A self-fulfilling prophecy: investigating the role of normative misperceptions in the student drinking culture at Stellenbosch University

by
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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the existence of misperceptions regarding the peer-drinking norm among undergraduate students at Stellenbosch University and the role of these misperceptions in explaining students' drinking behaviour. A more permissive perception of the drinking norm has been associated with heavier alcohol consumption and negative consequences for oneself, others and property. Perceptions of the academic norm and its relation to personal academic and drinking behaviour are also investigated. Furthermore, the study examines the role of perceptions of the drinking norm in personal drinking behaviour in the context of other cognitive factors (perceptions), experiences prior to enrolling at university, as well as socio-demographic and contextual factors. The theoretical framework used to understand the origin, occurrence and perpetuation of misperceptions regarding the social norm includes Bourdieu's theory of habitus, social norms theory, social learning theory and attribution theory. Data were collected from 640 students out of a random sample of 3 177 who had been invited to participate in a web-based survey during September 2009. In addition, 18 personal semi-structured interviews were conducted with students.

Similar to findings of research in other countries, the results of this research show that students at Stellenbosch University tend to perceive other students' drinking behaviour (descriptive norm) and approval of drinking behaviour (injunctive norm) as more permissive than their own. The degree of misperception increases as the social distance of reference groups increases and is also significantly related to personal alcohol consumption. There is also evidence of misperceptions regarding the academic norm and its association with personal drinking behaviour and academic behaviour. Multiple regression analysis reveals that the perceived drinking norm of close friends is the best predictor of personal drinking behaviour, followed by personal approval of drinking and drinking behaviour during the last year of high school.

The data presented here for Stellenbosch University students extend the evidence that peer drinking norms are misperceived and highlights the importance of a student's experiences before enrolling at university. Furthermore, it provides evidence that misperceiving the drinking norm is a pervasive problem that may have behavioural consequences. Various American higher education institutions have developed and implemented campaigns aimed at correcting these misperceptions. This has resulted in significant reductions in misperceptions as well as in heavy drinking among students. Students at Stellenbosch University and elsewhere might also benefit from these types of intervention strategies.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die bestaan van wanpersepsies aangaande die portuurgroep-drinknorm onder voorgraadse studente aan Universiteit Stellenbosch en die rol daarvan in die verduideliking van studente se drinkgedrag. 'n Meer liberale persepsie van die drinknorm hou verband met swaarder alkoholgebruik en meer negatiewe gevolge vir die persoon self, ander en eiendom. Die studie ondersoek ook persepsies van die akademiese norm en die verband daarvan met persoonlike akademiese en drinkgedrag. Verder word die rol van persepsies van die drinknorm in persoonlike alkoholgebruik in die konteks van ander bewussynsfaktore (persepsies), ervarings voor inskrywing by die universiteit, asook sosiaal-demografiese en kontekstuele faktore ondersoek. Die studie maak gebruik van die teoretiese raamwerke van Bourdieu se habitus, sosiale norm-teorie, sosiale leer-teorie en attributasieteorie om die oorsprong, aanwesigheid en voortsetting van wanpersepsies te verstaan. Data is versamel onder 640 studente uit 'n ewekansige steekproef van 3 177 studente wat uitgenooi was om gedurende September 2009 aan 'n webgebaseerde opname deel te neem. Daar is ook 18 in-diepte semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met studente gevoer.

Soortgelyk aan bevindinge van navorsing in ander lande, toon resultate van hierdie navorsing dat studente aan Universiteit Stellenbosch geneig is om ander studente se drinkgedrag (beskrywende norm) en goedkeuring van alkoholverbruik (injunktiewe norm) as meer liberaal as hulle eie waar te neem. Die graad van wanpersepsie neem toe namate die sosiale afstand van verwysingsgroepe toeneem en hou ook betekenisvol verband met persoonlike alkoholgebruik. Daar is ook bewyse van wanpersepsies aangaande die akademiese norm en die verband daarvan met persoonlike drink- en akademiese gedrag. Resultate van 'n meervoudige regressie-ontleding wys dat die waargenome drinknorm van goeie vriende die beste voorspeller van persoonlike drinkgedrag is, gevolg deur persoonlike goedkeuring van alkoholgebruik en drinkgedrag gedurende die laaste jaar van hoërskool.

Die data van Stellenbosse studente lewer verder bewys dat portuurgroep-drinknorme verkeerdelik waargeneem word en beklemtoon die belangrikheid van studente se vorige ervarings. Dit bewys ook dat die verkeerde waarneming van die drinknorm 'n konstante probleem is wat gedragsgevolge kan hê. Verskeie Amerikaanse universiteite het al veldtogte ontwikkel en geïmplementeer gemik op die regstel van dié wanpersepsies, en dit het wanpersepsies en swaar drankgebruik onder studente betekenisvol verminder. Studente aan Universiteit Stellenbosch en elders sal waarskynlik ook by soortgelyke intervensiestrategieë baat vind.

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1.1   INTRODUCTION

In the social sciences today, the assumption that social influence plays a significant role in shaping individual and group behaviour can perhaps be accepted as uncontested wisdom. Moreover, social influence can largely be seen as dependent on the socialising forces of day-to-day interaction. The social norm, and people's own perception of how they personally deviate from that norm, is of particular importance for bringing on behavioural change. Perceiving a difference between oneself and a social norm may often lead to an adjustment of one's personal attitude and/or behaviour or, alternatively, alienation from the norm. Behavioural adjustment in the direction of the norm is more often than not seen as the convention; however, this is dependent on the assumption that people can correctly identify the social norm (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 243). The current research concerns itself with this idea: that people often misperceive the social norm and that this misperception has behavioural consequences. More specifically, this study will explore the occurrence of misperceptions of the peer drinking norm at Stellenbosch University by means of quantitative as well as qualitative research.

1.2   BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

This first section of this chapter will introduce the general university context, considering, among other things, the function of the university as an institution within society and how student drinking fits into the institutional milieu. This will be followed by a brief introduction of peer influence and how it contributes to the occurrence of student misperceptions regarding peer-drinking behaviour within the university context. Finally, the social norms approach will be introduced as an intervention/prevention programme aimed at correcting these normative misperceptions.

1.2.1   THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Every year, thousands of prospective university students leave the confines of their high school careers, their parents' homes and their adolescent lives behind to become part of the thousands of first-year students entering tertiary education. For a student as an individual, this change does not merely represent a swopping of living arrangements, but rather the start of a life-altering experience. From a structural-functionalist perspective, one could say that the institutions of the family and the secondary education system are expected to have paid their dues to society by preparing the prospective students for the next phase of their lives, their university career. However, this experience is different for every student. Upon enrolment, their minds are not mere blank slates, ready and willing to absorb the norms of their new-found social environment. Rather, they bring with them their previous experiences, different perceptions and different socio-demographic and cultural backgrounds and so make diverse choices in their new social milieu. From the perspective of funding, for instance, some students will be on a bursary; others will have a student loan, while the parents of some will be paying for their studies. Whatever the case, various factors will significantly influence students' behaviour and their priorities at university. Importantly, these factors will also influence their susceptibility to '*social norming*' (Hunter, 1998, as cited in Berkowitz, 2004: 6) or *socialisation*, i.e. the transmission and internalisation of the social knowledge and values necessary to function within the social and institutional environment of the university (Wallace, 1966: 4). Furthermore, individual students will perceive social norms

differently and consequently their reactions to the perceived norms will differ. Likewise, not all students within the university context will be subject to the same sources of social norming. For example, some will live in university residences, others in flats, while others will be staying with their parents.

Individual differences aside, the stereotypical function of a university as a social institution is to turn high-school scholars into functional young adults. According to Robert Merton (1957: 63), social institutions such as universities have two types of functions. *Manifest functions* are the obvious and intended outcomes of activities designed to aid some part of the social system. The manifest function of going to university would be to obtain an education and acquire the necessary qualifications and skills to enter a career (Newman, 2006: 46). *Latent functions*, on the other hand, are the sometimes unnoticed and unintended consequences that inadvertently contribute to the social system. The latent function of a university would be to teach students important lessons in how to manage on their own in the absence of parents (for some), to accept a greater sense of personal responsibility, to manage their time effectively and how to act and interact within a large bureaucracy. This knowledge and these skills will undoubtedly be invaluable in their professional careers to come (Newman, 2006: 46).

The manifest function of the university, namely education, is largely dependent on the voluntary participation of students in the educational process. Obtaining student participation is therefore one of a university's biggest dilemmas. The degree to which a university succeeds in fulfilling this function is usually reflected by the students' grades. If a student fails a course due to low grades, he/she has not been adequately educated by the university. However, if he/she passes with distinction, the opposite is true. Student grades are therefore directly related to the purpose of the students' stay at the university as an institution, therefore they are required to maintain a certain level of academic achievement.

University administrators do not merely set these minimum standards of achievement, but in addition seek to maximise students' adherence to them (Wallace, 1966: 9). According to Wallace (1966: 9), university administrators have certain tools at their disposal to maximise student compliance to institutional norms, which can be divided into four categories, namely selective recruitment, physical constraint, selective expulsion and socialisation. *Selective recruitment* refers to the screening criteria institutions use to accept potential students (Wallace, 1966: 10). In contrast, *selective expulsion* refers to the criteria employed by higher education institutions to exclude current students due to noncompliance. *Physical constraint* refers to limits the university can place on the social environment to minimise the occurrence of certain behaviours. An example would be the implementation of a curfew for hostel students or maintaining separate male and female university residences (Wallace, 1966: 10, 11).

These three tools are all solely under the control of the university and are relatively inexpensive, as they do not involve any extra cost to the institution. However, attaining centralised control of the fourth tool for gaining student compliance, namely *socialisation*, is less certain, more complex and more expensive. Socialisation from the university's perspective represents an attempt to cultivate compliant dispositions and, specifically, to create a culture of learning among them. On the other hand, socialisation is subject to various informal influences. In this regard, the influence of student peers has been found to be very important (Wallace, 1966: 12).

The difficulty in controlling student socialisation in a university context, or as a matter of fact in any context, can confidently lead to the assumption that university administrations can by no

means succeed in monopolising control of student socialisation (Wallace, 1966: 18). Rather, research has shown that peer group norms play a bigger role in student socialisation than institutional norms (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 392; Hansen, 1997: 167). Consequently, the influence of peer group socialisation on the student drinking norm should be of importance to any university and is of particular importance to the current research.

Among various other social factors, student drinking plays a prominent role in university socialisation, since alcohol consumption may take a central position in the social lives of many students. As Young and De Klerk speculates:

> *It is probably uncontroversial to state that most university campuses struggle with containing and controlling alcohol consumption by their students, since the age at which students first enter such institutions is an age of freedom and experimentation, where young people have the opportunity to test the limits set by parents and schools.* (2009: 101)

However, student drinking cannot be seen as mere harmless fun. Research has identified student drinking behaviour as a serious problem for higher education institutions across the world, because alcohol consumption is associated with academic impairment, personal injury and death, sexual coercion, unintended and unprotected sexual activity, suicide, impaired driving ability, impaired athletic performance and legal repercussions (e.g. Turrisi, Mallett & Mastroleo, 2006; Hingson, Heeren, Winter & Wechsler, 2005; Perkins, 2002a; Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens & Castillo, 1994). This is not even to mention the secondary effects on other students and the general university environment, such as property damage and vandalism, fights and interpersonal violence, hate-related incidents and noise disturbances (Perkins, 2002a: 92). Turrisi *et al.* summarise the risks associated with drinking as follows:

> *Alcohol drinkers are more likely to have been insulted by others; been confronted with unwanted sexual advances; been a victim of date rape or sexual assault; been in a serious argument or quarrel; been pushed, hit, or assaulted; had their property damaged; been in a situation where they had unplanned sexual activity; put themselves in situations where they were more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV; been injured or had life-threatening experiences; driven while intoxicated, or ridden in a car with an intoxicated driver.* (2006: 402)

The abovementioned risks associated with student alcohol use and alcohol abuse are one reason why student drinking should be a concern for higher education institutions and society in general. Another reason why higher education institutions should be concerned is the potential institutional costs associated with student drinking, such as property damage, poor relations with other townsfolk, legal costs and added time demands and emotional strain on staff. Of particular importance for institutions of higher education is the influence alcohol consumption has on student attrition and the institutions' perceived academic rigour (Perkins, 2002a: 92). In my Honours research at Stellenbosch University, I found that as students' level of alcohol consumption increased, their academic performance tended to decrease (Tolken, 2008: 57). Also of importance is the notion that the experiences students have at university will influence the type of adults they become.

Nevertheless, one might be tempted to argue that student socialising and the associated drinking somehow fall into the domain of the latent function of university life. However, here an important distinction needs to be made between alcohol use and alcohol abuse. While alcohol use may possibly be argued to serve important social functions, for example to relax and increase confidence (in its role as a social lubricant), alcohol abuse on the other hand has adverse

consequences for the individual, the university as an institution and society as a whole. Accordingly, student alcohol abuse is often seen to be in direct conflict with the manifest function of a student's university career, i.e. education. Drinking, its accompanying social activities, its effect on students, the secondary effects on other students and the risky behaviour associated with it are often seen as being in conflict with the university's academic culture.

For these reasons, student drinking has been the subject of extensive research, especially in the United States of America. Various interventions and preventative measures have been developed to influence drinking behaviour and combat its effects. These programmes are in essence an attempt by university administrations to influence and control the consequences of the socialising processes in the cultural context of being a student. In the South African context, however, the issue of student drinking has not enjoyed as much attention from the research community and the media. Tertiary education is highly valued within the societal milieu of South Africa, and student alcohol abuse as a possible obstacle in the way of its attainment definitely warrants attention from the research community. To develop effective intervention programmes for alcohol- and other drug[1] related problems, higher education institutions must understand the extent of the problem at their institutions and its nature. For that reason, it should be regarded as a matter of necessity to obtain accurate and credible data on the patterns of student alcohol use (De Jong, 2008: 1).

Traditionally, research on student drinking behaviour has focused on either the psychological and/or the sociological/ecological factors that influence problem drinking behaviour. Psychological theories tend to emphasise personality traits and de-emphasise the role of social factors, whereas social theories examine the social and demographic qualities associated with alcohol use and overlook intrapersonal causes. The middle ground between the two, psychosocial theories, attempt to link the characteristics of the social and the psychological domains by means of theories, such as social learning theory, that are based on the assumptions of socialisation. For the current research, the relationship between the psychological and the social domains concerns the dynamic between the individual student and his/her environment. Research in general has shown that various psychological and social variables are associated with student alcohol use (e.g. Oetting & Beauvais, 1987: 205). It is simply a question of which theory best describes the variance in student drinking behaviour and which consequent approach to intervention or prevention has shown promising results in its application.

1.2.2 PEER INFLUENCE AND MISPERCEIVING THE SOCIAL NORM

Group norms are one of the most important factors that contribute to individual behaviour, and therefore are fundamental to understanding social order and variation (Perkins, 2002b: 164). Conventionally in the social sciences, when individuals perceive their attitudes as different from those of the social group, it can be expected that they will experience discomfort and attempt to resolve this divergence by typically changing their behaviour towards the normative. According to Prentice and Miller, classical influence studies suggest that norms have two general properties that influence how they are communicated and perceived. In the first instance, 'social norms are defined by people's public behaviour' (1993: 243). Secondly, in relation to this public nature, is the impression of universality associated with norms:

> *People assume that all members of a group endorse that group's social norms, and, in turn, the power of norms to affect an individual's attitudes and behaviour is heavily dependent on their*

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[1] Alcohol is commonly viewed as a legal 'drug'. 'Other drugs' refers to illicit drugs.

perceived universality. As consensus or the appearance of consensus breaks down, the norm loses its influence.

(Prentice & Miller, 1993: 243)

A study conducted by Perkins and Berkowitz in 1986 was the first to highlight the discrepancy between students' own drinking behaviour (the actual drinking norm) and their perception of peer drinking behaviour (the perceived norm). As Perkins (1997: 181) explains, '[s]ubjective perceptions, be they accurate or inaccurate, must be taken as important in their own right since people act on their perceptions in addition to acting within a real world'. Perceptions of the social world are based on the observation and interpretation of others' actions and interactions in everyday life. Through perception, we become aware of the norms that govern interaction and consequently which behaviours are socially enforced and/or which actions are socially undesirable. The initial findings of Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) sparked interest in the research community and intense research on the misperception of the student drinking norm amongst students followed. Overwhelming support has since been established for the notion that personal drinking behaviour is related to the inaccurate perceptions of how members of an individuals' social group act and think (e.g. Neighbors, O'Connor, Lewis, Chawla, Lee & Fossos, 2008; Perkins, 2007; De Jong, Schneider, Towvim, Murphy, Doerr, Simonsen, Mason & Scribner, 2006; Neighbors, Larimer & Lewis, 2004; Borsari & Carey, 1999; Haines & Spear, 1996; Perkins & Wechsler, 1996; Baer, 1994).

Misperception essentially involves the dynamic between the individual (the private) and the social (the public). Firstly, people's private attitudes may be different from how they publicly represent themselves and secondly, people's actual behaviour and how others perceive them might differ as well. Stated differently, our private attitudes might be different from how we socially behave and, more importantly, our social behaviour might be different from how others perceive us. Accordingly then, traditional interventions might be effective in influencing our private attitudes, but not necessarily our perception of peer attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, individuals might still feel obligated by the social environment to represent themselves in a socially desirable way. The social norm therefore remains unaffected and consequently public behaviour continues as usual. An ideal approach towards intervention would therefore address an individual's public perception by exposing the actual social norm. In so doing, the perceived social norm is questioned and consensus surrounding the perceived norm breaks down, with the consequence that the actual norm is socially accepted and therefore legitimised on a social level (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 255).

1.2.3 SOCIAL NORMS APPROACH

From research on misperceptions, the social norms approach was developed as an intervention measure for student alcohol use. It has since had immense success in reducing students' misperceptions of the drinking norm and reducing actual alcohol consumption levels (e.g. De Jong *et al.*, 2006; Neighbors *et al.*, 2004; Perkins & Craig, 2002; Johannessen, Collins, Glider & Mills-Novoa, 1999; Haines & Spear, 1996). The basic underlying premise of social norms theory is the notion that the personal behaviour of an individual is influenced by inaccurate perceptions of how the members of his or her social group act and think (Berkowitz, 2004: 5). Michael Haines (1996) was first to develop a programme aimed at correcting student misperceptions utilising social norms marketing. The programme took the form of a media campaign, educating students about actual drinking norms on campus. As a result, the Northern Illinois University, where the programme was first implemented, reported a reduction of 44% in heavy drinking over a 10-year period (Johannessen *et al.*, 1999: 9). The social norms approach also differed from other

intervention programmes in that it did not make use of scare tactics, but rather used positive messages to inform students about accurate levels of alcohol consumption on campus.

Within the context of university student life then, two normative influences are of importance for the current research, namely the institutional norm (referring to norms regarding the expected academic behaviour from students) and the social norm, of which the second has been identified as playing the more significant role in student behaviour and, in particular, in student drinking behaviour. Research has shown that students often misperceive the drinking behaviour of their peers. Students tend to think that others drink more than they do, when in actuality the majority of students drink less than perceived. Accordingly, this misperception of erroneously perceiving others alcohol consumption as heavier than their own influences student behaviour. The current research seeks to understand this misperception within the broader cultural context of Stellenbosch University.

1.3   AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In general, student drinking behaviour has not enjoyed serious attention from the research community in South Africa, and the review of literature did not produce any research, not to mention published research, regarding student perceptions of the peer drinking norm within the South African context.

The current research is an expansion of a study I undertook during 2007 for my Honours degree that investigated the relationship between student drinking behaviour, socio-demographic factors and student drinking culture at Stellenbosch University. The study showed that factors associated with peers and the social milieu were predictors of student drinking behaviour and provided preliminary evidence of possible misperceptions regarding the peer drinking norm (Tolken, 2008). As will be further deliberated upon in the literature review, misperception of the peer drinking norm is considered an important factor in the explanation of students' personal drinking behaviour.

Given the occurrence of misperceptions regarding drinking norms on college and university campuses in other countries, and the relative importance attributed to this variable in explaining student drinking behaviour, this study aims to investigate the phenomenon at a South African university. Consequently, the *first* objective of this research is to look for further evidence of normative misperceptions within the social milieu of a South African university. The review of theory pertaining to students' perceptions of the normative behaviour of their peers also highlighted the importance of the perceived approval of drinking behaviour by peers. Therefore, the *second* objective of the study is to explore the latter in relation to personal drinking and personal approval of drinking. Furthermore, due to the manifest function of the university as an educational institution, which means that academic responsibilities are supposedly the most important priority for students, the *third* objective of the study is to explore the existence of misperceptions concerning peer academic behaviour (the extent to which academic roles are fulfilled). Moreover, the normative perceptions of peer academic behaviour and its relationship with personal academic behaviour and drinking behaviour are a relatively unexplored terrain that warrants the inclusion of perceptions of peer academic behaviour in social norms research. The consequent question with regard to perceptions of academic behaviour is whether it 'functions' like drinking behaviour and approval of drinking behaviour as stipulated by social norms theory. The current study therefore aims to explore personal behaviour in relation to the perception of

three social constructs, namely, peer drinking behaviour, their approval of drinking and their academic behaviour.

It is of particular importance for the current research to acquire an in-depth understanding of the interrelationship between the general cultural context of the university on the one hand, and perceptions on the other. The review of existing research revealed that not much, if any, qualitative research has been conducted concerning misperceptions of the drinking norm at university. The current research seeks to do exactly that in conjunction with quantitative research. Theory revealed that perceptions are intrinsically linked to social interaction in the everyday life of individuals. Hearing how individual students reflect about their peers and social life might lead to invaluable insights into how perceptions are formed as well as insights into the consequences of this process for theory and intervention strategies.

My previous study as well as research by others also highlighted the possible influence of prominent socio-demographic, contextual and life-experience factors on student drinking behaviour. In accordance, the *fourth* objective of the study is to further explore students' personal drinking behaviour at the hand of various socio-demographic, contextual and life-experience variables, as well as perceptions (cognitive factors). This will be done to understand the unique influence of normative perceptions on drinking behaviour when controlling for other variables. The relative predictive strength of each of the vast range of variables associated with problem drinking has important implications for theory and intervention programmes. Often, research evaluates the influence of certain variables on drinking behaviour in isolation and consequently fails to consider and detect other possible explanations. The abovementioned highlights the necessity for multivariate analysis in understanding the complex interrelationships that often exist between social phenomena. Furthermore, identifying the most important predictors of drinking behaviour may provide informative and important guidance to policy makers and enable them to target factors that would have the greatest impact on student drinking.

