how likely someone would be to become an alcoholic and this survey could not predict this factor. Even if the chart was hypothetical, there are so many factors that

go into alcoholism including the biological aspect that this chart would be so theoretical that it would really serve no purpose.

This project is hopefully only the first step in terms of research on this topic in this field at the University of Maine. As stated previously in this study, only on campus students were targeted to take this survey so there is not really a true representation of the entire UMaine campus. A great next step would be to send out a similar survey of around ten to twenty questions but sent to the entire undergraduate population. In this survey, questions can see what groups or areas of campus are receiving this alcohol education. One example would be on campus versus off campus, to see if being off-campus means less chance of receiving this education. The one area that may be the most useful would be looking at how the UMaine Greek life population stacks up against the majority of non-Greek students. With the backing of such figures as Katherine Pezzella from the Office of Sorority and Fraternity Affairs and Dean Robert Dana, a campus wide survey would be easily feasible.

Personally I have put in over two years into this project and it has had a major impact on my academic trajectory. After first being contacted by Bud Walkup in the fall of 2012, I was unsure that this was really the project for me. After doing research into the subject of alcoholism and addictions in general, coming from a family with a history of addictions, I realized just how important this project was and feel in love with the idea. Starting the spring of 2013, I began to have one on ones sessions with Walkup to think of survey questions and after months of work, we came up with around ten that we both agreed would work for this project. The next step and my first stumbling block was putting together a committee. While Walkup was an easy first pick, because the public

administration department was no longer around, I knew that this would not be easy. Luckily, Kenneth Nichols, a former Public Administration professor at UMaine, through email and Skype agreed to advise this project and despite never meeting in person the entire length of the project, Nichols has been extremely helpful in the process. Also, Dr. Carolyn Ball gave up her free time and agreed to be a member of the committee even while now working at the University of Sothern Maine. In terms of my honors committee member, with her expertise in the English department, I knew Kathleen Ellis would be a perfect fit. The last member to join the committee was one that when I started to work on this project in 2012 had never even met me. However, after having class with Steven Barkan and seeing his skills with analyzing data, he graciously agreed to be the last member of the committee.

The biggest challenge that I faced when doing this project was getting it approved through the University's Institutional review board. After being rejected in the summer of 2013, I was not able to gain approval until November of the same year. If not for the help of my committee members, I do not know if I would have been able to gain this approval. Originally I was looking to release this survey in September of 2013, with this delay, it was not sent out until late December. Even with this setback, I was still able to gain over 600 responses. With the help of Residents Life at the University of Maine and in particular, Kyle McAuliffe, the survey was sent to around 3,000 on campus students and gain all of the data needed for this study.

Going into this study, I had never come close to attempting a project of this magnitude and it has helped me gain confidence not only my academic life but helped mold me as a person outside of class work. After having so much background knowledge

on this subject, I have been able to become much more involved in Greek life on campus and hopefully a follow up study will help this very important part of the University.

Working on a project of this magnitude has also given me confidence heading into law school and post school life.

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About the Author

Vincent S. LoConte was born in Winthrop Massachusetts on July 6, 1991. He was raised his entire life in Winthrop until he moved to Orono, Maine in the fall of 2010 to study Public Management at the University of Maine. Vincent later added a minor in Political Science as well as Legal Studies and a concentration in Criminal Justice. He joined the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity in his second year and later became vice president. He is also a member of Order of Omega, a Greek honors society and Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science honors Fraternity.

Upon graduation, Vincent plans to study law at Maine Law in Portland Maine and hopes to concentrate in environmental law. Vincent plans on moving to the Portland area for law school to be close with family but then later working for the national park system in the future.