However, the most important reason that justifies the need for understanding the complex social phenomenon of student drinking behaviour is the fact that heavier drinking is often associated with an increased risk of negative consequences for students personally, to fellow students, and to the higher education institutions they attend. Research is necessary to ensure well-grounded intervention and prevention strategies, which, if successful, will diminish these consequences and lead to a university environment more conducive to academic behaviour and general student health.

Chapter 2 will examine the theoretical concepts highlighted in this introductory section in more detail. This will be followed in Chapter 3 by a description of the research methodology employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research, which is followed lastly by a discussion in Chapter 5 of the findings in relation to theory and the results of previous research.

CHAPTER 2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Students' perception of their social environment needs to be interpreted in the cultural context from which it arises. Therefore, an understanding of the socialising forces that lead to the formation of culture and the subsequent internalisation of the associated norms needs to be considered. This necessarily takes place through the lens of perception. Of particular importance are the well-documented distorted perceptions of peer drinking behaviour, which research suggests the majority of students have. Students tend to perceive other students' drinking behaviour as different from their own; more specifically, they tend to perceive their peers as drinking more than they actually do. This perceived difference between students' own behaviour and that of others is often referred to as self-other differences or discrepancies. However, any consideration of a social context cannot be seen as complete without including possible factors that may influence individual variation.

Consequently, the theoretical contextualisation of misperceiving the social norm commences with a basic review of factors that may contribute to individual variation regarding alcohol consumption and drinking-related problems. This is done in terms of the variables included in this research and other factors. An overview of cultural theory, socialisation and identity is then given as the basic theoretical background against which to understand individual and group behaviour. Pierre Bourdieu's work on structures, habitus and field will be discussed as a theory that unifies these concepts with the purpose of understanding social order and variation. This is followed by a discussion of social learning as a specific theory of socialisation. Peer influence as a particularly important socialising force at university is then examined, followed by a discussion of the misperception of peer norms. This includes a review of attribution theory, which explains how misperceptions form part of everyday social life, and a distinction between three types of misperceptions. Conversation and public peer behaviour as the means whereby misperceptions are perpetuated are consequently discussed, lastly followed by an overview of the social norms approach.

2.2   INDIVIDUAL VARIATION

Although the influence of culture, social context and norms falls largely into the domain of social influence, individual variation is important in this regard, as it determines how individuals react to influences from their social environment. The university student population is characterised by vast individual variability in terms of alcohol use and the problems associated with it. Variables that may explain this variability come from the range of biological, psychological, demographic, historical, contextual and social factors. In his review of student factors that contribute to understanding individual variation in college or university drinking, Baer (2002: 40) identified the following 'stable individual characteristics' in relation to drinking: personality, motivation to drink, family history, social norms and interpersonal relationships (including social and peer relations). He also considered specific social contexts and activities that are dependent on student self-selection, such as fraternities and sport, which influence student drinking at both individual and social levels. These factors will be briefly considered at the hand of Baer's review and other studies, as well as other factors identified by previous research at Stellenbosch University.

2.2.1 BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

Students often have the general idea that men can consume more alcohol than women can. There are indeed biological differences between males and females, such as fat-to-water ratios that influence blood alcohol levels causing women to reach a level of intoxication more quickly (Holmila & Raitasalo, 2005: 1764). Previous research (Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport & Rimm, 1995: 984) found that controlling for students' body mass index (BMI) slightly decreased the odds of experiencing alcohol-related problems of men that consumed five drinks compared to women that consumed five drinks. Moreover, when women who had consumed four drinks were compared with men who had consumed five drinks, the odds of experiencing alcohol-related problems also diminished after controlling for BMI. Both of these findings support the notion that men and women differ in their rates of gastric metabolism of alcohol and therefore women have higher blood alcohol levels than men when they consume the same amount of alcohol, even when controlling for BMI.

2.2.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Previous research has investigated various socio-demographic factors that may influence student drinking behaviour and the associated alcohol-related consequences. Aspects such as race, gender and religiosity often lead to varying levels of drinking due to cultural differences between different groups. However, studies often vary in terms of their findings, and with a lack of representative research in the South African context, it is difficult to speculate how demographics contribute to the variation in drinking of South African students.

2.2.2.1 Gender

Gender differences in student alcohol consumption have been especially well established by research in other countries. Previous research in the South African university context has supported these findings (Young & De Klerk, 2009: 9; Tolken, 2008: 34; Meyer, 2001: 26). Studies have consistently found that male university/college students tend to drink larger quantities of alcohol, drink more frequently and are more prone to heavy episodic drinking than female students (e.g. Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fossos & Larimer, 2007: 7; Perkins, Haines & Rice, 2005: 474). It also seems these gender differences in heavy drinking have remained quite stable since the 1980s, at least in the United States (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman & Schulenberg, 2005). Differences can, in all likelihood, be ascribed to either cultural differences in that heavier alcohol consumption is seen as more acceptable for males, or to biological differences, as was explained in the previous section. Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 922) performed a multivariate logistic regression analysis to determine which factors among demographic variables, precollege drinking, college lifestyle choices, status in school, risky behaviour and hours per day spent on activities played the most important role in binge drinking. In the preliminary analysis of individual correlates of binge drinking and in the final model, gender played only a small role, with males being slightly more likely to binge in both instances.

Two previous studies at Stellenbosch University found a significant difference between male and female students. Firstly, Meyer (2001: 26) found that 50% of male students drank once or more per week, compared to 38% of female students. Moreover, 34% of men usually drank heavily per occasion compared to only 12% of women. In my research (Tolken, 2008: 35), I found that 50% of male students reported usually drinking heavily per occasion, compared to only 24% of female

students. In addition, 70% of males could be classified as binge drinkers[2], compared to 57% of females. Research at Rhodes University (Young & De Klerk, 2009: 9) found that men are more likely than females to be located in the hazardous, harmful or dependent categories according to the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)[3] (Saunders, Aasland, Babor, De La Fuente & Grant, 1993).

2.2.2.2 Age

Alcohol consumption is expected to vary by age as certain ages are often linked to life experiences within the university context. In South Africa, the legal drinking age is 18, which in general coincides with the age students first enrol for university. Of course, every year at university is associated with different experiences, such as a varying academic load and varying levels of responsibility, which may influence drinking. In terms of students' age, previous research at Stellenbosch University found a weak relationship with students' usual level of alcohol consumption. The proportion of heavy drinkers seem to increase from those aged 19 or younger (35%) to those aged 20 to 21 (42%), and then to decrease substantially from there onwards as age further increased (Tolken, 2008: 35). In their multivariate analysis, Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 922) found that students younger than 24 were slightly more likely to drink than students who were 24 or older.

2.2.2.3 Home language and race

The importance of home language and race in understanding the variation in student drinking behaviour may again lie in cultural differences and also, especially in the South African context, socio-economic differences. The apartheid legacy persists in the sense that previously disadvantaged individuals might not have funding as freely available as white students, or may be more conservative regarding the squandering of funds. Opportunities for bursaries are also more easily available to these individuals, which mean a larger proportion of these students may not be relying on their parents for financial support.

Meyer (2001: 30) found no relationship between the home language of males (English, Afrikaans, other) and their usual level of alcohol consumption. However, English females seemed more likely to drink more heavily than their Afrikaans counterparts. In my previous research, I found a significant but weak relationship between race and level of alcohol consumption. The White student group had the largest proportion of heavy drinkers (39%) and moderate drinkers (30%), closely followed by Coloured individuals (heavy, 38%; moderate, 23%). Black (45%) and Indian (50%) students were more likely to abstain (Tolken, 2008: 38). The more risky drinking behaviour of white students is supported by research at Rhodes University. White students were more likely to be classified as hazardous, harmful and dependent drinkers than Coloured, Black and Indian students were (Young & De Klerk, 2009: 9). In their multivariate analysis, Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 922) determined that in comparison with students of colour, white students were twice more likely to binge.

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[2] Binge drinking is seen as consuming five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women, at least once, in the past two weeks.

[3] "The measure consists of ten items: three on alcohol consumption, four on alcohol related problems and adverse reactions, and three on dependence symptoms. Each item has a score ranging from 0 to 4 and the maximum score is 40; the higher the total score, the more dangerous the drinking. . . . [A] score of eight or more [is] associated with future problems. In general, a score of 8 to 15 is regarded as hazardous drinking, 16 to 19 as harmful drinking, and 20 or more as alcohol dependence" (Young & De Klerk, 2009: 10).

2.2.2.4   Religiosity

Religious beliefs are often in general associated with more conservative drinking practices or even abstinence. A study conducted by Meyer (2001: 32) supported this relationship between religiosity and drinking at Stellenbosch University. His findings reflected that only 26% of religious male students (defined as 'more than once a month religious participation') are heavy alcohol users compared to 55% of non-religious male students who are heavy drinkers. Similarly, only 8% of religious female students are heavy drinkers, in comparison to 22% of non-religious female students. However, in my research, I found that there was no significant difference in students' usual alcohol consumption in terms of whether they had a religious affiliation or not (Tolken, 2008: 38). Results of a multivariate analysis indicated that students who thought religion was not very important were twice more likely to binge compared to those who thought it was very important (Wechsler *et al.*, 1995: 923).

2.2.2.5   Financial resources

An obvious constraint on alcohol consumption is the amount of money a student has available to spend on 'partying'[4] and drinking. In my previous research (Tolken, 2008: 40) I investigated the relationship between students' primary source of funding for their studies and their usual level of alcohol consumption. A weak relationship was found between the two variables. The majority of the students' (61%) parents funded their studies. Of this group, 9% abstained and 42% were heavy drinkers. Students who were reliant on other sources of funding for their studies tended to be less inclined to heavy drinking. For example, of the group of students with scholarships and bursaries (the second largest group), a larger proportion (15%) indicated that they abstained than compared to those with parental funding, and a smaller proportion indicated they usually drink heavily (29%). Also concerning financial resources, a positive relationship was found between students' usual level of alcohol consumption and the average amount of pocket money they received every month. As the amount of pocket money students received increased, so too did the percentage of heavy drinkers. For instance, of the students who receive no allowance, 23% abstained and 19% were heavy drinkers. In comparison, of the students who received R1 501 or more per month, only 9% abstained and 50% were heavy drinkers.

2.2.3   PREVIOUS LIFE EXPERIENCES

Students' previous life experiences influence who they are when they arrive at university and how they respond to situations within the university context.

2.2.3.1   Family history and parents' behaviour

Concerning the influence of a family history of alcoholism and parents' drinking behaviour on student alcohol use, Baer found findings to be relatively mixed. Results varied about whether students with parents who have alcohol-related problems drink more or whether the students themselves have more alcohol-related problems in comparison with other students from non-alcoholic families (2002: 41). He summarised his findings as follows:

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[4] The term 'party' is commonly used by students and youth alike as a verb to denote socializing in the presence of alcohol. For example, 'let's go party' or 'we partied all night long'.

> *[A]lthough it appears likely that COAs [children of alcoholics] within the college populations may be at some increased risk for alcohol-related problems, the inconsistency of the research evidence suggests that it may be a smaller or more variable risk factor than when studied in other populations.*
>
> (Baer, 2002: 42)

In my research at Stellenbosch University (Tolken, 2008: 42-43) I found statistically significant relationships between students' alcohol consumption and whether their family (mother, father and brother/sister) consumes alcohol, as well as positive relationships with students' perceptions of their parents' opinion of alcohol consumption. Therefore, as perceived acceptance by parents of alcohol consumption increased, so too did their children's level of alcohol consumption. In addition, a statistically significant relationship was also found between students' alcohol consumption and whether a student's parents have a degree.

Meyer (2001: 36) investigated the relationship between level of alcohol use and the wish that parents would drink less. Although only a small number of students indicated that they wished their parents would drink less, no significant relationship was found between the perception of problematic family alcohol use and the level of student alcohol consumption at Stellenbosch University. The same study (Meyer, 2001: 37) investigated the relationship between students' usual level of alcohol use and their perception of their parents' approval of alcohol use. A significant relationship was found between parent's perceived approval of student drinking and students' level of alcohol consumption, but only for female students.

In a multivariate analysis, Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 924) found that whether students' parents abstained or not, contributed a small degree to the final model, with those whose parents do not abstain being slightly more likely to binge.

2.2.3.2   Age started drinking

Research has shown that students who start drinking earlier in life have a stronger tendency to be heavy drinkers than students who started drinking later in life. Qualitative research has shown that parents have varying approaches to their children's exposure to alcohol: some may oppose it completely while others will expose their children gradually from a certain age. My previous research found that of those students who started drinking between the ages of 10 and 14, 58% were heavy drinkers at university, in comparison to only 20% of students who started after the age of 18 (Tolken, 2008: 36). An even more important indicator of students' current drinking behaviour may be the age they first started drinking heavily, i.e. the age at which drinking first reached risky levels (defined as four or more drinks per occasion for women and five or more drinks per occasion for men). Students' very first drinking experiences may only consist of very light drinking, which may have minimal influence on their life choices and attitudes.

2.2.3.3   High-school behaviour

Students' high-school academic performance is an important indicator of students' previous commitment to responsibilities, which may be related to their current level or commitment to their studies. It might also explain their susceptibility to aspects of drinking culture or their support for an academic culture. Students drinking behaviour prior to enrolment at university may be an important determining factor for their behaviour at university, as the latter might somewhat represent a continuation of previous behaviour. In a multivariate analysis of student binge drinking, Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 924) found that students who binged in their last year of high school were three times more likely to binge at college.

2.2.4 CURRENT SITUATIONAL/CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

2.2.4.1 Attitude towards or approval of drinking

It is of course expected that an individual's attitude or approval of drinking should be associated with their actual level of alcohol consumption. However, studies have found that attitude does not always account for all the variation in drinking behaviour, meaning other factors beyond personal attitude also seem to affect drinking behaviour (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 580; Perkins & Wechsler, 1996: 966).

2.2.4.2 Academic behaviour

Unlike most of the other factors contributing to individual variation, for academic behaviour and drinking behaviour the influence might go both ways. A lifestyle of excessive drinking might influence academic behaviour, whereas a very committed academic lifestyle might also influence drinking behaviour. Therefore, the negative influence of drinking on academic behaviour can also be seen as an alcohol-related consequence. In my research, I found a negative relationship between students' usual level of alcohol consumption and their self-reported average academic performance, indicating that the more students drink, the worse they perform academically (Tolken, 2008: 57). For example, 27% of students who abstain reported that they receive an average mark of 75% or more, compared to only 9% of heavy drinking students. Conversely, Meyer (2001: 29) concluded that alcohol use and academic performance are largely independent from one another.

A multivariate study determined that students' college performance played a small role in whether they binge or not, with those with a grade point average of a B or less being more likely to binge (Wechsler *et al.*, 1995: 924).

2.2.4.3 Historical year of study

Meyer (2001: 28) found no relationship between year of study (first year, second year, senior undergraduate, postgraduate) and usual alcohol consumption whereas I (Tolken, 2008: 37) found a very weak relationship between usual level of alcohol consumption and historical year of study. Surprisingly, both studies seemed to indicate that first-year students are not proportionally the largest heavy-drinking group as is generally thought. Rather, all other year groups drank heavier than first years and proportionally, second-years drank slightly heavier than others did.

2.2.4.4 Type of residence/Residence location/Type of co-residents

My research (Tolken, 2008: 39) and that of Meyer (2001: 29) found a significant relationship between students' type of residence/residence location and drinking behaviour. Firstly, my research showed that male students residing in university residences and private accommodation in Stellenbosch were proportionally the heaviest drinkers with 53% usually drinking five or more drinks per drinking occasion. More or less 40% of male students residing at home with parents/family and in university student housing drink that much. Male students residing outside Stellenbosch were more likely to drink moderately (three to four drinks) (46%). Female students, however, were more likely to drink less than men. Between 17% and 20% of those residing at home with parents/family, in a university residence or outside Stellenbosch usually consumed five or more drinks. Female students staying in university student housing and private accommodation were more likely to drink heavier with more or less a third usually consuming five or more drinks.

Meyer reported similar results, with the largest proportion (more or less 40%) of male university and private residence residents consuming five or more drinks and those residing outside Stellenbosch being more inclined to lighter drinking. Among females, those residing in private residence in Stellenbosch had the largest proportion of students consuming five or more drinks (18%), followed by those living in university residence (10%) and lastly, those residing privately outside Stellenbosch.

The study at Rhodes University found that students residing in university and private residence were almost equally concentrated in hazardous, harmful and dependent categories, with slightly more students from private residence in the harmful and dependent categories. Students living with their parents were much less likely to be involved in hazardous, harmful and dependent drinking behaviour, as the majority were found to engage in safe drinking practices (Young & De Klerk, 2009: 7).

Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 924) found fraternity or sorority residence to be a strong predictor of student binge drinking in their multivariate analysis. Students residing in fraternities or sororities were four times more likely to binge. Although initial analysis revealed that students living with a roommate were almost three times more likely to binge drink, the variable did not make a significant contribution to the final model.

2.2.4.5 Employment status

One important factor that might influence drinking behaviour is the time students have available as well as the responsibilities associated with the use of their time. Employment and the need for financial resources may obviously place great constraints on their time, especially in the presence of academic responsibilities. Students that work may therefore have less time for other activities such as social alcohol consumption. On the other hand, they may have more funds to spend on drinking than their unemployed counterparts. Either way, the employment status of students may be an influential factor to consider when investigating drinking behaviour. One study making use of multiple regression (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 474), did however find that, when controlling for other variables such as gender and the perception of other students drinking, the hours per week students spent working for pay (and volunteering) did not make a significant contribution to predicting the amount of drinks students had the last time they 'partied' or socialised.

2.2.4.6 Relationship status

The influence of relationships on drinking behaviour may again be time-related, as it represents another possible area of social life that may influence the amount of time available for other things. Single students, without the added responsibility of a relationship, are bound to have more free time than students who are in committed relationships or that are even married. In addition, drinking and the socialising with which it is often associated may be seen as a space where romantic encounters may occur, serving as a possible motivation to drink as well as a means to relax. However, another aspect that needs to be considered is the possibility that couples' preferences in terms of drinking will mutually influence one another. Wechsler *et al.* (1995: 924) found students that have never been married were three times more likely to binge than students who were married; however, in a multivariate analysis this predictor did not play a significant role.

2.2.4.7   Social affiliation

Baer identifies peer alcohol use as possibly the 'strongest predictor of adolescent alcohol use' (2002:47) as university life is often associated with a large degree of social activity. In his review, Baer focuses on two aspects of social affiliation: firstly, the social contexts in which students find themselves and secondly, on the social activities and organisations they decide to join (2002: 47).

'Social context is a term that is used to attempt to characterise social and psychological environments where drinking takes place, and in so doing attempt to measure the interaction of interpersonal, temporal and situation factors' (Baer, 2002: 47). A difference in survey respondents' gender, age, living arrangements, study direction and various other factors causes a natural variation in terms of the *social contexts* in which students are located. Research has found that social contexts can influence student drinking behaviour simply through the size of the group of people that is seemingly consuming alcohol and its composition in terms of the level of drinking of participants. More specifically, larger groups of drinkers are associated with greater consumption. Furthermore, gender differences in alcohol consumption in terms of group size and gender composition have been observed (Baer, 2002: 47).

Concerning the second aspect of social affiliation, several studies have documented a variation in drinking as a function of *membership of different organisations* and taking part in certain activities. Firstly, where students live seems to affect drinking. Students living with their parents tend to drink less, whereas residing in dormitories is associated with higher levels of alcohol consumption (Baer, 2002: 47). Fraternities/sororities at American higher education institutions have especially enjoyed attention from the research community. In comparison with non-members, students belonging to these social organisations have been found to drink more frequently, more heavily and to experience more negative consequences due to their drinking. A larger proportion of these members also tend to see alcohol as fulfilling a social function (friendship, social activity, sexuality) than non-members. Very importantly, one study Baer reviewed found that fraternity members have a much more normative perception of drinking. Another study very interestingly found that these members do not continue the drinking practices associated with membership after the completion of their tertiary studies (Baer, 2002: 48). Accordingly, this study argued, 'social normative processes appear critical for students in these contexts' (Baer, 2002: 48). Another study found that students tend to select friends with similar drinking habits to themselves on entering college (Leibsohn, 1994: 177). Other research showed that school students who plan to join fraternities tend to drink more compared to peers who do not plan to join. Baer concludes that '[i]t is likely that drinking is influenced both by selection of social organisations and by socialisation within organisations' (2002: 48).

2.2.5   PERSONALITY

Baer (2002: 42) defines personality as distinctive ways of acting, thinking and feeling that to some extent are consistent when considered over time and across situations. In his review, he organised research concerning personality and its relation to alcohol use according to three broad personality constructs, namely impulsivity/disinhibition, extroversion/sociability and neuroticism/emotionality.

The first personality construct, *impulse expression or sensation seeking*, has consistently been associated with more frequent drinking, consuming larger quantities of alcohol and with more negative consequences. Furthermore, this tendency exists for both men and women. In line with

this construct are students that are impulsive, disinhibited, nonconforming and have a history of deviant behaviour, all of which tend to drink more heavily and frequently. The association between being more rebellious towards traditional or conventional values and drinking more is in line with findings that suggest students who are more religious and committed to traditional values tend to drink less (Baer, 2002: 43).

The second personality construct Baer reviewed, *extroversion/sociability*, has also been associated with higher drinking levels. However, some conflicting results have been found in this regard and he suggests that more research is required to better understand the nature of the relationship (Baer, 2002: 44). Van Schoor, Bot and Engels (2008: 125) found that extroversion is moderately associated with self-reported daily drinking. One study Baer reviewed, did however lead him to conclude the following: '[s]tudents who have some heavy drinking experiences (but not a great deal) appear most integrated into the college community. Thus extraversion/sociability may be related to drinking rates among college students, but less related to drinking problems' (2002: 44).

The third construct, *neuroticism/emotionality*, refers to states of emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, stress, frustration and low self-esteem. Again, findings with regard to these states and their relation to drinking are mixed. However, Baer (2002: 44) identified more studies that found a relationship between such factors and alcohol-related problems than those that did not. One study also suggested that alcohol might be used to manage anxiety. In terms of low self-esteem, studies have documented an association between frequency of drinking and drinking-related problems. Research also showed that this relation is stronger and sometimes only exists for female students. One study ruled out the reverse effect, namely that drinking problems or heavy drinking causes low self-esteem (Baer, 2002: 44). Another study found a modest relationship between alcohol-related problems and low emotional stability (Van Schoor *et al.*, 2008: 130).

Very importantly, an observational study (Van Schoor *et al.*, 2008: 125) making use of a 'bar laboratory', found that drinking in a peer context, played a large role in shaping young adults (mostly students) drinking behaviour, irrespective of personality. Personality was not related to the observed drinking of young adults among familiar peers. 'A plausible explanation can be that, because most young adults drink for social facilitation, and drinking in a social setting is such a [perceived] normative behaviour, personality is no longer of predictive value' (Van Schoor *et al.*, 2008: 130-131). The researchers further postulated that personality might play a more indirect role in young adults' drinking, by influencing their selection of friends with similar drinking styles to themselves. When individuals start their tertiary education, their personalities are already well formed and are embodied by certain characteristics. This will influence their selection of friends. Thereafter, social factors play a more prominent role than personality, which is often seen as a moderator between peer drinking and individual drinking (Van Schoor *et al.*, 2008: 130)

2.2.6   COGNITIVE FACTORS

Research has identified various cognitive factors that contribute to individual differences in terms of drinking rates and problems. Leading research on this topic is divided into three broad subjects, namely drinking motives, alcohol expectancies and perceived norms.

2.2.6.1 Drinking motives

The term drinking motives refers to a psychological function or need that is satisfied through alcohol consumption. Four types of drinking motives are generally distinguished in motivational models for drinking, namely social rewards, coping with negative effect, enhancement and conformity. They are also seen as varying on two dimensions. The first dimension, *source of reinforcement*, can be either internal (enhancement and coping) or external (social and conformity). The second dimension, *type of reinforcement*, can either be positive (enhancement and social) or negative (coping and conformity). According to Neighbors *et al.* (2007: 4): '[e]mpirically, social and enhancement motives have been most strongly associated with consumption, whereas coping motives have been more strongly associated with problems' and '[c]onformity motives have been less consistently and sometimes negatively associated with drinking'.

One study Baer reviewed specifically found that social motivation is a better predictor of alcohol usage rates than personal motivation among students. Based on his review of the literature, Baer suggests that both drinking for emotional escape/relief and drinking for social purposes 'are likely important, perhaps for different individuals for different types of outcomes' (2002: 45).

2.2.6.2 Alcohol expectancies

Closely related to drinking motives are the alcohol expectancies associated with alcohol usage and drinking-related problems. Alcohol expectancies are defined as the particular subjective ideas students have about the effects of alcohol on behaviour, emotions and cognition (Baer, 2002: 45). According to Neighbors *et al.* (2007: 4), previous research has shown that alcohol expectancies are constantly associated with heavy drinking at college or university. Students have beliefs about the likelihood that drinking will either lead to positive or negative consequences. Examples of positive effects are the reduction of tension, enhanced sexuality and social lubrication, whereas negative effects may be aggression, general risks and cognitive impairment. These effects may in turn be evaluated by students as either favourable or unfavourable.

One study Baer reviewed found that alcohol expectancies are a better predictor of drinking than demographic variables and that problem drinkers have a stronger tendency to expect alcohol consumption to reduce their tension. In comparison, social drinkers were more likely to expect social enhancement. Other studies in general show that in comparison to lighter drinkers, heavy drinkers tend to expect more positive than negative effects from alcohol consumption. In addition, Baer also reviewed three studies that tested for causal relationships between alcohol usage and the beliefs surrounding its effects. All four studies found some relationship between higher levels of drinking and positive expectations (2002: 46).

2.2.6.3 Perceived social norms

Perceived social norms concerning alcohol use have been the focus in research on student drinking behaviour since the early 1990's and continues to be prominent in more recent studies. It also takes a central role in the current research. Social norms may be seen as a function of both the individual and the social context. Concerning individual variation, research has shown that student perception of the drinking norm represents a risk factor for heavy drinking, meaning that there is a relationship between having a more permissive perception of the drinking norm and higher levels of drinking and drinking-related problems (Baer, 2002:46). Moreover, Perkins and Wechsler found that attitude mediates this relationship in that perceived norms best predict

alcohol use for students who have more lenient attitudes towards alcohol consumption (1996: 961). It is important to note here that the relationship between perception and drinking is not necessarily a one-way causal relationship. Students might have a more permissive perception of drinking because they are heavy drinkers. This point also points to the complexity of the formation of perceptions, which will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

Drinking motives, alcohol expectancies and perceived social norms are difficult to separate from one another. Perception of the social norm may be related to the motivation to drink. Drinking may be seen as socially desirable behaviour, which in itself may be a motivation for students who seek social acceptance. Moreover, the social acceptance that goes along with drinking may be seen as a drinking expectancy. In line with this, Neighbors *et al.* (2007) designed a study with the purpose of evaluating the unique contribution of all three the abovementioned cognitive factors, while controlling for demographic factors (gender and fraternity/sorority membership). Multiple regression results showed that the perceived drinking norm of students in general was by far the best predictor of the number of drinks students consumed per week followed by fraternity/sorority membership, gender and the perceived norm of friends' approval of drinking, which were more or less similar in terms of predictive strength. Ordered from the strongest to the weakest predictors, enhancement motives, conformity motives, the perception of parents' approval of drinking, coping motives and evaluation of negative effects, also made significantly large contributions to the explanation of variance in students' weekly drinking.

From the above discussion on individual variation, it is evident that, especially regarding social norms and social affiliation, individual and social processes are difficult to separate from one another. In the following section, the focus will accordingly shift to the social processes involved in influencing individual behaviour. It is evident that individual factors often seem to play a role in students' drinking behaviour. However, as the review of multivariate studies showed, peer influences and especially the normative perception of peer drinking behaviour seems to have a more important influence on personal drinking in the university/college environment, as drinking in this context is largely a socially-driven activity.

2.3   CULTURE, SOCIALISATION AND IDENTITY

To understand the possible influence of perception on student drinking behaviour, it is imperative to recognise the role of culture, socialisation and identity in all forms of social life. The formation and understanding of perceptions are embedded in the interaction of this triad: culture as the overarching concept that connects students, socialisation as the process of acquiring the norms that govern culture, and identity as the internalised personal version of cultural norms. Pierre Bourdieu's work unifies these concepts by transcending the dichotomies often associated with social theory. In doing this, he clarifies the interaction between these interlinked social phenomena. It is important to note that the following discussion is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of theoretical work relating to these concepts, but rather serves the purpose of providing a theoretical context for understanding student drinking behaviour and the influence of peers and perception.

2.3.1   CULTURE

The concept of culture can often be very abstract and open to scrutiny, and consequently a variety of definitions is found in the literature. After reviewing hundreds of statements and definitions

made about culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, two American anthropologists, defined the term in the following way:

> *Culture consists of patterns explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.* (1952, as quoted in Tseng, 2001: 23)

Anderson and Taylor (2004: 58-61) identify five features of culture recognised across different societies. In the first instance, *culture is shared*; all students have at least some elements of campus culture in common and it is this shared nature of their experience that is significant and meaningful to them. Students share certain elements of campus life, for instance, attending classes, studying for tests and maybe going for a drink after a long day. Durkheim (1947) used a term very similar to shared culture, namely collective consciousness, to describe the shared beliefs and values of a society. 'The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience' (as quoted in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 667). For Durkheim, this collective consciousness or shared culture is passed down through generations and through this, an association between consecutive generations is formed. It restricts and directs behaviour and is not subject to the choices and desires of the individual member. Moreover, it is essential for society to function properly. Durkheim therefore implies that a collective consciousness or culture gives some structure and arrangement to society by limiting individuals' choices through the regulation of values and beliefs. However, Durkheim's theory can be criticised for being deterministic, i.e. for not allowing for personal choice. In no way are students utterly and completely controlled by campus culture but rather, individual choice is situated within the general framework of any culture. Nevertheless, no one person is free from the structuring influences culture has on our everyday interaction, and its shared nature – or the perception of a shared culture – contributes to its effectiveness in constituting social order.

Secondly, *culture is learnt,* through direct instruction, for example by parents, university administrators, senior peers during initiation or faculty members or, indirectly, through the observation of others' actions and the imitation and incorporation thereof into their own behaviours. Through these observations, individuals learn to identify what is expected of them and so they may choose to act accordingly or deviate from the norm.

Thirdly, *culture is taken for granted*. As stated above, culture is indirectly learnt through interaction and observation, and consequently norms are seldom questioned. Culture has a normalising effect on the perception of its norms; what is seen as 'normal' is inherent to a culture, and perpetuated as normal in the thoughts of its members. Norms determine what is seen as desirable, a desirable lifestyle and appropriate behaviour. By not conforming to cultural expectations, individuals may be subject to tacit social sanctions, for example, losing social appeal or popularity in one's friendship group.

Fourthly, *culture is symbolic.* 'The significance of culture lies in the meaning people give to symbols for things or behaviour. The meaning is not inherent in the symbol but is bestowed by the cultural significance' (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 59, 60). In turn, symbols are then again meaningful for individuals, and through interaction with the symbols situated within a social environment or, taking part in symbolic behaviours, meaning is acquired within a certain cultural milieu.

Lastly, *culture varies across time and place.* One culture differs from another as different groups of people experience varying circumstances and are therefore faced with diverse challenges. Culture is partly situated in the minds of its members, and therefore, as its members are able to adapt, it creatively adapts to changing conditions. Hand in hand with the varied nature of culture, is the notion of *cultural relativism*. This concept states that behaviour or actions can only be judged and understood within, or in relation to, the cultural milieu in which they appear. Because there is a variation between cultures, the systems of meaning need to be interpreted within a certain cultural context (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 61).

The diversity of a culture is influenced by the complexity of its composition. Various terms are used to denote cultural diversity. The concept of a *dominant culture* refers to the culture of the most influential group in society. The dominant culture needs not be supported by the majority of a society's people as their culture, but rather, it is the culture of the group that is powerful enough to define the cultural framework. On campus, a heavy drinking norm may represent the dominant drinking culture. As will be explained later (see section 2.8), heavy-drinking behaviour is highly visible and therefore it has the potential to influence perception and so to define the norm. It maintains its dominance partly through the perceptions it generates, and by defining and enforcing what is desirable (see section 2.5 on Social Learning). Social norms or institutions perpetuate this dominant culture and thereby legitimise it (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 70).

Subcultures usually co-exist with dominant cultures and they often share some characteristics. Predominantly they represent parts of the population whose cultural systems differ from that of the dominant culture (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 71). By preference they often, but not necessarily always, have distinctly different sets of norms and ways of life (Tseng, 2001: 29). For example, students who proclaim abstinence from drinking may be seen as a subculture of student drinking culture, and student drinking culture as a subculture of campus culture. It can be hypothesised that people have the tendency to view other cultures or subcultures different from their own as threatening or possibly judgemental. Abstainers decide not to subscribe to certain norms and therefore do not share alcohol users' beliefs and values. Consequently, their behaviour might be interpreted as critical towards drinking behaviour, and even viewed as a counterculture. *Countercultures* may be established in response to the behaviours and norms of the dominant culture. Typically, because of moral or political reasons, members of the counterculture reject the values of the dominant culture and develop cultural practices in defiance of the norms of the dominating cultural group (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 73).

One definition of culture sees it as a quality an individual can possess. According to this view, individuals are seen as cultured when they are able to learn and obtain the skills and characteristics that are seen as advantageous for a 'cultured' entity. It identifies some facet of what is human as being superior in comparison to other aspects (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 663). Hence, an individual's ability and willingness to be socialised into a dominant culture, and to accept the norms of this context, may be seen as more desirable and therefore more cultured than someone who shuns these values and beliefs. This point is related to the importance of the shared nature of culture and what meaning its members acquire from this quality (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 58). The possibility therefore exists that individuals may tacitly adhere to cultural expectations and consequently adopt a certain lifestyle to be accepted and incorporated in a cultural context, even though it might be in conflict with their previous behaviour, moral values or beliefs. Being accepted as part of a culture creates a sense of belonging and gives meaning to everyday interaction, possibly even when that culture is in direct conflict with one's private attitude. For some individuals the origin of meaning may not necessarily be that important but

rather, merely attaining that meaning by whatever means is of particular importance. In contrast, others may prefer to reject the dominant culture, which may lead to feelings of alienation (Perkins, 2007: 2652). The choice between rejection and adherence may be influenced by many things, but individuals' previous experiences in life, as well as personality traits such as self-esteem and confidence certainly have an important part to play. Moreover, consequences of the choice (such as alienation) may also be mediated by their personal characteristics.

According to Tseng (2001: 35), culture can be viewed in different dimensions for behavioural analysis. *Actual cultural behaviour* refers to the norm of the actual behaviour observed in social life. It is what the members of society do and think. *Ideal cultural behaviour* is the desirable pattern of life as defined by a particular group. The actual observed behaviour and the ideal behaviour do not necessarily overlap. Rather, there may be large disjuncture between the levels of support for the ideal norm and occurrence of that behaviour in reality. Everyone in a student drinking culture may have been conditioned to see heavy drinking as the ideal cultural behaviour. However, as will be discussed, heavy drinking is not necessarily the actual dominant behaviour on campus. *Deviated cultural behaviour* refers to the possibility that not all manifested behaviours may be in line with the pattern of the majority. In all likelihood, behaviours within one group may not be homogeneous but differentiated with varying levels of support for ideal cultural behaviour. *Stereotyped cultural behaviour* is the view of a behavioural pattern by an outsider of the group, usually thought to represent the behavioural pattern of the whole group. This view is often distorted, exaggerated or fragmented because it is based on the outsiders' interpretation. The view commonly held by society and probably prospective students is one of stereotyped cultural behaviour and this initial general interpretation of all students as heavy drinkers may contribute to the misperception that is commonly held by students. Moreover, it may also contribute to parents' and faculty members' views of student drinking as a rite of passage, because it is seen as something that 'all' students did, still do and need to do.

2.3.2 SOCIALISATION

Socialisation can be seen as the process through which culture is acquired. It starts at infancy and continues throughout our lives. We observe and learn the appropriate behaviours within certain contexts and associate those behaviours with certain roles, and in so doing we learn the norms of social life. Therefore, through socialisation, the individual learns what societal values to internalise, which then contributes to the formation of his or her personality. Internalisation takes place when we assume behaviours, stop questioning their legitimacy and accept them as correct (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 88). Through internalisation, society's culture is perpetuated in the minds of its people (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 665). 'Socialisation makes people bearers of culture. . . . A person not only is the recipient of culture, but also the creator of culture who passes cultural expectations on to others. The main product of socialisation, then, is society itself' (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 92).

Family is the primary source of socialisation, merely because it is the most prominent sources of social contact during childhood. During this phase, socialisation is more a one-way process from the top down, as children learn from their parents and their social environment. However, peers also play an important role with their influence growing as adolescents mature (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244; Oetting & Beavais, 1987: 210). In the case of peers, culture and norms develop through reciprocal interaction, by individuals both contributing and learning through social exchange. Parsons (1959, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 687) saw schools as playing an important

role in secondary socialisation. To a certain extent, schools bridge the gap between home and society, accustoming children to conform to the abstract rules for appropriate interaction within general society.

Of course, it can be argued that this initial socialisation indoctrinates individuals to conform to social norms without questioning the reasons for behaviours, but rather, merely acting as others do in order to fit in, choosing not to disrupt social order, and consequently, creating the tendency to act in socially acceptable ways (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 92). Through experience, people learn to know the consequences of deviance from the norm, namely ridicule, peer pressure, and other judgements that serve to remind us of the expected. Therefore, because socialised individuals conform to cultural expectations, society becomes predictable to a certain extent. Socialisation can therefore be a source of social control, a means of maintaining social order. '[M]ost people conform, although to differing degree[s]' (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 89). For the current research, it is not as much a question of what is generally defined as socially desirable behaviour but rather, what students privately perceive as socially desirable (see section 2.8). Perception is the key to socialisation, because it represents the contact point that grants social agents access to the social world. However, it also represents a point where significant error can occur within the socialisation process. If one misperceives that which is seen as socially desirable, one would act on those perceptions as if they are reality (Perkins, 1997: 181).

At this point in the discussion, it is important to note that individuals are not the passive recipients of culture through socialisation. All individuals are free social agents, actively participating in their own development. Often we experience internal or external confrontations due to contradictory socialising influences, which require us to make choices. What makes us unique are the different experiences we have, our varying patterns of socialisation, the difference in our inclination to conform and the difference in our perception of the social environment. Whether conscious or subconscious, through our choices we become individuals, a process referred to as 'individuation' (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 665). Individuation as a part of socialisation forms the basis for identity formation.

2.3.3 IDENTITY

Everybody has an identity, and that in itself implies the internalisation of norms and values which is intrinsically associated with identity formation. In essence, identity bridges that gap between the social and the individual. Through this relationship, behaviours become 'regular' and 'patterned' so that people know what to expect from other 'cultured' individuals and society as it is structured around this concurrent predictability (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 696). A consequence of the mutual influence of identity and culture is that identity formation is not free from structural constraints. Culture constrains identity because it limits the realm of acceptable behaviour. The prominence of different identities is determined by social factors such as enforcement. However, that which is defined as cultured within a given context may not necessarily be ideal for the individual or for broader society; the identity products of socialisation may often have adverse consequences for its hosts. For example, frequent binge drinking may have adverse consequences for students' physical and mental health and their academic and social lives, leading to health issues, uncompleted degrees and depression. Nevertheless, being very sociable and drinking heavily is socially desirable on university campuses and, as a consequence, is socially enforced.

Although identity is an individual characteristic, it is complicatedly related to the social group with which an individual identifies (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 665). When we look at other people, we perceive them in a certain way and we are equally aware that they observe us. We attempt to represent ourselves to the outside world in a certain way and how we represent ourselves is seen as an integral part of individual and group identity. The process by which we manage how the external world perceives us, is referred to as *impression management* (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006: 115). Following, our 'identities are always formed in relationship to other people' (Jenkins, 1996, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 699). The process of forming impressions of others is referred to as *impression formation* (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 112). This reciprocal process of impression management and formation has the social consequence of group formation through people's mutual identification of similarities and, conversely, self-other differences. From the abovementioned it seems clear that everyday life is confounded by the management of impressions, and thus it plays an integral part in social interaction.

Of importance to the current research is whether we are successful in representing ourselves as we want to be seen and whether we are successful in perceiving others in the way they are trying to present themselves. We tacitly assume that through observation we receive accurate information about individuals, that their actions represent their attitudes (i.e. they represent themselves truthfully) and that our perception provides us access to an understanding of the elements of their identity.

2.4   HABITUS, FIELD AND CAPITAL

Everyday social practices are characterised by regularities. We base our everyday decisions and interpretations of social life on this predictable nature of others' behaviours and attitudes. However, there are no written rules governing our and other individuals' actions or our predictions of their actions. The dichotomy between such social regularities and the absence of explicit rules governing behaviour represents the starting point for Bourdieu's theory of 'structured and structuring structure' (1994: 170). For Bourdieu practice is the result of the relationship between three main thinking tools as expressed in the following equation:

[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (Maton, 2008: 51)

According to Bourdieu, practice results from the relationship between a person's disposition (habitus) and their position in a field (capital), within the current social circumstances (field). The complex relationship between these three concepts concerns the age-old debate of social structure versus individual agency (Maton, 2008: 50).

> *The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment . . . produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.*

(Bourdieu, 1977: 72)

Essentially, what Bourdieu is saying here, is that social life is characterised by order and it is an order in the absence of any formal rules or control. This order within any given social environment

forms habitus, which is a collection of dispositions every individual has that in turn structures behaviour.

Very importantly, habitus is seen as a property possessed by social agents, either as individuals or in a group. It has three unique qualities, all in relation to structure. In the first instance, habitus is *'structured'*, both by an individual's previous and current circumstances, by the past and the present. The field one interacts with during everyday life therefore gives structure or certain regularity to one's habitus. An example of this is a student's family upbringing and his/her current university career. Before their studies, students' interaction with their family continuously structured their habitus during everyday interaction; presently their habitus is being structured by their university career, and in the future, their habitus will continue to be structured by the field and their position therein, like for instance, their future job. Secondly, habitus has a consequence of *'structuring'* or shaping students' present and future practices. Therefore, just as habitus is continuously being structured by its interaction with field, so it also structures students' current interaction. Every day students are faced with an infinite number of choices. Habitus determines the number of choices available to each specific individual and which choice is made. Thirdly, habitus is a *'structure'* because it is not 'unpatterned' or random, but rather systematically ordered. It consists of a system of *'dispositions'* that generates perceptions, attributions and practices (Maton, 2008: 51). The term disposition has a critical role in bringing the ideas of structure and tendency together, as Bourdieu explains:

> *It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state . . . and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination.*   (1977: 214)

Further, dispositions do not merely come and go, but rather are *'durable'* and last over time, neither are they only applicable to specific social circumstances, but rather *'transposable'*, as they can be employed within a variety of social situations (Maton, 2008: 51).

The on-going social and physical spaces we occupy (our field) are, like habitus, also structured. Practices are the result of the relationship between these two structures. Field and habitus are therefore intrinsically involved with one another; field, as the continuous context that we occupy, structures habitus, while simultaneously, habitus forms the basis for our understanding of our existence, including field. Habitus therefore contributes to representing field as a meaningful world. In short then, habitus is structured by existence and produces existence according to its own structure (Maton, 2008: 52). Maton describes it better than I could even attempt to:

> *Simply put, habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into the present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. This is an on-going and active process — we are engaged in a continuous process of making history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making. Where we are in life at any one moment is the result of numberless events in the past that have shaped our path. We are faced at any moment with a variety of possible forks in that path, or choices of actions and beliefs. This range of choices depends on our current context (the position [capital] we occupy in a particular social field), but at the same time which of these choices are visible to us and which we do not see as possible are the result of our past journey, for our experiences have helped shape our vision. Which choices we choose to make, therefore, depends on the range of options visible to us, and on our dispositions (habitus), the embodied experiences of our journey [through field]. Our choices will then in turn shape our future possibilities, for any choice involves*

foregoing alternatives and sets us on a particular path that further shapes our understanding of ourselves and of the world. (Maton, 2008: 52-53)

Bourdieu saw social interaction as competitive, with social agents possessing and employing varying resources to preserve and to improve their situation. Social agents compete for the accumulation of *capitals* in the field, which represent a product of the field. Bourdieu distinguished among four types of capital, namely economic (assets and money), cultural (knowledge, taste, preferences), social (networks, associations, family, religion) and symbolic capital (such as credentials that stand for any of the other forms of capital that can be used in other fields) (Thomson, 2008: 69).

Habitus and its constituent structures are therefore not stagnant, but rather in a continuous state of evolution. They are durable, in that they last over time, and transposable, in that they are interchangeable between different situations, but they are not unchangeable. Concurrently, the social strata through which we pass, namely our contextual fields, also continuously evolve according to their own configuration, to which social agents contribute. Hence, understanding practice is understanding both the evolving fields within which individuals are found and the habitus each individual brings to the social fields where practice takes place (Maton, 2008: 52).

How we see the world or field and the choices that are available to us is determined by our habitus. How students perceive student drinking culture, and how they react to it will depend on their habitus. Moreover, field is structured and our choices are regulated by our position therein, our capital. Students are presented with a certain social environment and each of them takes a certain place within that environment according to their capital, which regulates the choices available to them.

Bourdieu succeeds in explaining through theory how our experiences in our social environment in the past and the present influence our actions and consequently how we influence our environment. What is important to take from the above review for the purpose of this study is the notion that our habitus influences the choices available to us, while our field and our capital may further structure our choices. The relationship between individuals and their social environment is therefore not a one-way relationship, but rather a complex interplay between past experiences, personality, current environment and students' location in their current environment. During the course of this research, I will attempt to clarify this interplay between individuals, their history and their present social circumstances within the university environment.

2.5   SOCIAL LEARNING

As can be inferred from the previous two sections, social reinforcement for desirable behaviours and attitudes is intrinsically related to the functioning and formation of culture, socialisation and identity. To understand more thoroughly how these positive and negative definitions of behaviour may shape and reward student drinking behaviour, the theory of social learning will now be considered.

Probably one of the best-known approaches to learning has its origins in behaviourism. The classical behaviourist definition of learning suggests that learning is 'any more or less permanent change in behaviour which is the result of experience' (Borger & Seaborne, 1966: 16). However, within the behaviourist paradigm, the sole concern is behaviour, and therefore only the measurable behavioural outcomes are taken into consideration, rather than focusing on attitudes,

norms, knowledge and so forth. It predominantly considers overt responses to stimulus that can be measured. Well-known theorists within this area of research are Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike and Frederic Skinner who are largely responsible for theories surrounding classical, operant and instrumental conditioning (Jarvis, Holford & Griffen, 1998: 22).

According to the general theory of learning, social behaviour is shaped by the rewards and the punishments that follow actions or is the consequence of actions. In their study of social learning theory and deviant behaviour, Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce and Radosevich (1979: 638) distinguished between the following types of social conditioning:

- *positive reinforcement*, when behaviour is strengthened through reward
- *negative reinforcement*, when behaviour is strengthened due to the avoidance of punishment
- *positive punishment*, when behaviour is weakened by uncalled for or unexpected stimuli
- *negative punishment,* when behaviour is weakened due to loss of reward.

Whether behaviour is acquired and continued depends on the reward and punishment for that behaviour. In addition, it also depends on the reward and punishment for alternative behaviours. When certain behaviour enjoys prominence instead of other behaviour due to differing levels of support or punishment, it is referred to as *differential reinforcement.* Behaviour is learnt through both direct conditioning and by the *imitation* or modelling of others' behaviours. Through these interactions with reference groups, individuals become aware of the *definitions* (norms and attitudes) for what is considered as 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. The greater the proportion of people with a *positive definition* for a behaviour (view behaviour as desirable) rather than a *negative definition* (view behaviour as undesirable) or at least a *neutral definition* (view behaviour as justified), the greater the likelihood that other individuals will act in a conforming way. Whether deviant or conforming, behaviour will be favoured when its negative definitions are outweighed by the positive and neutralising definitions (Akers *et al.*, 1979: 639). According to Akers *et al.* (1979: 638), 'the theory posits that the principal behavioural effects come from interaction in or under the influence of those groups which control individuals' major sources of reinforcement and punishment and expose them to behavioural models and normative definitions'.

Student alcohol abuse can therefore be expected to the extent that it is differentially reinforced over lighter forms of drinking or no drinking, and whether it is defined as desirable or at least justified. In addition to these variables, social learning theory provides an order for the interrelationship among these variables. First, *differential association* occurs, referring to the identification and interaction with different social groups. Within this social environment, the student is exposed to models for *imitation*, definitions guiding norms and attitudes, and *differential reinforcement* for the level of possible alcohol usage. Definitions are learnt via imitation and internalised because of social reinforcement by members of the peer group with whom the student associates. In turn, definitions serve as the discriminative stimuli for appropriate drinking behaviour. Imitation becomes less important with the passage of time, while the influences of definitions continue and are themselves altered with the personal experience of alcohol use (Akers *et al.*, 1979: 638).

From the behaviourist perspective, learning has often been studied by examining how *individuals* learn. However, learning clearly has a social element that needs to be considered (Jarvis *et al.*, 1999: 37). The abovementioned is largely a functionalist perspective, according to which individuals are socialised into certain cultural norms and attitudes that are shared by others in

society and in so doing, learning contributes to social order. Accordingly, to be members of society, individuals must learn social roles. If this fails to happen, society itself will suffer the consequences and individuals will take on deviant roles (Jarvis, 1999: 39). Functionalism has been criticised for implying that individuals are simply shaped to fit into society as it is, passively accepting the status quo as conforming recipients of established cultural norms (Jarvis *et al.*, 1999: 39). However, learning is not merely a one-way process, as Jarvis explains:

> *All aspects of the individual are, to some degree, a reflection of the social structure. But this is not merely an acquisition, or receptive process, since this social self affects the manner in which persons perceive and interpret their experiences in social living . . . individuals actually modify what is received and it is the changed version that is subsequently transmitted to other people in social interaction.*
> (1987: 14)

What is known about learning has therefore changed in the past three decades. Learning is no longer merely defined in terms of the behavioural change that takes place, neither is it seen as occurring in a social vacuum. Rather, learning is now thought of as a reciprocal process during social activity; social beings gain knowledge during their engagement with their social environment and also contribute knowledge. Here, the similarity with Bourdieu's concept of habitus is noticeable, as the mutual exchange between the individual and their social environment is emphasised. Through this process of social exchange and learning, we make sense of our experiences. These experiences may take the form of formal experiences such as education or more informal experiences such as watching television, conversing with friends, getting drunk or any other seemingly everyday activity. However, what are of importance are not only the experiences we have, but also how we interpret those experiences and how we contribute to the learning process (Jarvis *et al.*, 1998: 66). Consequently, it is apparent that learning may vary for all involved, 'depending on where, how and why it is taking place . . . If social context influences learning, what and how people learn is likely to be different in different cultural and social contexts' (Jarvis *et al.*, 1998: 66). The latter notion is again similar to Bourdieu's concept of field and how a social agent's position therein influences and interacts with their habitus.

> *From this sociological perspective, therefore, the structure and culture of a society determine how any individual learning can take place. It criticizes behavioural approaches to learning by stressing that human learning is self-conscious and reflexive. We are both products and creators of culture. Learning is seen not as social adaption but as social action and interaction.*   (Jarvis et al., 1998: 40)

From this perspective, various reference groups have sufficient contact with students to facilitate the reciprocal learning process for normative drinking behaviour. Research investigating the influence of parental values and behaviours has found little direct impact on college students (Oetting & Beauvais, 1987). Moreover, parental influence diminishes as children grow older and in turn, peers become more salient as a reference group (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 392; Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244). In addition, research has shown that peer drinking norms have a larger influence on personal drinking behaviour in comparison to the influence of parents, resident advisers and faculty members (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008; Perkins, 2002b; Hansen, 1997; Oetting & Beavais, 1987). Therefore, in terms of the campus social environment, peer interaction is seen as the most influential source of students' social learning, and so too, social norming. Accordingly, the role of peers in student drinking behaviour will now be considered as the main underlying theme for the current study.

2.6   PEER INFLUENCE

'While each individual has an identity which is personal to them, those identities are shaped through membership of social groups' (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 699). Socialisation at university is especially peer-intensive. Students are constantly surrounded by and in contact with peers from various social groups, e.g. their housing units, when out 'partying' and in the course of academic responsibilities. Peers provide alcohol and the social contexts for its consumption, they share ideas and beliefs that rationalise alcohol use, and so influence attitudes about alcohol consumption (Oetting & Beauvais, 1987: 206). For the majority of students, the university context represents a social situation where, other than with student peers, there is a low frequency of interaction with parents, siblings or other reference groups that may influence or have a valued opinion of their actions. Accordingly, the role of peers becomes important in defining the attitudes and behaviours of students. Furthermore, research has shown that young people are more inclined to adopt peer attitudes, especially in relation to alcohol and other drug use (Perkins, 1997: 178) and that the impact of peers on personal behaviour tends to increase as adolescents mature (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 392; Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244).

In their research to test peer cluster theory, Oetting and Beauvais (1987: 206) referred to close and very influential groups as peer clusters. Within alcohol-consuming peer clusters, alcohol plays a significant part in shaping the group's identity and structuring its behaviour. Within this theory, they saw various factors underlying an individual's susceptibility to drug use, namely social structure, socialisation, psychological or personality characteristics, attitudes, beliefs and rationales, and behaviours. In terms of socialisation, they saw major links between the individual and the community, schools, religion, parents and peers. They found that these socialisation variables are predictive of adolescent drug and alcohol use but, even more importantly, that the strongest relationship exists with peer drug and alcohol involvement. The relationship of other socialisation characteristics to alcohol and drug use was essentially accounted for by the indirect relation of these characteristics through the influence they had on peer drug associations. Thus schools, religion and your parents largely influence the peers you associate with, rather than influencing your personal drug use (Oetting & Beauvais, 1987: 205).

Of course, peer pressure is not universally experienced by students. Rather, subjective differences will occur from individual to individual. In accord, Bourdieu would say that students differ in terms of their position in field because they are involved in diverse social groups and have different living arrangements which vary in composition and in their influence on lifestyle choices, or rather, students' habitus. Peers may discourage alcohol use, merely encourage a balanced lifestyle, or blatantly look down upon abstinence or light drinking. Alternatively, as was explained in section 2.2 on individual variation, students also differ psychologically. For example, some may be more inclined towards social integration, which influences the intensity of peer interaction, and the need for peer-group acceptance. Consequently, individuals differ in their susceptibility to peer pressure due to psychological differences explained by inner- versus other-directedness. However, 'the basic assumption of the socialisation model is that one tends to think and act as one's peers do, especially when contact with them is close and frequent' (Perkins, 1997: 179). Under such circumstances, the scope for influence by peers is extensive. In the university context, peer groups are situated at the optimum position to influence standards of acceptance and perceptions of ideal behaviour. As explained by social learning theory, students may gradually be inclined to conform to the expectations of peers due to the positive and negative reinforcement of certain social behaviour. Consequently, in relation to alcohol consumption, if a student's peer group classifies it as desirable, provides models for it and rewards it, students may learn and continue

heavy-drinking behaviour even if their parents, larger society, faculty members and even they themselves consider heavy drinking as deviant (Perkins, 1997: 179).

Student peers can influence alcohol use directly (actively) or indirectly (passively). *Direct peer influence* represents explicit invitations, offers or demands to drink. However, peer influences are not only confined to these direct temptations to consume alcohol. Through their behaviour, peers define appropriate behaviour within a certain social milieu and accordingly define actions that will lead to social reward or punishment. Therefore, students' observations of norms and their consequent modelling are components of *indirect peer influences*. As social learning theory dictates, modelling takes place due to behaviour being interpreted as socially desirable, and the subsequent expectation of social reinforcement (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 393). However, the degree of indirect peer influences is largely reliant on the personal perception of the norms that govern student drinking behaviour. In addition, two modes of indirect peer influence are distinguished. *Injunctive norms* refer to perceived approval of peers of certain behaviours, i.e. whether others evaluate certain behaviour as right or wrong, whether they approve or disapprove (Neighbors *et al.*, 2004: 434). These perceived moral rules of peer group interaction are also referred to as the norm of 'ought' or 'prescriptive norms' (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 402). In contrast, *descriptive norms* refer to the perceived prevalence of actual drinking behaviour, the perception of what others actually do (e.g. the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption of the typical university student in discrete drinking situations) (Neighbors *et al.,* 2004: 434; Borsari & Carey, 2001: 393;). Descriptive norms are also referred to as the norm of 'is' or 'popular norms' (Borsari & Carey, 2001: 402).

Figure 1: Hierarchy of peer influence
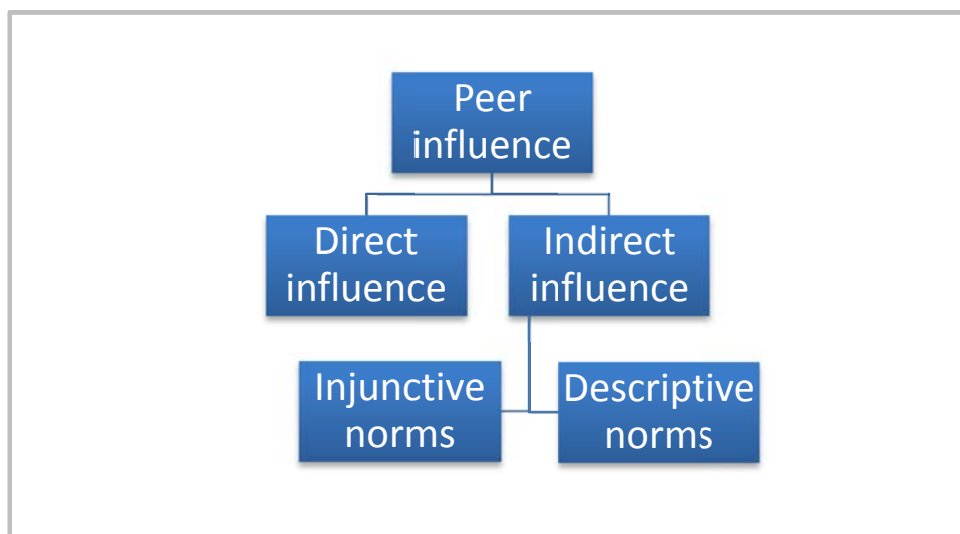
Accordingly, descriptive and injunctive norms influence personal behaviour through the *perception* we have of others' behaviour and the *perception* we have of their level of approval of that behaviour. As mentioned before, this is referred to as the perception of self–other differences. For this study, these perceptions are of key importance, since research has shown that systematic errors occur during norm estimation (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244).

According to Prentice and Miller, individuals have three strategies at their disposal to respond to the perceived discrepancy between the social norm and their private attitude (1993: 244). They can adjust their private attitude in the direction of the perceived norm, influence the norm to more closely represent their own attitude, or reject the norm and the group completely (i.e.

alienation). The last two of these options may invoke social sanction or may merely be too difficult to achieve. Therefore, in the short run, the most viable option would be to minimise the disjuncture between the perceived discrepancy between the social norm and one's private attitude by changing one's private attitude, or at least, giving the impression that one's attitude is in line with the social norm. Another point that is worth mentioning is the stronger tendency for internalisation of the norm to occur in social situations where private attitudes have not yet been well established (Kelman, 1958, as cited in Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244).

2.7 MISPERCEIVING THE SOCIAL NORM

In the previous section, I discussed the possibility that peers may play a significant role in influencing social interaction in the university context. However, social influence is fundamentally dependent on subjective definitions of what is normative behaviour and attitude. Students can only construct these definitions through their personal perceptions of their student peers' behaviour, perceptions that research has shown are often in error. This section explores the creation of general perceptions and the peer norm and how misperceiving the latter may influence behaviour.

'In real-world social groups . . . the task of identifying the group norm can be highly complex and demanding, so much so that members' estimates of the norms are often seriously in error' (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 252). How we define and react to a situation largely depends on how we perceive that situation. In accordance, the possible influence peer behaviour has on our personal behaviour can primarily only be based on our interpretations of what others approve of and do (the perceived norm) rather than others' real actions and beliefs (the actual norm). The gap between the actual and the perceived norm is where misperception is found (Berkowitz, 2004: 5). According to Borsari and Carey (2001: 411), a two-step process plays a role in the influence students' perceptions have on their personal drinking. Firstly, students compare personal alcohol use and attitudes to the descriptive and injunctive norm and perceive a difference. Secondly, they may adjust their behaviour to be in line with the perceived group norm. While this process in itself may not necessarily be problematic, the problem lies in the fact that a large body of research has shown that the initial perception of the drinking norm (as different from one's own) is often erroneous. In particular, students tend to perceive a discrepancy between their own behaviour/attitude and the behaviour/attitude of others. A misperception of the social environment occurs when there is either an overestimation or an underestimation of the behaviours and attitudes of others (Berkowitz, 2004: 5).

Research shows that students tend to overestimate the drinking norm and therefore perceive it as more permissive than it actually is or, alternatively, as more permissive than their own behaviour (e.g. Borsari & Carey, 2001; Perkins, 1997; Prentice & Miller, 1993). Students' definition of alcohol use on campus is therefore often based on a misperception. Accordingly, if observing a difference between one's own behaviour and the social norm is seen as leading to behavioural change in the direction of the norm, then many students might base their behaviour on an erroneous perception as they strive to conform to this misperceived drinking norm. The formation of this misperception and its role in the perpetuation and aggravation of drinking behaviour is simplistically summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Figure 2: Steps in the formation and the perpetuation of misperceptions

Perceive students' drinking behaviour and attitude (e.g. that of friends, senior students, students in general)

Compare peceptions of their behaviour with own behaviour and attitude

Notice a difference between own behaviour and the perceived norm

Expect social reward if conform to the norm

Manage projected impression to represent the perceived norm

Receive differential social reinforcement for the projected impression

Continue behaviour associated with the perceived norm

Internalisation of the perceived norm

'If people perceive situations as real, those situations are real in their consequences' (Thomas & Thomas, 1926, as quoted in Perkins, 1997: 181). This is commonly known as the Thomas theorem and as Robert Merton suggested, '[w]ere the Thomas theorem and its implications more widely known more men would understand more of the workings of our society. [I]t possesses . . . the gift of relevance, being instructively applicable to many, if indeed not most, social processes' (1956: 421), and indeed the Thomas theorem forms the basic underlying premise for this research. There are certain consequences of misperceiving the social norm. Students, like all individuals, do not only react to the objective characteristics of a situation, but rather, and sometimes primarily, also to the subjective definition they ascribe to that situation (Merton, 1956: 422). A definition is attributed to that situation and some rationale has to be employed to justify that attribution. Although the definitions people attribute to circumstances may vary, one thing seems clear, after that assignment has taken place, subsequent behaviour will be influenced by the attributed definition.

From the above then, if a public definition of the situation is created, it becomes a fundamental part of that situation, as it influences subsequent developments (Merton, 1956: 423). In this sense, the occurrence of normative misperceptions of peer behaviour is a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Merton stated, 'the self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behaviour which makes the originally false conception true. The specious validity of

the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates the reign of error' (1957: 423). Misperceptions therefore become the reality in which the student acts and interacts. Consequently, students may act as they normally would not, and their actions then again contribute to others' normative misperceptions of alcohol use.

In their review of literature on peer influence on college drinking, Borsari and Carey (2001) noted that perceived normative support of others for consuming alcohol consistently predicts individual alcohol use and, to a lesser degree, alcohol-related problems. In addition, they identify two trends in the literature that point to a disparity in the influence of norms on drinking. Firstly, people-based norms play a more important role than institution-based norms, meaning that the perception of close friends and family's behaviour and approval has a greater influence on personal drinking behaviour than that of the university, or health specialists. Secondly, gender differences are apparent in that women perceive more conservative drinking norms than men do. Explanations for the latter include that women tend to be influenced by environmental influences to a greater extent than men, or that women are involved in the culture of drinking to a lesser extent and therefore misperceive more due to their lack of knowledge thereof (Berkowitz, 2004: 11). In addition, a study by Lewis and Neighbors (2004: 334) found that same-sex peer drinking norms are a better predictor of personal drinking than combined norms (students in general). Moreover, they found that opposite-sex drinking norms were not predictive of drinking behaviour.

Research has also shown that the proximal distance of a reference group determines the level of personal misperception of individuals, with more accurate perceptions of those in close social proximity (e.g. Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 580; Perkins, 1997: 189). However, as Perkins (1997: 191) explains, although the normative misperceptions of close friends may be minor, they may be very influential because of the powerful sway friends have on personal behaviour. Conversely, the misperception of students in general may have a weaker influence on actual behaviour, but still be significantly powerful because of the larger degree of misperception.

Findings from my previous study among students at Stellenbosch University produced preliminary evidence that a vast misperception exists about the drinking norm of students in general. Firstly, while 62% of all students (male and female) either abstained or drank lightly to moderately (one to four drinks per drinking occasion) a much smaller proportion of students (38%) indicated they drank heavily (five or more drinks per drinking occasion) (Tolken, 2008: 30). However, when asked to indicate what they saw as the usual level of alcohol consumption for students in general at Stellenbosch University, an overwhelming proportion of students, namely 72% thought heavy drinking was the norm (Tolken, 2008: 33). Furthermore, in line with social norms theory, students' perceptions of their close friends' level of alcohol consumption was more in line with the actual drinking norm on campus. Only 32% described their friendships groups' usual level of alcohol consumption as heavy.

With regard to students' perceptions of normative behaviour, an interesting question arises concerning student perceptions of other students' academic behaviour: are there misperceptions regarding the academic behaviour of other students and, if so, how are these misperceptions related to students' perceptions of the academic norm and their personal drinking behaviour? For instance, first-year students may perceive their older counterparts as always taking part in social and drinking activities, and not allocating much time to academic activities when, in actual fact, the majority of students may be balancing their social and academic lifestyles. Can social norms theory be applied to academic behaviour? This would depend on whether the majority of students perceive others students' academic behaviour as less rigorous than it actually is (Berkowitz, 2005:

193). In other words, it would depend on whether non-academic behaviour is overestimated and academic behaviour is underestimated. For example, students may think that the majority of their student peers work less than is the case in reality, or that they strive to perform worse than they actually do. If perceptions like these exist then, according to social norms theory, it may influence the personal academic behaviour of students. The nature of academic behaviour, namely that it is tedious, time-consuming and generally not associated with the concept of 'fun' can be postulated as reasons why it may not be normatively defined as desirable behaviour in student culture and why non-academic behaviour may be differentially reinforced. Misperceptions may therefore stretch further than merely alcohol consumption; they may exist for students' academic life in terms of the perception of how hard other students work, what is seen as the 'adequate' achievement to strive for, etc. If academic behaviour is seen as the main responsibility of their university life by the majority of students and drinking is generally seen as playing a central role in students' social life, then perceptions of both these behaviours are crucial to the understanding of the norms of student life.

Unfortunately, hardly any published research could be found concerning the perception of the academic norm and how it relates to actual academic behaviour and drinking behaviour. A pilot study conducted at a university in the United States, investigated perceptions of academic success. It found that students perceived their peers as less academically motivated than themselves. An 'Academic Success Norming Campaign' was subsequently implemented to correct misperceptions and to encourage behaviour associated with academic retention and success (Abhold, Hall & Serini, 1999, as cited in Berkowitz, 2004: 28). Furthermore, a study conducted at a medical college in India compared academic achievers and underachievers in terms of their perceptions of their educational environment. It found a significant difference between the perceptions of poor performers and better performers. Poor performers scored significantly lower concerning the perceptions of teachers, academic atmosphere and social self-perceptions (Mayya & Roff, 2004: 280).

Additionally, concerning student academic behaviour to some extent, research on college student cheating investigated the role of perceived norms, among other factors, in influencing students' cheating behaviour. Only preceded by *attitude* (19%), perceived social norms accounted for the second largest proportion of the variance (15%) in cheating (Jordan, 2001: 239). However, unexpectedly, both cheaters and non-cheaters underestimated actual cheating levels (Jordan, 2001: 241). The difference here in comparison with the usual overestimation of perceived alcohol consumption is possibly because cheating is not as visible[5] as drinking behaviour, and therefore it is underestimated. In accordance, the study also found that cheating is influenced by the actual observation of others cheating. In comparison with those who did not witness cheating, the mean personal cheating scores among those who had witnessed cheating were significantly higher. Lastly, in comparison with non-cheaters, cheaters tended to think that more of their student peers were cheating, and the more an individual cheated, the greater the proportion of other students he/she believed cheated (Jordan, 2001: 242).

At the core of any type of social misperception, is the issue of how individuals interpret everyday social life on a psychological level. The theory of attribution grapples with the subject of how individuals try to understand cause-and-effect relationships in everyday social interaction and how predictable errors occur in the most basic interpretation of our social environment. It is therefore

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[5] The possible role of visibility in misperceptions will further be elaborated upon in section 2.8 (conversation and public peer behaviour).

important for understanding perceptions in the university context and will subsequently be considered.

2.7.1 ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theory has its origins in social psychology. It can be briefly described as the 'study of perceived causation . . . [P]eople interpret behaviour in terms of its causes and . . . these interpretations play an important role in determining reactions to the behaviour' (Kelley & Michela, 1980: 458). As human beings, we have a basic desire to understand cause-and-effect relationships in our social environment. This understanding is important for every individual, because it tacitly enables us to predict the future behaviour of others (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 92). An individual gradually gathers information through the observation of others in various situations. He or she uses this information to interpret the causes of their behaviour. Through this act of perception, the individual answers the question of why people act as they do and so tries to bring order and understanding to his or her environment and others' actions. In social psychology, this is known as 'Kelley's theory of causal attribution' and it is essentially how we answer the question of 'Why?' (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 94).

Perkins (1997: 186) compares people to 'intuitive' but 'crude' scientists, with limited information about their environment, only their observations, but still the need to understand why behaviour occurs. Therefore, people nevertheless have to make judgements on the grounds of their rudimentary perceptions in order to understand their world at least to some degree. Perkins proceeds to explain that during this process 'we use cognitive testing mechanisms to decide whether something can be accounted for by the particular environment, by the particular person, or by a combination of factors' (1997: 187). Of course, the causes behind others' behaviour may be numerous, but we simplify this task by asking whether the behaviour of others stem chiefly from internal (e.g. attitudes, traits, intentions, motives) or external causes (features of the social or physical environment), or both (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 95). However, a problem arises with assigning either internal or external causes to a given behaviour, e.g. does a student drink heavily due to his or her attitude (personal disposition) towards drinking or because he or she is celebrating the end of exams (environmental influence)? According to Kelley, individuals depend on three key forms of knowledge to make such a decision (1980, as cited in Baron *et al.*, 2006: 95). Firstly, *consensus* refers to the extent to which other people behave the same in reaction to a given stimulus or event as the person that is being considered. Therefore, the larger the proportion of people (students) who acts in a similar way (or are perceived to act in a similar way, e.g. drink heavily), in a certain situation (going out), the higher the consensus. Secondly, *consistency* is considered. High consistency is determined by the extent to which the same person (student) reacts similarly (drinks heavily) to the same event or stimulus (going out) in other instances, over time. Finally, *distinctiveness* refers to 'the extent to which this person (student) reacts in the same manner (drinks heavily) to other, different stimuli or events (intervarsity rugby)' (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 95).

Kelley's theory (1980, as cited in Baron *et al.*, 2006: 95) also postulates that people are more likely to attribute others' behaviour to *internal* causes in circumstances where consistency is high and consensus and distinctiveness are low. Moreover, people are more likely to attribute others behaviour to *external* causes, when consensus, consistency and distinctiveness are all high. Lastly, when consistency and distinctiveness are high and consensus is low, behaviour is more likely to be attributed to a combination of *internal and external* factors. Two other dimensions of causal

attribution that individuals consider is whether causal factors, which may influence others' behaviour, are *controllable* (or perceived as controllable) and whether their behaviour is *stable* over time (or perceived as stable).

From the above it is clear that individuals have a multitude of potential factors and causes of behaviour to consider in making sense of everyday life. To cope with this, research has shown that individuals make use of discounting and/or augmenting. When a cause is seen as less likely or less significant by a person because another probable cause for the behaviour also exists, it is known as *discounting*. Alternatively, *augmenting* refers to the tendency to assign added weight or importance to a cause that might facilitate a given behaviour when that cause and another cause, which might inhibit such behaviour, are both present, yet the behaviour still occurs (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97).

Attribution theory has been used to understand how people explain their own and others' alcohol use. However, Perkins (1997: 187) was the first to suggest that attribution theory can be applied to understand the misperceptions students have of peer alcohol use as attribution during everyday interaction is not free from error. All of us make basic errors when we attribute causes to behaviour, not only the behaviour of others, but also our own (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 99). Firstly, research on attribution has revealed that when we interpret the behaviour of other people, we focus more on the person than their present situation or social environment. Of course, their circumstances are not completely ignored, but their personal disposition enjoys privilege as cause (Perkins, 1997: 187).

> *The observer may know nothing more about the actor than his behaviour in a particular situation or in a limited range of situations, whereas the actor knows of his behaviour in many situations and is aware of its cross-situational variability. Thus, the observer may assume more consistency of behaviour and infer dispositional causality.* (Kelley & Michela, 1980: 477)

Jones (1979, as cited in Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97) referred to this as *correspondence bias.* It is the tendency to see others' behaviour as originating from their disposition, even though situational causes are apparent. The occurrence of correspondence bias is so common, that it is referred to as *fundamental attribution error* in social psychology. Multiple explanations for the occurrence of this error have been researched. From the perspective of the observer, the actions of the person being observed are high in *perceptual salience,* the focus of attention, whereas situational factors are less salient and so less important. Another explanation postulates that we do observe situational causes but do not attribute sufficient weight to them in comparison with personal dispositions. Another explanation states that we start by attributing others' behaviour to their personality, and then we gradually attempt to correct for the effects of the external world. The latter is a mental shortcut called '*anchoring and adjustment* . . . [a] two-step process – a quick, automatic reaction followed by a slower, more controlled correction' (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 99). Research has however shown that the subsequent adjustment is often insufficient; we tend not to give enough credit or weight to external factors when considering other people's behaviour (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 100).

In contrast, when we evaluate our own behaviour, we make the error of focusing for the most part on the situation (i.e. external causes). Fundamental attribution error therefore does not apply to attributions we make about ourselves. We consider different sources of information when we examine our own behaviour than when we examine other people's behaviour. This tendency is known as *the actor-observer effect* – the tendency to attribute our own personal behaviour to external causes, but that of others to internal causes (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 102).

Concerning student alcohol use, individuals may to a greater extent ascribe others' drinking behaviour to their disposition than is the case in reality. Students see the cause of others' drinking as a favourable attitude towards drinking and tend to downplay the influence of the environment. On the other hand, when scrutinising their own drinking behaviour, students usually have intimate awareness of the environment within which they function (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 102). The key word here is contextualisation. When a person drinks, he or she knows the reasons for drinking in the given circumstances. Alternatively, observers who are not familiar with the person can only make assumptions on the grounds of their observations. In other words, they are unable to contextualise the person's behaviour without getting to know the person better. In general, students have restricted perception of other students' lives, that is, beyond their close friends. The person's current behaviour may be because s/he is celebrating a specific event, something that occurs every now and then, and his/her behaviour may be well within the bounds of his/her moderate disposition towards alcohol consumption.

2.7.2   SELF-OTHER DIFFERENCES: TYPES OF MISPERCEPTION

Misperceptions are intrinsically linked to whether we accurately observe a difference between our own behaviour or attitude and that of others. However, as with all other social phenomena, misperceptions regarding peer alcohol consumption are subject to individual variation as the student population varies in terms of their drinking habits. Students differ in the sense that some abstain, while others drink lightly, moderately or heavily. On their arrival in their first year, they may for example already be heavy drinkers and consequently their (mis)perception of the social environment as condoning heavy drinking, will support and justify their previous drinking habits. Conversely, if students are light drinkers, misperceiving the norm may motivate them to drink heavier by making heavier drinking more socially acceptable and desirable than lighter forms of drinking or abstinence. Social norms theory by no means postulates that by misperceiving the drinking norm as heavier than it actually is, all students will turn into heavy drinkers. Rather, the influence of perceived social norms is more gradual in that the heavy-drinking norm is legitimised as the ideal cultural behaviour and consequently the dominant cultural behaviour, which makes it desirable and justified for students to drink heavier than would otherwise have been the case. This section looks at how misperceptions may differ for individuals with varying levels of personal alcohol consumption. In his review of the social norms approach (see section 2.9), Berkowitz identified three key misperceptions that may cause students with different levels of consumption to perceive their peers and the larger student community in a manner that influences their behaviour, namely pluralistic ignorance, false consensus and false uniqueness (2004: 7). Additionally, he identified 55 published studies in which the influence of false consensus and pluralistic ignorance have been documented (2004: 9).

2.7.2.1   Pluralistic ignorance

Seen as the most common misperception, '*pluralistic ignorance* is a psychological state characterised by the belief that one's private attitudes and judgements are different from those of others, even though one's public behaviour is identical' (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244). Pluralistic ignorance is when students falsely assume that their peers' attitudes are different from their own, even if in reality they are acting similarly. There is thus a misinterpretation of private attitudes. Under such circumstances, where a difference is perceived between oneself and the attitude of others, people may tend to rely on public behaviour to gain access to the norm. This may often lead them astray, because their perception of the social norm does not accurately reflect the attitude of the majority. Even though a particular individual's drinking behaviour is similar to that

of others in a group, he or she assumes that his/her peers feel differently about the matter than he/she does. Research has also shown that students often perceive other students' actual behaviour as more permissive than their own (e.g. Carey, Borsari, Carey & Maisto, 2007: 391). In the case of student drinking behaviour then, there is a common but false belief among the majority of students that other students have a more permissive attitude towards drinking and thus drink heavier than they themselves do (Berkowitz, 2004: 7). Some researchers also refer to this as positive self-other differences (Carey *et al.*, 2007: 389). The average perceived drinking behaviour of peers is often heavy when, in fact, the majority of college or university students drink moderately, and some do not drink at all (Borsari & Carey, 2003). The consequence of pluralistic ignorance is that the perceived exaggerated norm motivates students to suppress healthier behaviours and attitudes, to engage in more harmful behaviours and to accept unhealthier attitudes that are erroneously perceived as the norm.

2.7.2.2   False consensus

Particularly applicable to heavy drinkers, *false consensus* is the belief of individuals that the behaviour and attitude of others are similar to their own when in reality it is not. Heavy drinkers may therefore wrongly think that the majority of students are, like them, heavy consumers of alcohol. The expectation is therefore that heavier drinkers will observe a smaller difference between their own behaviour and that of others. False consensus serves a personal function for heavy drinkers; it preserves their denial that their behaviour and attitudes are typical and unproblematic. Also referred to as a '*self-serving bias*', this misperception is a means of rationalising alcohol abuse by seeing it as usual, as the norm, and disregarding the possibility of a problem (Berkowitz, 2004: 7).

2.7.2.3   False uniqueness

A phenomenon that abstainers may experience, *false uniqueness,* occurs when a minority of individuals think the difference between others and themselves is larger than it actually is. Abstainers may therefore falsely assume they are relatively unique in their behaviour and attitudes, and underestimate the commonness of conservative drinking behaviour and attitudes (Berkowitz, 2004: 8). As mentioned before, this sense of uniqueness, or put differently, deviance from the norm, is theorised to lead to feelings of alienation. In support of the latter, a study of Canadian students found that non-drinkers and light drinkers who overestimated the drinking norm of students in general were more likely to not feel valued as individuals at their institution, to be unhappy at university/college most of the time, to believe that they did not fit in with other students on campus, and to believe that it was not important to work with other students to improve their institution (Perkins, 2007: 2652).

2.8   CONVERSATION AND PUBLIC PEER BEHAVIOUR

Actions associated with alcohol use are often highly visible and memorable. When one student observes other intoxicated students' actions, he or she might have various opinions. It might be seen as comical, irritating, shocking or even frightening. Nonetheless, the experience is likely to be remembered and, in all probability, more vividly than other campus experiences, especially if the student sees it in a negative light. In social psychology, this tendency to pay extra attention to negative social and environmental information is referred to as *negative bias* (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 59). For example, at a party, sober or light drinkers are not highly visible in comparison to the sometimes extraordinarily jolly and loud heavier consumers of alcohol. In addition, the observer

will not systematically review the number of people intoxicated in comparison to those who only consume lightly to moderately. He/she will fail to attribute equal credence to the general behaviour of students and base the formation of his or her impression of the norm on the discrete but highly memorable occurrences (Perkins, 1997: 190).

The same memorable experiences of the previous night or from throughout the year will serve as topics of conversation with peers and will continuously enjoy prominence in terms of detail and length over other campus-related activities because of its prominence and its perceived social desirability. Language plays a central role in directing and determining social thought. Social reality is understood through the categories language provides and so it forces us to perceive the world in terms of certain expressions. For that reason, language and culture are complicatedly interconnected, the one shapes the other and vice versa. The things people talk about and how they talk about them determine appropriate responses, and in addition, how these things are seen. Conversations are governed by norms but in turn, norms are also perpetuated and maintained via conversation. In short, language shapes perception (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Conversations about the alcohol-related behaviours of friends, large parties where alcohol is present and car accidents involving intoxicated students are regular and popular topics of discussion among students and also enjoy prominent coverage in the media. As a result, conversation about drinking distorts students' perception of actual alcohol use by being overrepresented in everyday student talk and so adding to the perception of heavy drinking and its desirability on campus (Perkins, 1997: 190).

A lack of prominence in conversation regarding alternative behaviours and attitudes strengthen the normative misperceptions of alcohol use. Students do not eagerly introduce comments into conversations about staying sober at social events or of responsible academic behaviour because it is in conflict with the perceived social norm and peers are therefore unlikely to be impressed or to differentially reinforce such conversation. For example, student academic behaviour is not particularly memorable, comical or associated with fun and happiness. In contrast, stories about drinking behaviour are often over exaggerated and dramatized for extra effect to reap maximum social reward (Perkins, 1997: 190).

Social learning theory therefore explains these circumstances of positive social reinforcement, which perpetuates the popularity of these elaborated stories involving intoxication as socially desirable behaviour (Akers *et al.*, 1979: 638). It also explains why students who privately do not agree with such behaviour and conversations about it, would not voice their opinions: drinking is socially defined as normative and desirable, and so these individuals would fear that such actions would lead to social sanctions. For example, one study found that even though some students deviated from the norm, or rather, even though others' attitude was viewed as more permissive than their own, they were unlikely to act on their attitude. This shows how actions in opposition of the perceived social norm are inhibited (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 251, Study 4). Therefore, users and non-users are guilty of preserving behaviour that perpetuates misperceptions. Those with attitudes that are more conservative towards alcohol consumption inadvertently contribute to the social reinforcement for drinking behaviour by humorously engaging with individuals that portray these tales of intoxicated adventures and by again then relaying these stories to other people (Perkins, 1997: 191).

Thus, regardless of students' personal alcohol consumption, they become the producers of misperception (Johannesson *et al.*, 1999: 8). Conversation is therefore a means by which the social acceptability and desirability of alcohol use is portrayed, rewarded and often misperceived. The

misperception leads to its perpetuation and its dominance as normative behaviour. '[T]he process is a complex, self-perpetuating one: misperceptions encourage excessive behaviour, excessive behaviour leads to more problems that are highly visible and widely discussed on campus, and these problems in turn lead to even greater misperceptions' (Perkins, 1997: 192).

Also worth mentioning in this section is the depiction of students as heavy drinkers in the media. Movies and newspapers often stereotypically represent student culture as a heavy-drinking one, making vast generalisations based on opinions that are not founded on representative data. In addition, drinking is often portrayed in media articles, like in Stellenbosch University's student newspaper, *Die Matie*, as a serious problem on campus (e.g. Ramugondo, 2010: 1; I need a buddy, 2009: 1; Kriel, 2008: 6). Furthermore, awareness programmes tend to focus on the negative consequences of heavy drinking. These actions by the media, as well as stereotypes held by general society concerning student drinking, reinforces the perception that drinking is central to the social lives of the majority of students and that there is in fact a drinking problem on campus. Accordingly, social norms theory speculates that such activities by the media contribute to the misperception of a heavier-drinking norm than is actually the case.

In summary then, university culture presents a peer-intensive social environment coupled with a certain perception of an exaggerated drinking norm. As individuals in a post-modern society, students have a subjective choice of how they want to react to this situation. However, is there actually a conscious choice to be made? They observe behaviour; they assume that their observations allow for accurate knowledge of other students dispositions; they perceive similarity or difference between others and themselves and generalise to the majority. However, they most probably misperceive. Through this process, they become aware of cultural expectations from what they perceive as the majority. They think others' behaviour is evidence of those students' internal disposition, a disposition that approves of the perceived culture. Furthermore, they make the mistake of generalising from highly visible and memorable experiences of heavy drinking and assume that that is how the majority behave. They are unaware that other students are also simply conforming to cultural expectations and representing themselves accordingly. Thus, they are unaware that peer behaviour is not necessarily evidence of others' personal attitudes and, in addition, that drinking in general is not as heavy as it seems to be. Consequently, they conform (to whatever degree) and represent themselves as approving of the perceived norm which, with time, might become internalised. In actuality, the majority's internalised version of the culture (their identity) is more moderately orientated and the majority's actual drinking behaviour is more conservative than is perceived. Misperceptions are therefore complicatedly related to the disjuncture between how we see ourselves (our internal view), how we want to represent ourselves socially (our external projection motivated by social reinforcement), how others perceive us and how we perceive others.

Thus far, the probable underlying theories of social norms theory have been presented in extensive detail with the end goal of understanding the cultural context of university life and how it possibly contributes to the formation of misperceptions of peer drinking behaviour. In the next section the social norms approach will be considered as it represents the practical application of the social norms theory that attempts to correct the misperceptions students have of the drinking norm. If students' perception of the norm can be modified to reflect the actual behaviour of their student peers, it may influence their behaviour, possibly decreasing drinking and the negative consequences associated with drinking.

2.9   SOCIAL NORMS THEORY AND APPROACH

As stated before, the basic underlying premise of social norms theory is the notion that the personal behaviour of an individual is influenced by inaccurate perceptions of how members of his or her social/peer group act and think (Berkowitz, 2004: 5). The theory 'describes situations where individuals incorrectly perceive the attitudes and/or behaviour of peers and other community members to be different from their own when in fact, they are not' (Berkowitz, 2005: 193). As described in section 2.7.2.1, this is known as pluralistic ignorance. Usually, these misperceptions occur in association to risky or problem behaviours, which are overestimated, and in association with protective or healthy behaviours, which are underestimated. Accordingly, pluralistic ignorance causes individuals to modify their behaviour to approximate the erroneously perceived norm to a certain extent, which leads to the rationalisation and/or the increased occurrence of the problem behaviour and the suppression of the healthier behaviour (Berkowitz, 194: 2005).

All other factors considered equal, alcohol consumption in itself is not necessarily a problem for students completing their tertiary studies. Students that have light to moderate drinking styles can have just as successful a university career as their non-drinking counterparts, while still enjoying the so-called benefits of drinking that are often mentioned, such as relaxation, increased confidence, meeting friends, camaraderie and romantic encounters. It is however the negative consequences that are often associated with drinking, especially heavy episodic drinking that often borders on alcohol abuse that detrimentally affects students' lives on various levels and is problematic for students and campus culture as a whole.

For example, in their review of national data on the magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among United States college students aged 18 to 24, Hingson *et al.* (2005: 259) found that in 2001, out of a total of 8 894 000 college students, there were 1 700 alcohol-related 'unintentional injury' deaths, 2.8 million students who reported driving under the influence of alcohol, 500 000 students unintentionally injured because of drinking and more than 600 000 who were hit or assaulted by another drinking student. 'College students, who are in an age group that has the highest rate of binge drinking, are at even higher risk for heavy episodic drinking than their peers who do not attend college' (Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995: 921). As mentioned before, there is not much published research on South African university/college drinking and the associated risks. However, a recent survey conducted at Rhodes University sheds some light on the matter within the South African context. Employing the AUDIT classification, Young and De Klerk (2009: 7) found that approximately 50% of students' drinking behaviour could be classified as safe, in comparison to 33% classified as hazardous, 8% classified as harmful and 9% classified as dependent.

The application of social norms theory is known as the *social norms approach,* which is in essence a theory of human behaviour that is applied to health promotion and the prevention of risky behaviour such as heavy alcohol consumption. The approach is applicable to populations where the majority already behave in a healthy manner and/or has healthy attitudes, but pluralistic ignorance is present. The social norms approach then attempts to correct misperceptions of the social norm rather than trying to change harmful or problematic behaviours directly. It therefore attempts to expose and augment existing healthy norms that have thus far been underrated and undermined (Berkowitz, 2005: 195). When the approach was first suggested by Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) it represented a drastic departure from traditional intervention strategies, which primarily focused on providing information about the adverse effects of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and the treatment of problem users. With regards to this, social norms theory

postulates that if an attempt at prevention emphasises the prevalence of problem behaviour and its effects, it may actually contribute to the perception that problem behaviour is worse than it actually is and, in so doing, indirectly contribute to the behaviour itself by legitimising the norm. The social norms approach has been successfully tested in research pertaining to adolescent safe drinking practices, smoking, sexual assault and reducing prejudicial practices (see Berkowitz, 2005b, for a review). However, the largest contribution to the field of social norms research comes from research concerning AOD use. The theory predicts that underestimation of the AOD use norm will discourage problematic behaviour, whereas overestimation will increase this behaviour. For students, perceiving the alcohol use norm as more permissive than it actually is may lead to increased consumption. It may also serve a rationalising function for abusive drinkers to justify their behaviour and/or attitude based on false consensus. On a larger scale, another effect of pluralistic ignorance is to play down the mainstream support for the healthier norm (Berkowitz, 2005: 194). Accordingly, if the misperception of the group norm is corrected, it will result in a reduction of the unhealthy behaviour or an increase in healthy behaviour (Berkowitz, 2004: 5). The basic assumptions of social norms theory is summarised by Berkowitz:

1. *Actions are often based on misinformation about or misperceptions of others' attitudes and/or behaviour.*
2. *When misperceptions are defined or perceived as real, they have real consequences.*
3. *Individuals passively accept misperceptions rather than actively intervene to change them, hiding from others their true perceptions, feeling or beliefs.*
4. *The effects of misperceptions are self-perpetuating, because they discourage the expression of opinions and actions that are falsely believed to be nonconforming, while encouraging problem behaviours that are falsely believed to be normative.*
5. *Appropriate information about the actual norm will encourage individuals to express those beliefs that are consistent with the true, healthier norm, and inhibit problem behaviours that are inconsistent with it.*
6. *Individuals who do not personally engage in the problematic behaviour may contribute to the problem by the way in which they talk about the behaviour. Misperceptions thus function to strengthen beliefs and values that the 'carriers of the misperception' do not themselves hold and contribute to the climate that encourages problem behaviour.*
7. *For a norm to be perpetuated it is not necessary for the majority to believe it, but only for the majority to believe that the majority believes it.*   (2005: 196)

Extensive research suggests that the majority of students overestimate the alcohol use of peers, meaning pluralistic ignorance exists concerning alcohol use on campus (e.g. Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 473; Neighbors *et al.*, 2007: 8). This may have the consequence of supporting the behaviour of students who drink heavily. Secondly, it may motivate light and moderate drinkers to consume more alcohol than they would have otherwise, and thirdly, it may encourage non-consumers to start drinking. False consensus (see section 2.7.2.2) makes heavier drinkers more likely to overestimate the drinking norm, as they wrongly think the majority of other students are similar to themselves. They also use this perception to justify their risky drinking behaviour (Berkowitz, 2005: 194). Moreover, the university context might be especially conducive to influencing perceptions, as it is especially peer-intensive. Research has shown that young people are more inclined to adopt peer attitudes, especially in relation to alcohol and other drug use (Perkins, 1997: 178). Accordingly, as predicted by social norms theory, if interventions are directed at correcting misperceptions by exposing students to the actual healthier norm, the majority will be encouraged either to increase protective or healthy behaviour or to reduce their participation in the potentially harmful behaviour (Berkowitz, 2005: 194).

Approaches for universal (primary), selective (secondary) and indicated (individualized) intervention strategies have been developed from the social norms perspective. *Universal or primary intervention* not only targets individuals at risk, but is directed at a whole population of individuals (Berkowitz, 2004: 16). It usually takes the form of a large-scale social norms marketing campaign, using either electronic or print media, aimed at promoting accurate norms (Berkowitz, 2004: 17). A large-scale study involving 18 tertiary education institutions, especially designed to rigorously test the effectiveness of social norms marketing, concluded that students at test group institutions, where social norms marketing campaigns had been implemented, had a lower risk of drinking than students at the control group institutions (De Jong *et al.*, 2006: 868). *Secondary or selective interventions*, also known as targeted social norm interventions, focus on members of specific subpopulations such as first-year students. The majority of these interventions make use of small, interactive group discussions during which information about the actual group norm is communicated (Berkowitz, 2004: 18). Lastly, during *indicated or individualised social norm interventions*, data about actual norms are presented to alcohol abusers or high-risk drinkers in counselling sessions. Abusers tend to adhere strongly to misperceptions as it serves the purpose of justifying their abuse (Berkowitz, 2004: 21). Of course, in practice these different levels of intervention are not used in isolation, but rather, are combined, as well as used in conjunction with other forms of intervention and education (Berkowitz, 2004: 23).

To illustrate the effect of decreased misperceptions of the drinking norm on students' experience of alcohol-related consequences[6], Perkins *et al.* (2005: 470) examined national data of 130 higher education institutions (N = 76 145) in the United States. The research showed that at institutions where information about prevention was associated with decreased misperceptions, the proportion of students who experienced negative consequences due to drinking was 15% lower and the proportion of students that experienced negative effects to academic performance was 44% lower than schools where information about prevention was not associated with misperceptions (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 475). The study also found that at a third of the higher education institutions, information about prevention was in fact associated with a greater degree of misperception and alcohol-related harm (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 476).

In conclusion, the social norms approach corrects the perception of the norm, showing abstainers, lighter consumers of alcohol and moderate drinkers that they can act true to their private attitudes or at least, that they can be more comfortable with their personal attitudes. However, it also creates a new social norm that influences individuals that have more permissive attitudes, showing them that behavioural change towards the conservative might be ideal within their current social milieu. Our perception of social life functions like a script according to which we act in our social environment. Actors still interpret the script as they like, but they tend to follow the main theme. Consequently, to influence excessive behaviours that have their origin in social misperceptions, one has to provide social actors with the correct information, with a modified script for social interaction. The audience is powerless to influence the actor directly, but if the script is changed, the actor's behaviour will be influenced, because he/she will be forced to reinterpret the script.

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[6] Consequences included physically injuring themselves, or another person, being involved in a fight, forgetting where they were or what they had done, having someone use force or threat of force to have sex with them, or having unprotected sex. The study also investigated the effects of alcohol on academic performance (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 472).

2.10   RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

As became evident through the review of theory, certain aspects are important to understand the role of perception in student drinking culture. Accordingly, the following objectives were condensed from the theory, which consequently guided the development of the survey questionnaire (Appendix 5) and interview schedule (Appendix 9).

i.   *Describe students' personal behaviour on campus*

The first objective of the qualitative and the quantitative research alike is to describe students' personal behaviour. More specifically, one of the main goals of the quantitative research is to establish a norm for students' actual drinking behaviour, their approval of drinking and their academic behaviour for comparison with the perceived behavioural norm of their peers. In addition, a further objective of the quantitative research is to look at students' previous drinking behaviour during high school as well as the negative consequences associated with their current consumption. Qualitative research alternatively needs to look at students' motivations for drinking to grasp the possible importance of peers and perceptions of peer behaviour in motivations.

ii.   *Determine whether students perceive a difference between their personal behaviour and the norm*

Knowing what is normative on campus in terms of alcohol consumption, approval of consumption and academic behaviour, the main objective of the quantitative research is to compare the actual norm with the perceived norm for these behaviours and to investigate whether students perceive themselves as different from the norm. Furthermore, as research reflects a significant reference group interaction, differences need to be investigated for various reference groups. In relation to this, qualitative research will more generally explore individual perceptions of peer behaviour and how these perceptions are formulated.

iii.   *Investigate the relationship between personal behaviour and the perceived difference from the norm*

If significant differences exist between the actual norm and the perceived norm, a subsequent objective would be to investigate how these perceived self-other differences relate to personal alcohol consumption, i.e. how perceived self-other differences might influence personal behaviour. An additional objective is to explore how the perceived self-other differences in terms of academic behaviour also relate to students' own academic behaviour. The latter objective was deemed necessary due to the relatively unexplored nature of perceptions of academic behaviour.

iv.   *Explore students' general perceptions of peer behaviour and conversation*

Theory and research attribute significant importance to the influence of peers within the university's social context. As such, a general objective of the qualitative research is to engage with students concerning the general socialisation processes they experience within the university environment. In this regard, the possible role of conversation has been recognised as of particular importance by the theory.

v. ***Explore other perceptions concerning the university context***

The literature review identified peers and the perception of their behaviour as possibly the most influential factor impacting on students' personal behaviour. However, in line with Bourdieu's theory of the continuous and reciprocal influence of habitus and field, or the constant socialising influences from various sources in an individual's life, one objective of predominantly the qualitative research is to explore other perceptions concerning the university context. More specifically, students were questioned about their perceptions of student drinking before coming to university as well as their precedent perceptions of the role of alcohol consumption in student life. Another objective is to explore the individuals' idea of the public perception of students. Perceptions of the student carnival, known as RAG, as an introduction to campus culture for first-year students is possibly an important factor in the formation of perceptions regarding student drinking norms. Lastly, student perceptions of the current status of prevention and intervention programmes at Stellenbosch University need to be explored. The latter also concerns students' perceptions of Stellenbosch University's concern about student drinking behaviour.

vi. ***Investigate the role of perceptions in personal drinking behaviour in the context of other factors***

The final and most important goal of the quantitative research is to test the relative importance of perception (cognitive) variables in students' personal consumption when the influence of other factors is accounted for. These factors can be classified into three broad categories, namely demographic factors, life experiences and situational/contextual factors.

CHAPTER 3　　　RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1　　INTRODUCTION

In addressing the objectives of this study, I decided to employ a quantitative methodology supplemented by qualitative research. Quantitative research is typically used to answer research questions where the scope of a social occurrence is of importance and/or when the researcher wants to test a specific theory, whereas qualitative research is generally used to obtain a deeper understanding of social phenomena and/or explore new areas of research. More specifically, for the current research, a survey was necessary in order to establish trends within the student population with regard to actual behaviour and normative perceptions. Semi-structured personal interviews facilitated the understanding of the role drinking and perceptions play in the everyday life of individual students. By employing this multifaceted research methodology, the need for generalisability was satisfied with the added advantage of contextual understanding.

3.2　　QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

3.2.1　　POPULATION AND SAMPLE DESIGN

The study population represented all full-time, undergraduate students enrolled for the academic year of 2009, who studied at the main campus of Stellenbosch University (i.e. in the town of Stellenbosch). This represents a population size of 15 463 students (based on the June 2009 student records). From this population 3 177 (21%) student e-mail addresses were randomly selected by an official of Stellenbosch University[7]. A simple random selection technique was applied.

3.2.2　　DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was facilitated by the use of a structured questionnaire (see Appendix 5) that was specifically developed for the purpose of the research. An electronic survey was conducted in the form of a computerised self-administered questionnaire (CSAQ). This specific method of data collection requires respondents with an adequate level of literacy and computer literacy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 259). Students meet both these criteria. The vast majority of the student population has access to internet and e-mail as they are expected to make use of these online tools for everyday academic responsibilities. Research in the United States indicates that 86% of college students go online and 72% check their e-mail at least once daily (De Jong, 2008: 6). In addition, the electronic infrastructure necessary to conduct such a large-scale survey, namely a web-based survey program, is in place at Stellenbosch University. The use of the electronic survey method has been found to be both cost effective and less time consuming than traditional forms of data collection. Additionally, a quantitative survey design has the added benefit of generalisability, depending on the response rate achieved and the socio-demographic composition of the sample (see section 3.2.4).

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[7] Stellenbosch University controls access to student records and did not allow invitations to be sent to all students. The student population is continuously confronted by invitations to participate in online surveys, which may lead to research fatigue. It is therefore necessary to limit students' exposure to research.

The web-based survey software, *Checkbox*, was employed to facilitate the complete quantitative data-capturing process by allowing me to invite students to participate in the survey, to design and administer the questionnaire and to monitor responses. The electronic version of the questionnaire was piloted among a group of eight sociology Honours students. The pilot test took the form of computer-assisted self-interviews (CASIs). Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire on a computer, under the same circumstances respondents in the survey would be required to. It served the function of identifying difficulties respondents may experience in understanding and answering the questionnaire. During their completion of the questionnaire, students could ask questions about items they were uncertain about and indicate which items they struggled to understand and/or with which they had any specific problem. The completion of the questionnaire was followed by a discussion to establish how respondents had experienced the questionnaire, what they found difficult and what they thought could be improved. The questionnaire was consequently modified according to the feedback received.

Potential survey respondents were approached via an e-mail invitation (see Appendix 3), explaining the research, its objectives and their role. This invitation to participate in the study was sent to each of the 3 177 sampled students. As an incentive, respondents stood in line to win a cash prize of a R1 000 in a lucky draw competition. Both the invitation and questionnaire were available in Afrikaans and English.

Students were guided through the questionnaire by instructions and had the opportunity to save and exit the questionnaire at any time. This allowed them to return at a later stage to complete the questionnaire. Filters and validation rules ensured that no questions were left unanswered and that only questions relevant to each respondent were available to be completed. After students finished the questionnaire, they were prompted to click on a link that would take them to a separate online page. Once there, students were given the option to indicate if they wanted to participate in further research on student drinking behaviour, if they wanted to be included in the lucky draw and if they wanted to receive an electronic copy of the research report via e-mail. They could subsequently provide their contact details if they had indicated yes to any of these options.

The two datasets (question answers and contact details) were separately stored in an electronic database on a secure server from which the *Checkbox* program operates. Since data were directly captured via the survey program, no additional manual data input were required, minimising the error traditionally associated with this task.

3.2.3   ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

On 23 September 2009, a participation teaser (see Appendix 2) was sent to the sampled students. The participation 'teaser' served the purpose of informing students of the invitation e-mail they would receive in the coming week. In addition, it included a link to the informed consent document, which contained information regarding procedures of the study and students' participation. The same link was included in the invitation e-mail. The use of participation teasers is common in mailing surveys (e.g. De Jong *et al.*, 2006: 870; Campo, Brossard, Frazer, Marchell, Lewis & Janes, 2003: 486).

On 28 September 2009, the invitation e-mail was sent to the 3 177 students in the sample, and 350 students completed the survey questionnaire within the first week. After a week (on 5 October 2009), a first reminder was sent to all respondents who had not yet completed the

questionnaire. Another 146 students completed the survey in the following week. A week later a second reminder was sent, after which a further 94 students completed the questionnaire. A third and final reminder was sent another week later (20 October 2009) and 50 more students completed the survey. The survey was deactivated on 27 October, a month after it was launched. A total of 640 respondents completed the questionnaire (i.e. a response rate of 20%). Figure 3 graphically represents survey responses per day during the course of the survey period, also referred to as response rate graph (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 260). It also illustrates the importance and need for reminders, a common practice in surveys of this nature (e.g. De Jong *et al.*, 2006: 870). Students may often forget about invitations, due to the unavailability of time to immediately complete a lengthy survey, or alternatively, some may require further motivation to take part. As can be seen, on the days reminders were sent, the number of responses increased substantially from the day before and then gradually tapered down as the days passed.

Of the 640 respondents, 22% (143) indicated they would like to participate in further research, 91% (583) indicated they would like to be part of the lucky draw and 69% (444) indicated they would like to receive an electronic copy of the research report via e-mail.

Figure 3: Survey responses per day
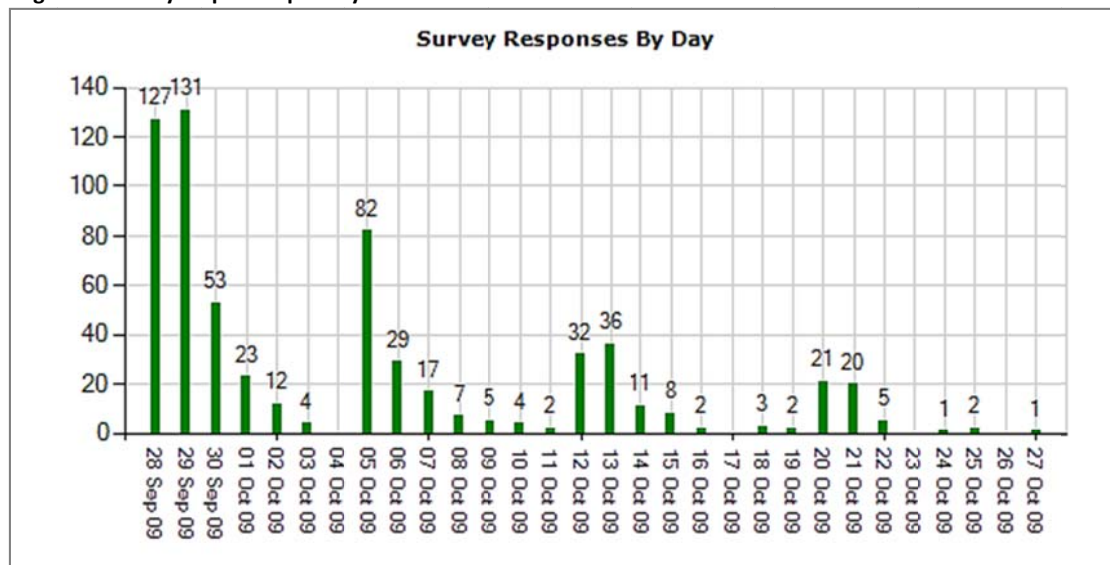
3.2.4 SAMPLE VERIFICATION

Sample verification served the purpose of comparing the sample respondents with the student population in terms of the available socio-demographic variables to establish to what degree the sample deviates from the population. The June 2009 records of the student population were compared to respondents in the survey in terms of gender, race, home language, age, type of residence, faculty and study year. Some variables in the survey had to be transformed to enable comparison with university record categories. For the purpose of sample verification, the student population is defined as all registered undergraduate students studying at the main campus of Stellenbosch University at the beginning of June 2009. The population excludes students from the Military Academy, as these students were not included in the sample.

The sample statistics, with the exception of age and type of residence, do not differ significantly from the student population (Table 1). More particularly, the distribution of survey respondents is proportionately similar (not more than 4% difference) to the student population in terms of

gender, race, home language, faculty and first year status. In terms of age, students that are 19 or younger are underrepresented by 8%, whereas those aged between 20 and 24 are overrepresented by 8%. Regarding type of residence, students living in university student houses are overrepresented by 4%, whereas students residing privately are underrepresented by 8%. In terms of these socio-demographic variables, the sample appears to be fairly representative of the larger population. Consequently, weighting of the data was not considered.

Table 1: Comparison between survey respondents and the general student population in terms of gender, race, home language, age, type of residence, faculty and first year status

		Survey respondents		Student population	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	293	45.8%	7 404	47.9%
	Female	347	54.2%	8 059	52.1%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
Race	Black	29	4.5%	714	4.6%
	Coloured	76	11.9%	2 456	15.9%
	White	527	82.3%	12 064	78.0%
	Indian/Asian	8	1.3%	229	1.5%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
Home language	Afrikaans	421	65.8%	9 504	61.5%
	English	176	27.5%	4 784	30.9%
	Afrikaans/English[8]	.	.	517	3.3%
	IsiXhosa	9	1.4%	160	1.0%
	Other official South African languages	10	1.6%	262	1.7%
	Other	24	3.8%	236	1.5%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
Age	19 or younger	181	28.3%	5 671	36.7%
	20 to 24	433	67.7%	9 231	59.7%
	25 to 29	20	3.1%	441	2.9%
	30 or older	6	.9%	120	.8%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
Type of residence	University residence (koshuis)	284	44.4%	6 582	42.6%
	University student housing	36	5.6%	258	1.7%
	Private residence	234	36.6%	6 819	44.1%
	Family home (parents)	86	13.4%	1 804	11.7%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
Faculty	Faculty of Agri Sciences	33	5.2%	1 024	6.6%
	Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences	155	24.2%	4 526	29.3%
	Faculty of Health Sciences	66	10.3%	1 730	11.2%
	Faculty of Engineering	104	16.3%	1 943	12.6%
	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	130	20.3%	3 282	21.2%
	Faculty of Science	88	13.8%	1 748	11.3%
	Faculty of Education	28	4.4%	667	4.3%
	Faculty of Law	28	4.4%	412	2.7%
	Theology	8	1.3%	126	.8%
	Other	.	.	5	.0%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%
First year status	First year	183	28.6%	4 222	27.3%
	Non-first year undergraduate	457	71.4%	11 241	72.7%
	Total	640	100.0%	15 463	100.0%

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[8] Student records take account of students that have both English and Afrikaans as their home languages, whereas the survey did not consider this possibility.

3.2.5 OPERATIONALISATION

The survey questionnaire consisted of 54 questions. The inclusion of items in the questionnaire was directed by the problem statement and includes items from existing surveys on the topic and new items.

Due to the complexity of the social phenomena of drinking behaviour, approval of drinking behaviour and academic behaviour, multiple indicators were used to measure these concepts. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 136, 137). For instance, in the case of drinking behaviour, if students are only asked about the quantity of alcohol they consume and not the frequency, the picture provided by the results may be incomplete. The students may indicate that they usually consume 15 drinks, which might seem like a dangerously high amount per occasion. However, if then asked about the monthly frequency of that consumption, they may indicate that they only drink that amount once a month, which obviously changes the interpretation of the severity of the drinking behaviour. However, using multiple indicators in an analysis is often unnecessarily repetitive, as statistical tests have to be conducted with each indicator. Furthermore, each individual indicator does not reflect the complexity and the variation of the concept as well as all of the indicators together would. To solve this, multiple indicators are often combined to form a composite measure of a certain concept known as an index. Indicators for actual and perceived norms for drinking behaviour, attitude towards drinking behaviour and academic behaviour, and alcohol-related negative consequences due to own behaviour and others' behaviour were all selected with index construction in mind. Two criteria to be considered for measurement quality are validity and reliability. All indexes were subjected to principal component analysis to test their internal validity. To test the reliability of the consequent index, indicators were subjected to reliability analysis with the use of Cronbach's alpha (see section 3.2.6).

Variables for inclusion in the questionnaire were distinguished according to four broad themes, namely socio-demographic factors, life experiences, contextual factors and cognitive factors.

3.2.5.1 Demographic factors
❖ *Gender (Q2)*
❖ *Age (Q24)*
❖ *Home language (Q27)*
❖ *Race/Population group (Q28)*
❖ *Body mass index (height, Q25; weight Q26)*
❖ *Religiosity (attendance, Q39; affiliation, Q40)*
❖ *Money available per month to spend on personal interests (Q42)*
❖ *Money spent per drinking occasion (Q23)*

3.2.5.2 Life experiences
❖ *Age started drinking (drank one whole drink for first time) (Q4)*
❖ *High-school level of alcohol consumption (Q9)*
❖ *Family drinking problems (Q43)*
❖ *High school academic performance (Q34)*
❖ *Age first drank heavily (5 drinks or more for males, Q7; 4 drinks or more for females, Q8)*

3.2.5.3 Situational/Contextual factors

❖ *Type of residence (Q30)*

❖ *University residence/hostel (male, Q32; female, Q33)*

❖ *Residence location (Q29)*

❖ *Type of co-residents (Q31)*

❖ *Average academic performance (Q64)*

❖ *Historical year of study at Stellenbosch University (Q35)*

❖ *Faculty (Q37)*

❖ *Relationship status (Q38)*

❖ *Employment status (Q41)*

Measures of students' own behaviour (i.e. the actual norm) was also classified as contextual factors. These include:

❖ *Personal drinking behaviour*

Personal drinking is defined as students' own self-reported drinking behaviour and has two dimensions, namely frequency and quantity. Abstainers were seen as students that did not usually consume a whole drink during the year they completed the survey (2009). In line with other research, one alcoholic drink was defined as a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, or a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (adapted from Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt & Lee, 1998: 58). Furthermore, for this study, alcohol consumption in the presence of other students or friends was important as the research is mainly interested in the social influences on personal drinking. As such, the definition of alcohol consumption was limited to include only the instances where it took place in the presence of friends/co-students.

○ *Average consumption,* i.e. the average number of alcoholic drinks students usually have per drinking occasion, while with friends. The first four response options for this measure were: *I don't drink at all, I didn't drink this year, I don't usually drink,* and *I usually only have a few sips,* all of which were treated as abstinence during analysis. This was followed by a 15-point drinks scale, ranging from *1 drink* to *at least 15 drinks* (Q14).

○ *Typical year frequency of average consumption*, i.e. how often in the current year students drank the average number of alcoholic drinks (or more) that they indicated as their *average consumption* (from Q14). The indicator consisted of a 10-point scale, ranging from 0 (*once or twice this year*) to 9 (*every day*) (Q15).

○ *30-day frequency of average consumption,* i.e. the number of days in the past 30 days students drank the average number of alcoholic drinks (or more) that they indicated as their *average consumption* (from Q14). The indicator consisted of a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*0 days*) to 6 (*all 30 days*) (Q16).

○ *Typical weekly frequency of average consumption*, i.e. how many days in a typical week students usually consume the average number of alcoholic drinks (or more) that they indicated as their *average consumption* (from Q14). The indicator consisted of an 8-point scale ranging from 0 (*zero days)* to 7 (*seven days*) (Q17).

○ *Typical weekly consumption,* i.e. the average number of drinks consumed for every day in a typical week. Categories ranged from Monday to Sunday and response items ranged from 0 (*0 drinks*) to 15 (*15 or more*) (Q18) (adapted from the Daily Drinking Questionnaire [DDQ] developed by Collins, Parks and Marlatt [1985], also used among others by

Neighbors *et al.* [2007, 2004]; Carey, *et al.* [2006], Neighbors, Dillard, Lewis, Bergstrom & Neil [2006]).

- o *Two-week binge frequency*, i.e. the number of times students have had five or more alcoholic drinks (men) or four or more alcoholic drinks (women) in the past two weeks. Indicator consisted of a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*none*) to 5 (*10 or more times*) (male, Q19; female, Q20). The term binge drinking is defined as 'the consumption of a sufficiently large amount of alcohol to place the drinker at increased risk of experiencing alcohol-related problems and to place others at risk of experiencing second-hand effects' (Wechsler & Nelson, 2001: 287). Internationally it is known as the five/four measure, conceptualised as consuming five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past two weeks for men, and four or more drinks in a row for women.

With the use of piping[9] in the electronic questionnaire, students responses to the question regarding their average consumption was piped into questions regarding their frequency of that average consumption for the past year, past 30 days and weekly.

- ❖ *Personal approval of drinking behaviour*

Personal approval is defined as students' self-reported personal attitude towards drinking behaviour. The measurements of students' own approval of drinking was adapted from similar items used in other research on this topic. Students' personal approval drinking was measured by two questions:

- o The first question consisted of a list of five statements about alcohol consumption, with an increasingly permissive attitude associated with each statement. Students needed to select the statement that best represented their own attitude. Response items ranged from 0 (*drinking is never a good thing to do*) to 4 (*frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do*) (Q12) (Core Institute, 2010; Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986).
- o The second question consisted of a list of four situations (drinking every weekend, drinking daily, drinking before driving, drinking enough to pass out) and asked students to indicate their approval for each situation on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disapprove*) to 6 (*strongly approve*) (Q13) (developed by Baer [1994], also used by Neighbors *et al.*, 2007).

In relation to students' own approval of drinking, survey respondents were also questioned about their opinion of the appropriate drinking behaviour for university students, which was measured by two indicators, both similar to the '*average consumption*' and the '*typical weekly frequency of average consumption*' indicators employed to measure actual drinking behaviour:

- o *Opinion of appropriate average consumption,* i.e. the average number of alcoholic drinks students deem appropriate for university students to usually consume per drinking occasion, while with friends. Response items were a 16-point drinks scale ranging from *0 drinks / students should not drink* to *at least 15 drinks* (Q10).
- o *Opinion of the appropriate typical weekly frequency of average consumption,* i.e. how many days in a typical week students deem it appropriate for university students to usually consume the average amount of alcoholic drinks (or more) that they selected as the appropriate average consumption for university students in Q10. The indicator

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[9] This term refers to a functionality of the electronic survey software to insert selected response categories from previous questions in the question text of subsequent questions in the survey.

consisted of an 8-point scale ranging from 0 (*no days [students should not usually drink]*) *to 7* (*seven days*) (Q11).

❖ *Personal academic behaviour*

Actual academic behaviour is defined as students' self-reported personal academic behaviour. New indicators were developed for the measurement of students' own academic behaviour and looked at the extent to which students fulfil academic roles. Indicators took into account class attendance (Q56), contribution of class attendance towards academic performance (Q57), effort put into course work (Q58), performance in class/ predicate/progress marks and tests/exams (Q59), how hard students study for exams (Q60), marks they strived for (Q62) and marks they received (Q61; Q63). These indicators had four to five response items, each of which ranged from the most conservative (e.g. worked very hard) to most permissive (e.g. did not work hard at all) academic behaviour.

❖ *Alcohol-related consequences due to own drinking*

To construct an index of negative consequences due to personal drinking, a list of 17 possible effects of alcohol abuse was constructed (adapted from Perkins *et al.*, 1996: 5; Core Institute, 2009). Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they experienced each consequence in the current year. For every consequence (indicator), a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*10 or more times*) was provided (Q21; Q22)[10].

❖ *Campus situation concerning alcohol use*

Indicators took into account students' awareness of an alcohol policy and its enforcement at Stellenbosch University as well as the university's concern about alcohol use and the implementation of prevention programmes (Q79; adapted from Core survey; Core Institute, 2010).

3.2.5.4   Cognitive factors

Cognitive factors represent student perceptions of peer behaviour (i.e. the perceived norm).

❖ *Descriptive drinking norm*

The descriptive drinking norm is defined as students' perception of the drinking behaviour of other students and, similar to the actual norm, has two dimensions, namely frequency and quantity. Apart from one question, students' perception of others drinking was measured by the same indicators as their own drinking behaviour, with the difference that questions were related to five reference groups, namely close friends, students in general, males in general, females in general and co-residents[11]. These reference groups have also been used in other research on the subject matter. Students were not questioned about the perceived 'typical year frequency of average consumption' of their peers. This indicator largely served as a filter question for subsequent questions regarding personal alcohol use. Filtering was not necessary for questions regarding the perception of other students' drinking behaviour, as these questions were asked to all students.

❖ *Injunctive drinking norm*

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[10] Positive consequences of alcohol use were not subject to investigation. The purpose of intervention strategies is to influence peoples' lives in a positive way, and to do this, it is not necessary to know how certain behaviours influence students' lives positively.
[11] Questions regarding the drinking behaviour of co-residents were only asked to students who reside in a university residence or university student housing.

The injunctive drinking norm is defined as students' perception of the attitude of other students towards drinking. Perceptions of other students' attitude towards drinking were measured by the same two questions used to measure personal attitude towards drinking. Questions were again directed at a range of reference groups, namely close friends, students in general, co-residents and parents.

❖ *Descriptive academic norm*

The descriptive academic norm is defined as students' perception of the academic behaviour of other students. More specifically, the extent to which students perceive other students as fulfilling academic roles. The perception of other students' academic behaviour was measured with the same 6-indicator index as personal academic behaviour. Questions were related to three reference groups, namely close friends, fellow students in their course and students in general.

❖ *Perceived alcohol-related consequences due to other students' drinking*

The question lists six possible secondary consequences due to other students' drinking and asks students to indicate how often each interferes with their life on campus (Q55). The response items for each consequence range from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*) (adapted from CORE survey; Core Institute, 2009).

3.2.5.5   Self-other differences

Additional to these factors, self-other differences (SODs) are calculated by subtracting the values of students' actual behaviour from the descriptive and injunctive norm. In this manner, a variable is created that reflects the degree of difference between actual and perceived behaviour. In addition, SODs are differentiated in terms of positive and negative SODs. For instance, in the case of number of alcoholic drinks, students that have a negative SOD for a given reference group, have the perception that other students drink less than they personally do. Alternatively, students that have a positive SOD, have the perception that other students drink more than they do. Therefore, a negative SOD indicates a perception that other students' behaviour/attitude is more conservative than their own, whereas positive SODs indicate a perception that other students' behaviour/attitude is more permissive (Carey *et al.*, 2007: 389). In the case of drinking behaviour, a convergence on zero from either side indicates a smaller perceived difference between personal drinking and the perceived drinking of peers. An SOD of zero indicates no difference between personal behaviour and perceived behaviour. Furthermore, as the absolute values of negative SODs increase from zero, the perception that you drink more than others increases. On the contrary, as the absolute values of positive SODs increase from zero the perception that others drink more than yourself increases.

3.2.6   INDEX CONSTRUCTION

To capture the variability of abstract and complex concepts such as attitude towards drinking, multiple indicators are often necessary. As described in the previous section, indexes (based on scores on multiple indicators) were used to measure drinking behaviour, attitude towards drinking, academic behaviour, alcohol-related consequences due to own alcohol consumption and the perceived alcohol-related consequences due to others' alcohol consumption. The reliability and validity of these indexes is discussed in this section.

Principal component analysis (PCA)[12], a statistical procedure, was employed to establish whether and what linear components exist within the data and how each variable (or indicator) might contribute to each component (Field, 2009: 638). In other words, this analysis tests whether there is more than one factor underlying the chosen variables and to what degree the variables contribute to the same factor or different factors.

Reliability analysis and PCA are often conducted together, as PCA validates a measure and reliability analysis checks the reliability of a measure. Reliability analysis tests whether a measure (or a collection of indicators) consistently reflects the theoretical construct that it is designed to quantify. According to Field (2009: 674), '[i]n statistical terms, the usual way to look at reliability is based on the idea that individual items (or sets of items) should produce results consistent with the overall questionnaire [or index/scale]'.

Indicators that do not contribute to the underlying component(s) were identified through PCA and removed. The reliability of the remaining indicators was then tested. If any indicator significantly decreased the reliability of the overall index, it was removed. In case of the latter, the index was subjected to another round of PCA followed by another reliability analysis to ensure that the removal of an indicator did not influence the underlying component(s). The indicators that contributed to each underlying component were then summed or averaged to form a composite or average score for each measure.

To facilitate comparison, the same indicators identified during the PCA and reliability analysis of the actual norm indicators were used for the construction of the perceived norm indexes[13].

3.2.6.1   The drinking behaviour index[14]

Table 2: Correlation matrix for drinking behaviour indicators

	Average number of drinks consumed per typical week	Average alcohol consumption per drinking occasion while with friends	Past 30-day frequency of average alcohol consumption	Typical week frequency of average alcohol consumption
Average number of drinks consumed per typical week	1.00	.64***	.58***	.60***
Average alcohol consumption per drinking occasion while with friends.	640	1.00	.34***	.32***
30-day frequency of average alcohol consumption	640	640	1.00	.68***
Typical week frequency of average alcohol consumption	640	640	640	1.00

*p <.05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)

Two measures of the level of alcohol consumption and the frequency of alcohol consumption were included in the survey questionnaire to develop a composite measure for the latent variable 'drinking behaviour'. Because the four variables used different measures, all variables were

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[12] PCA is also sometimes referred to as factor analysis. Strictly speaking it is not, although the two procedures often yield similar results (Field, 2009: 638).

[13] De Jong *et al.* (2006: 871) also made use of similar measures for both actual and perceived behaviour to construct a composite drinking scale and a normative perception scale.

[14] Only average consumption, '30-day frequency of average alcohol consumption', 'typical week frequency of average alcohol consumption' and 'typical weekly consumption' was included in this analysis.

transformed to a score out of 100, which was then entered into the PCA[15]. Table 2 represents the correlation matrix for the four variables based on the survey results.

The analysis revealed that one component had an eigenvalue larger than Kaizer's criterion of one and it explained 63% of the variance. This indicated that all indicators in the drinking behaviour index measured the same underlying dimension. Due to only one component being extracted, no rotation took place. Table 3 shows factor loadings. Subsequently, a reliability analysis of the indicators was carried out and the test indicated that the drinking behaviour index showed good reliability, Cronbach's α = .74

Table 3: Summary of exploratory factor analysis results of drinking behaviour index (N = 530)

	Factor loadings
	Drinking behaviour
Average number of drinks consumed per typical week	.91
Average alcohol consumption per drinking occasion while with friends	.79
Typical week frequency of average alcohol consumption	.75
30-day frequency of average alcohol consumption	.72
Eigenvalue	2.52
% of variance	63.10
α	.74

After PCA, an average score for the four drinking behaviour indicators was calculated and a Pearson correlation was conducted between the composite drinking behaviour score and the four indicators out of which it is comprised. All the relationships were significant. However, the highest correlation was found with the '*average number of drinks consumed per typical week*' indicator, r = .84, p < .01. Consequently, the decision was made to use the original '*average number of drinks consumed per typical week'* indicator for further analysis, as it refers to actual drinks, which would be practically more useful for analysis and interpretation than abstract scores. This measure has also been used widely within research on student drinking elsewhere (DDQ, Carey, *et al.*, 2007; Neighbors, *et al.*, 2004, 2006, 2007; Collins, *et al.*, 1985) and has been proven to have both good reliability (test-retest) and convergent validity with other measures of drinking (Neighbors *et al.*, 2004, 2006; Borsari, & Carey, 2000; Baer, Stacy & Larimer, 1991).

3.2.6.2   Index of alcohol-related negative consequences

Seventeen indicators of the negative effects of alcohol consumption were included in the survey questionnaire to develop a composite measure of the latent variable of 'negative effects due to drinking behaviour'. A PCA was conducted on the 17 items with oblique rotation[16] (direct oblimin)[17]. The initial analysis revealed that four components had eigenvalues larger than Kaiser's

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[15]The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .625 ('mediocre' according to Field, 2009: 659). In addition, all KMO values for individual items were above the proposed limit of .05. Lastly, Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (6) = 1046.2, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

[16] The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .87 ('great' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .79, well above the proposed limit of .05. Lastly, Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (136) = 3184.24, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

[17] Two types of rotation can be employed with PCA, namely orthogonal or oblique. The choice between the two methods of rotation depends on whether there are theoretical grounds to expect factors to be independent (orthogonal) or related (oblique). In this case, factors are expected to be correlated.

criterion of one and cumulatively they explained 58% of the variance. Therefore, PCA revealed that there were four underlying dimensions for the negative effects of alcohol consumption. However, after a reliability analysis was conducted separately on each of the four components, an indicator (*'thought I might have a drinking problem'*) from one of the components was identified that negatively affected Cronbach's α. After its removal, a PCA was conducted again.

Table 4: Summary of exploratory factor analysis results of the index of alcohol-related negative consequences (N = 530)

	Rotated factor loadings		
	Consequences for oneself: physical effects and illicit drug use	Irresponsible behaviour involving/affecting others: sexual behaviour/abuse, property damage, problems with authorities	Consequences of an academic nature
Got sick or vomited	**.79**	-.12	-.01
Passed out	**.70**	.08	-.06
Had a hangover	**.67**	-.13	-.34
Had memory loss: forgot where you were or what you did	**.63**	-.01	-.30
Used marijuana or other drugs while drinking or drunk	**.57**	.26	.13
Got into an argument or fight	**.50**	.37	.05
Engaged in unplanned sexual activity	.11	**.80**	.04
Did not use protection when you had (unplanned) sex	.01	**.79**	.03
Have been taken advantage of sexually	.03	**.63**	-.03
Damaged property, pulled fire alarm, etc.	.03	**.55**	-.10
Been in trouble with police, residence, or other university authorities	-.15	**.49**	-.32
Fallen behind in course work	.12	.11	**-.74**
Missed a class / did not meet an assignment deadline	.26	-.04	**-.73**
Performed poorly on a test or important project	-.04	.14	**-.73**
Eigenvalue	5.08	1.64	1.07
% of variance	36.25	11.74	7.77
α	.80	.73	.76

Note: Factor loadings larger than .40 appear in bold

Subsequently, only three factors had eigenvalues larger than Kaiser's criterion of one and cumulatively they explained 53% of the variance[18]. As a result of the removal of one of the indicators, the PCA consequently only found three underlying dimensions. After the inspection of factor loadings, two indicators (*'driven a car while under the influence or with someone that was under the influence'* and *'did something you later regretted'*) loaded almost equally on two components. I decided to remove these two indicators, as they did not clearly contribute to the measurement of only one component. The final three components explained 56% of the variance[19]. Table 4 represents the factor loadings after rotation for the final PCA.

The items that cluster on the same components seem to suggest three broad dimensions of the negative consequences due to personal alcohol consumption, namely, 'Consequences for oneself: physical effects and illicit drug use', 'Irresponsible behaviour involving/affecting others: sexual

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[18] For the remaining 16 variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .88 ('great' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .7, above the proposed limit of .05. Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (120) = 3060.639, $p <$ .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

[19] For the remaining 14 variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .86 ('great' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .7, above the proposed limit of .05. Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (91) = 2560.55, $p <$ .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

behaviour/abuse, property damage, problems with authorities' and 'Consequences of an academic nature'. The consequent reliability analysis of these factors and their indicators revealed no more variables that largely affected Cronbach's α negatively. All three factors display good reliability (Cronbach's α > .7).

Subsequently, the mean of the identified indicators of each component was calculated to serve as respondents score for each of the dimensions, which was then used separately for analysis.

3.2.6.3 Approval of drinking index

Five measures of students' approval of drinking were included in the survey questionnaire to develop a composite measure for the latent variable of 'approval of drinking'. A PCA was conducted on the five items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin)[20]. All variables were again transformed to scores out of 100, as one of the indicators was measured differently than the remaining four. Table 5 represents the correlation matrix for the five variables.

Table 5: Correlation matrix for approval of drinking indicators

		Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption best represents your own personal attitude?	How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about :			
			Drinking every weekend	Drinking daily	Drinking before driving	Drinking enough to pass out
Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption best represents your own personal attitude?		1.00	.55**	.35**	.36**	.51**
How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about :	Drinking every weekend	640	1.00	.51**	.36**	.42**
	Drinking daily	640	640	1.00	.30**	.35**
	Drinking before driving	640	640	640	1.00	.35**
	Drinking enough to pass out	640	640	640	640	1.00

*p <.05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)

One component had an eigenvalue larger than Kaizer's criterion of one, which explained 53% of the variance. This indicates that all indicators in the index measure the same underlying dimension. The scree plot showed inflexions that supported the Kaizer's criterion and consequently only one component was retained. Due to only one component being extracted, no rotation took place. Table 6 shows factor loadings without rotation. Reliability analysis revealed that the index had relatively good reliability, Cronbach's α = .76.

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[20]The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .79 ('good' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .75, well above the proposed limit of .05. Lastly, Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (10) = 788.90, $p <$ .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

Table 6: Summary of exploratory factor analysis results of the approval of drinking index (N = 640)

	Factor loadings
Indicators	Drinking attitude
How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about : Drinking every weekend	.80
Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption best represents your own personal attitude?	.78
How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about : Drinking enough to pass out	.73
How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about : Drinking daily	.68
How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about : Drinking before driving	.63
Eigenvalue	2.63
% of variance	52.52
α	.77

3.2.6.4 The academic behaviour index

For developing a composite measure for the latent variable of 'academic behaviour', eight measures of students' academic behaviour were included in the survey questionnaire. A PCA was conducted on the eight items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). All variables were standardised to a score out of 10 as indicators were measured differently. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed low correlations between most indicators (majority < .3). Two items with very low correlations were identified and subsequently removed from the PCA[21].

Table 7: Correlation matrix for academic behaviour indicators

	In the previous semester, how hard did you generally work on course work (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?	If you think about your class/ predicate/ progress marks (average for all modules) for last semester, would you say your marks are generally:	In general, how hard did you study for exams in the previous semester?	How would you describe the overall performance marks (average for all modules) you received after the previous semester?
In the previous semester, how hard did you generally work on course work (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?	1.00	.34***	.53***	.31***
If you think about your class/predicate/ progress marks (average for all modules) for last semester, would you say your marks are generally:	637	1.00	.24***	.84***
In general, how hard did you study for exams in the previous semester?	628	627	1.00	.30***
How would you describe the overall performance marks (average for all modules) you received after the previous semester?	628	627	628	1.00

*p <.05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*

Two components had eigenvalues larger than Kaiser's criterion of one and cumulatively they explained 68% of the variance. The scree plot supported the extraction of two components. According to which indicators cluster together, it was determined that components represent academic performance and academic effort. After a reliability analysis was conducted on the

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[21] For the remaining six variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .71 ('good' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .6, above the proposed limit of .05. Lastly, Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (15) = 1453.98, ρ < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

indicators of two components separately, one item from each component was identified that negatively affected Cronbach's α. After their subsequent removal, the PCA was conducted again[22]. Table 7 represents the correlation matrix for the remaining four variables.

The second PCA revealed that two components had eigenvalues larger than Kaizer's criterion of one and together they explained 84% of the variance. Table 8 shows the factor loadings from the PCA after rotation. The academic performance subscale had a high reliability, Cronbach's α = .91. The academic effort subscale had a relatively good reliability, Cronbach's α = .69. The personal academic behaviour variables were subsequently scored by calculating the mean for the indicators of each component.

Table 8: Summary of exploratory factor analysis results of academic behaviour index (N = 627)

	Rotated factor loadings	
	Academic performance	Academic effort
If you think about your class/predicate/progress marks (average for all modules) for last semester, would you say your marks are generally:	**.96**	-.01
How would you describe the overall performance marks (average for all modules) you received after the previous semester?	**.95**	.01
In general, how hard did you study for exams in the previous semester?	-.05	**.90**
In the previous semester, how hard did you generally work on course work (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?	.06	**.85**
Eigenvalues	2.99	1.07
% of variance	57.46	26.86
α	.91	.69

Note: Factor loadings larger than .40 appear in bold

3.2.6.5   Index of perceived alcohol-related negative consequences due to other students

Six indicators for the perceived negative consequences of other students drinking on students' lives were included in the survey questionnaire. Table 9 represents the correlation matrix of these indicators. As can be seen, the majority of the correlations between indicators are > .3. A PCA was conducted on the six items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin)[23].

Two underlying components with eigenvalues larger than Kaizer's criterion were identified, which explained 70% of the variance (Table 10). This means the PCA determined that two groups of indicators measured the same underlying concepts. The indicators that cluster on the same components suggests that component one represents 'negative consequences for private life' and component two represents 'negative consequences for general or social life'.

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[22]For the remaining four variables, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .573 ('mediocre' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .5, above the proposed limit of .05. Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (6) = 1072.17, ρ < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

[23] The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with a value of .78 ('good' according to Field, 2009: 659). All KMO values for individual items were > .7, above the proposed limit of .05. Lastly, Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2 (15) = 1397.04, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (Field, 2009: 659).

Table 9: Correlation matrix for the indicators of perceived alcohol-related negative consequences due to other students

	Interrupts your studying	Interrupts your sleep	Makes you feel unsafe	Messes up your physical living space (cleanliness, neatness, organisation, etc.)	Prevents you from enjoying events (concerts, sports, social activities, etc.)	Interferes in other way(s)
Interrupts your studying	1.00	.71***	.31***	.50***	.33***	.42***
Interrupts your sleep	640	1.00	.31***	.49***	.32***	.38***
Makes you feel unsafe	640	640	1.00	.24***	.50***	.45***
Messes up your physical living space (cleanliness, neatness, organisation, etc.)	640	640	640	1.00	.32***	.39***
Prevents you from enjoying events (concerts, sports, social activities, etc.)	640	640	640	640	1.00	.64***
Interferes in other way(s)	640	640	640	640	640	1.00

*$p <.05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$ (one-tailed)*

Reliability analysis revealed that both components showed good reliability, Cronbach's $\alpha > .7$. For the interruptions in private life index, one of the indicators (*'messes up your physical living space'*) affected Cronbach's α negatively to a minor extent. Moreover, for the interruptions in the general or social life index one of the indicators ('*makes you feel unsafe'*) also affected Cronbach's α negatively to a minor degree. However, because the overall reliability of both these indexes with these indicators included was already good, they were retained. Subsequently, the mean of the indicators for each component was calculated and so represented students' score on that index.

Table 10: Summary of the exploratory factor analysis results of the index of perceived alcohol-related negative consequences due to other students (N = 640)

	Rotated factor loadings	
	Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking
Interrupts your sleep	**.89**	-.03
Interrupts your studying	**.89**	.00
Messes up your physical living space (cleanliness, neatness, organisation, etc.)	**.74**	.04
Prevents you from enjoying events (concerts, sports, social activities, etc.)	-.04	**.89**
Makes you feel unsafe	-.046	**.80**
Interferes in other way(s)	.14	**.77**
Eigenvalues	3.12	1.10
% of variance	51.93	18.39
α	.80	.77

Note: Factor loadings larger than .40 appear in bold

3.2.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was processed and analysed with SPSS 17 software. The dataset was imported directly from the survey program, *Checkbox*, and defined and cleaned in SPSS to facilitate analysis. The following statistical tests were used during data analysis:

3.2.7.1   Chi-square test

Chi-square tests of significance are employed to test the statistical significance of relationships between categorical variables. It tests the probability that the relationship between two variables is merely due to chance (sampling error). A level of statistical significance equal to or less than .05 is regarded as significant, which means there is less than a 5% chance that the observed relationship is only due to chance. However, it does not indicate the strength of the relationship between variables.

3.2.7.2   Paired samples t-test

To test for the existence of statistically significant differences between related means, paired sample (or dependent-means) t-tests were conducted. In this research, the mean of students own behaviour is compared to the mean of the perceived behaviour of other students. The theoretical assumption is therefore made that these two scores are related. Paired samples t-tests will for instance be used to test whether the mean number of weekly drinks students actually consume differs statistically significantly from their perception of the mean number of drinks students in general consume.

Although t-tests indicate whether a significant difference exists between two means, it does not give an indication of the magnitude of that difference. To determine that, effect sizes were calculated. Effect sizes are 'an objective and (usually) standardised measure of the magnitude of an observed effect' (Field, 2009: 785). Effect sizes from different comparisons can be compared with one another because it is a standardised measure. Unfortunately, SPSS does not provide effect sizes and they had to be calculated manually. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed in this research as it is the most widely used. The following guidelines are proposed: values of $\pm.1$ represent a small effect size, $\pm.3$ a medium effect size and $\pm.5$ a large effect (Field, 2009: 173).

3.2.7.3   Correlation

Correlation coefficients gauge the ability to predict values on one variable by knowing the values on another variable. It therefore tests for a linear relationship between variables. Values can range from -1 to +1 and represents both the strength and the direction of a relationship. A coefficient of +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation whereas a coefficient if -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship. Zero indicates absence of a linear relationship. The current research made use of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) when comparing two scale variables, and Kendall's tau-b (τ), a non-parametric correlation, when comparing two ordinal variables. Correlation coefficients are also commonly used as effect sizes.

3.2.7.4   Regression

Regression is a statistical technique used to predict one variable from the values of another variable (simple regression) or a few other variables (multiple regression). In its essence, it represents fitting a model to data and using it to predict values of the dependent variable (outcome) from one or many independent variables (predictors). It does this by firstly assuming a linear relationship between the outcome and the predictor(s), and then calculating the straight line that best fits and explains the outcome in terms of certain predictor variables. This line is then evaluated in terms of the percentage of variance it explains in the outcome variable (Field, 2009: 198).

All categorical variables were transformed into dummy variables, in each instance using the category with the highest number of cases as the comparison category (Field, 2009). The first round of preliminary analysis made use of simple regression to identify variables that are clearly redundant in predicting the outcome. The variables that significantly accounted for variance in the outcome were retained and simultaneously entered (forced entry) into a multiple regression analysis. The variables that did not uniquely contribute to predicting the outcome were removed and then re-entered one by one (with the set of significant predictors) to identify any possible suppressor effects. In addition, variables removed during preliminary analysis were also entered one by one at this stage with the purpose of identifying suppressor effects. Suppressor effects 'occur when a predictor has a significant effect but only when another variable is held constant' (Field, 2009: 213).

During standard or simultaneous multiple regression, all predictors are entered into the analysis at once. As Tabachnick and Fidell describe:

> [E]ach one is assessed as if it had entered the regression after all other [predictors] had entered. Each [predictor] is evaluated in terms of what it adds to the prediction of the [outcome] that is different from the predictability afforded by all the other [predictors].　　　　　　　　　　(2001: 131)

Simultaneous entry was therefore used to evaluate the unique contributions of variables to predicting variation in alcohol consumption and, in so doing, evaluate their predictive utility.

3.3　QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The qualitative part of the study entailed personal, semi-structured interviews (interview schedule included in Appendix 9). This qualitative element firstly served the function of exploring other themes concerning student drinking culture. This included considering similar and other ways (than was covered by the survey) perception might play a role in student drinking culture. Therefore, the first aim of the interviews was to gain a more contextualised and in-depth perspective on student drinking behaviour, perceptions of the drinking norm and the role of academic norms in drinking behaviour at Stellenbosch University. Secondly, it served the function of critically reflecting on the social norms approach and theory as a mode of understanding student drinking behaviour and as a possible intervention/prevention programme.

3.3.1　THEMES

At the hand of my own involvement in the student drinking culture of Stellenbosch University for seven years and the review of literature, I identified the following themes as important areas for discussion during the interviews:

- ❖ personal drinking behaviour
- ❖ approval of own drinking
- ❖ approval or disapproval of other students drinking behaviour
- ❖ personal motivations to drink
- ❖ other students and own conversation about drinking
- ❖ perceived drinking behaviour of other students
- ❖ perceived approval of drinking by other students

- ❖ perceptions of student drinking before enrolling at university
- ❖ students' idea of the perception of the general public
- ❖ student alcohol consumption as a rite of passage
- ❖ perceived drinking behaviour during rag
- ❖ intervention/prevention at Stellenbosch University
- ❖ personal academic behaviour and in relation to drinking
- ❖ perception of other students' academic behaviour and in relation to their drinking behaviour.

3.3.2 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

To select students for the qualitative research, students were requested to indicate their interest to participate in qualitative interviews at the end of the survey questionnaire. Therefore, through this procedure, the availability of possible participants for qualitative interviews was determined by self-selection. From these self-selected students, possible interview participants were randomly selected and contacted via e-mail (see Appendix 6 for invitation e-mail). In total, of the 40 students that were contacted, 18 successful personal interviews were conducted.

3.3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Forms for informed consent, as provided by Stellenbosch University, were reviewed and completed before each interview commenced (see Appendix 7). Personal interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis. Interviews took between 45 and 90 minutes to complete.

In appeared as if good rapport was established with interviewees as they openly talked about their own drinking behaviour. This can possibly be ascribed to two factors. Firstly, participants may have associated with me as a fellow student. Secondly, interviewees chose to participate in these interviews when requested during the completion of the online questionnaire.

3.3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Transcribed interviews were reviewed, sorted and analysed for prominent themes. Findings were then discussed in relation to quantitative findings. In addition, the more unstructured nature of qualitative research assisted in critically reflecting on the theory and methodology employed for the current research, as it provided a more in-depth perspective of student behaviour in relation to drinking, academic work and norms, rather than only testing and exploring specific theories and hypotheses.

3.4   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Extreme care was taken to ensure that students were aware of their rights as interview participants and survey respondents in the research. Furthermore, care was taken to ensure the anonymity of survey respondents and the confidentiality of the personal details, identity and responses as interview participants. The study was approved by the ethical committee of Stellenbosch University, with the requirement that certain recommendations be met (see Appendix 1).

Firstly, when students clicked on the link provided in the invitation e-mail to participate in the research, they were referred to a question regarding their completion language for the survey and

then to a page with further information about research procedures (first and second page of the questionnaire). The page, the e-mail invitation and the participation teaser contained a link to the informed consent document (see Appendix 4), as prescribed by Stellenbosch University. This document explained the purpose of the research, procedures survey respondents would have to follow, potential risks and discomforts, potential benefits to subjects and/or society, and participant confidentiality and rights. The online ethical document was viewed 372 times between 23 September and 27 October 2009. However, the electronic nature and scope of the study did not permit me to obtain physical written consent from respondents. Rather, on the second page of the questionnaire, students were informed that by clicking on the 'next' button on the bottom of the page, they would be providing a virtual signature indicating they have read and understood the informed consent document and they have voluntarily decided to participate in the survey. Furthermore, the nature of the online survey program did not allow students' e-mail addresses to be linked to their survey responses.

At the end of the questionnaire, students were given the choice to indicate whether they want to participate in further research, to receive a copy of the research report or to be entered into the lucky draw. If they chose to do so, they were referred to a separate questionnaire where they provided their contact details. In this way, two separate datasets were created, one with the responses to the survey and the other with student contact details. Students were informed that if they provided their contact details for personal interviews, the lucky draw or to receive a copy of the research report, their participation in the project would no longer be anonymous. However, they were assured that none of their personal contact information could in any way be linked to their response in the alcohol survey because this was a separate questionnaire. Furthermore, it was indicated that although their responses to the interview questions would be anonymous, their identity would be known to the researcher. Lastly, participants were assured that all personal contact information and responses in the interviews would be treated as strictly confidential and would not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

Upon arrival at interviews, participants were presented with a copy of the informed consent document for themselves to keep as well as a copy to sign to indicate they understood all procedures of the research and their rights as participants.

3.5   REFLECTION ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In social research, it has to be accepted that any research design, no matter how well-planned and thought through, has inherent flaws that have to be considered when deliberating about results. In this section, I will critically discuss the methodological limitations of this research and the accompanying implications.

The general purpose behind the choice of methodology was to enable me to look for evidence of misperceptions of the social norms among students and to situate these misperceptions within the cultural framework of student life. The choice of a survey research design accompanied by personal, semi-structured interviews was motivated by various factors. Firstly, survey research was necessary to identify trends in the student population with regard to their perceptions to form an idea of the norm on campus. The use of survey methodology is common in social norms research and was accordingly necessary for this research to facilitate comparison with findings of research elsewhere, whereas interviews were deemed necessary to explore the main theme of the research as well as other surrounding themes with regard to perceptions and alcohol use.

With any survey research design, it has to be accepted that measures of abstract concepts are most probably imperfect and can only provide the researcher with approximations of these concepts. For example, in this study, none of the measures of drinking behaviour control for hours of drinking per occasion. Questions should have included a timeframe, like a four-hour night, or something similar to restrict students' idea of a drinking occasion. Measures therefore may not always represent reality completely or accurately. However, as was done in this study, the use of multi-indicator variables to more closely represent complex social phenomena is superior to merely employing one indicator. These composite measures can be tested to approximate their reliability and validity to gauge measurement quality (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 119-124).

Furthermore, these measures are additionally used when investigating relationships between variables. The problem that arises with this is the likelihood of oversimplifying social life by only considering the discrete and almost impossible arrangements where only a few factors might influence one another. The influence of other factors not included in the analysis needs to be considered, because a relationship between two factors may be completely mediated or moderated by another underlying factor. For instance, the relationship between parents' education and their children's drinking may disappear if income is introduced into the analysis, as a higher level of education is often associated with a higher income. This notion is problematic, because the intrinsic complexity of social life means various underlying factors are often involved when there is a relationship between two variables. In this instance, just as some measures of behaviour are better than others, some statistical techniques are better suited to investigate and highlight social and cultural complexity. For this research, multiple regression was employed because it has the added advantage of simultaneously considering various factors when looking at the possible influences on a behaviour.

Nonetheless, although this study did take various factors into account that have been shown to influence student drinking, it certainly did not and could not consider all factors. Rather, the purpose of the study was to identify the most dominant theory and approach in terms of successful intervention/prevention programmes through the literature review, and to test this theory at Stellenbosch University in the presence of contextual, demographic and life-experience factors that might further inform findings. Concerning the semi-structured interviews, although care was taken to minimise extraneous factors that could influence data quality, any interview process is intrinsically biased. For example, open discussion about student drinking was encouraged during interviews, but an interview schedule that was compiled by the researcher still directed the flow of conversation towards certain aspects that were of theoretical importance. This was seen to be in line with the purpose of the research of investigating one central aspect of student drinking behaviour, while providing the added advantage of exploring surrounding cultural factors.

More specifically, with regard to measures of perception of peer behaviour, students do not have access to accurate information of their social environment, a problem often associated with low reliability, as people will provide answers even if they have no idea or knowledge of the question (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 121). For example, students do not always have access to a class average, but are still required to compare themselves with their peers' average performance and effort. However, this particular study was precisely interested in these subjective ideas and perceptions students have of the behaviour of their peers. The study therefore does not claim that these perceptions are accurate, and does not need to, because the goal of the research was to gain access to students' rudimentary perceptions of their social environment by asking them to reflect about things they do not have exact knowledge about.

Another limitation of the research with regard to the measures employed is the reliance on student self-reports as evidence of their personal behaviour, which can be subject to problems related to inaccurate recall and bias (Perkins, 2007: 2653). Various studies have been conducted to test the concurrence between self-reported drinking behaviour and levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC). Two studies considering the relation between BACs and self-reports of consuming five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women during the previous two weeks did not reliably identify a pattern of heavy drinking. Furthermore, men or women that were tested after reportedly consuming five/four or more drinks for the specific night did not necessarily have high BAC's (Beirness, Foss & Vogel-sprott, 2004: 600; Thombs, Olds & Snyder, 2003: 322). Conversely, other studies have found strong associations between more general measures of self-reported drinking and breathalyser readings (for a review, see Midanik, 1988: 1025). With these contrasting findings in mind, the use of breath tests to validate self-reported alcohol consumption has been criticised as having temporal restrictions: it can only account for alcohol consumption in the past 24 hours and therefore cannot validate consumption patterns over time (Midanik, 1988: 1024). The results seem to be conflicting with regard to the accuracy of self-reported data. Nevertheless, the use of self-reporting is a commonly accepted method in studies of this nature that employ anonymous questionnaires, and is additionally frequently used for evaluations of interventions as well (De Jong *et al.*, 2006: 878).

In most electronic or mailing surveys, the question of response rate has to be considered, as almost all inferential statistics assume a response rate of 100%, meaning all selected potential respondents in the original sample are expected to complete the questionnaire. However, this rarely happens, which means response bias is usually an acceptable limitation in most electronic or mailing surveys. A lower response rate is usually associated with a larger possibility of significant response bias, meaning that there is a larger possibility that the characteristics of the sample will differ from that of the population of interest. As a rule of thumb, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 261) propose a 50% response rate as adequate for analysis, but, as they point out, there is no one statistical guideline for an adequate response rate. To a degree, this research attempted to circumvent this problem by sample verification that showed no large differences between the sample and the general student population. However, in the absence of representative data on drinking behaviour for the population, the question remains how typical the current research respondents are of all students in terms of their drinking profile.

CHAPTER 4   RESULTS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results from both the survey and the semi-structured interviews. Firstly, this introductory section looks at certain perceptions that were not the primary focus of the research but that are nevertheless important to understand the drinking culture at Stellenbosch University. Students' own behaviour, i.e. the actual norm, is then described in terms of the individual indicators of personal drinking, attitude towards drinking and academic behaviour in association with the testimonies of interview participants. Secondly, the differences between students' own behaviour and the perceived behavioural norm are then investigated in terms of drinking, approval of drinking and academic effort and performance. This is followed by an analysis of the relation between the perceived difference from the norm and students' own drinking. Subsequently, the role of peer behaviour and conversation in the socialisation processes of student life is investigated with reference to the qualitative interview results. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a look at the role of perceptions in personal drinking behaviour when controlling for other cognitive factors and contextual, socio-demographic and life-experience factors by means of a two-phase multiple regression analysis (see section 3.2.7.4 for a description)[24].

4.1.1   STUDENT PERCEPTIONS BEFORE ENROLLING AT UNIVERSITY

One aspect interviews dealt with was the perceptions students had before their enrolment at Stellenbosch University of student drinking behaviour and its role in student social life, and whether these perceptions were legitimised after becoming a student. In relation to this, three trends emerged from the interviews. In the first instance, some participants indicated that before they enrolled they had a perception of a heavy-drinking, 'party' lifestyle at university, which was consequently legitimised after their arrival. Secondly, other participants also initially perceived a heavy drinking 'party' lifestyle, but after they enrolled, they were in a sense surprised, as it was not as heavy as they had anticipated. Alternatively, some participants had the perception that student drinking would not be as heavy, but after they came to university, their perceptions were challenged because the degree of alcohol consumption and 'partying' was heavier than originally expected.

> *Well I have an older brother, and he has also told me of whatever goes on in his residence, but I kind of expected the worst, and it wasn't as bad as I expected, understand, I thought I was going to arrive here and I am going to be the only one that doesn't drink and I am going to be an outsider. (Interview 6)*

> *[A]lthough I was ignorant about what happens here, you're not so ignorant to think that everyone is a saint, in the sense that no one drinks. I think what did sometimes surprise me, is that people completely go overboard. If you had club initiation, then the people went to the extreme. I think there was sometimes a culture that shocks you, and it's like, is this for real? There you were really confronted with it, people passed out in front of you, a person that stays next to you, his roommate throws up over his whole bed . . . So I think I wasn't ignorant in that sense, that I expected it was going to be this hunky dory place, but you were shocked, this is the reality, you aren't necessarily in*

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[24] Note that the purpose of this chapter is not to compare different subgroups in terms of drinking and perceptions. Rather, the regression analysis was included in the analysis to identify the most influential variables in terms of personal drinking behaviour, making individual subgroup comparisons unnecessary.

an environment where everyone enjoys it just to enjoy it. They enjoy getting drunk. (Translated, Interview 18)

Aspects that seemingly influenced participants' perceptions before they came to university were previous contact with students (siblings or older friends), proximity to the town of Stellenbosch, and whether they had gone out or 'partied' in Stellenbosch before enrolling at university. However, interviews provided evidence of a general stereotype of student drinking culture that seems to be created and supported by people outside the university community through conversation as well as actual observations they make. One student responded as follows when asked about his perceptions before university about the role of alcohol in social life on campus:

Socially well . . . the idea that students drink, they party, you go out evenings, you stay up late, you go and sit in a place, you party, you dance, it definitely played a role in those thoughts, in that picture . . . For the average students, the image was there that it would play a role, alcohol use. (Translated, Interview 10)

Perceptions before arrival were not only voiced about student alcohol use but also concerning academic behaviour in relation to alcohol use. Participants expressed their initial surprise about students' ability to drink but still strike some balance with their academic responsibilities:

Actually, I was surprised because Wednesday is student night, and the Thursday they sit in class, they can stink how much of alcohol, they still ace their tests, I don't know when they get a chance to study for it. That was just amazing to me. Then some of them drink like fishes, but their marks are still good. (Interview 9)

Like I came here, I must admit I was actually quite surprised at the ability of the okes, when they know it's time to stop, like come test and exam time, I thought it was going to be . . . like I hear this thing about Rhodes where there is no sort of line or distinction, everybody is just like [drinking] all the time, and here, there was sort of a limit as to how it goes on and when it stops. (Interview 8)

With regard to perceptions before enrolment at university then, the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy has to be considered. If students arrive at university with a false perception of stereotyped cultural behaviour, as viewed by individuals positioned outside the campus culture, they start their university career with a certain perception of students' behaviour, which may bias their future perceptions and, as social norms theory would argue, influence their behaviour. In the next section, student's ideas regarding the perceptions of the public will be discussed as another possible influence on personal perceptions.

4.1.2   STUDENTS' IDEA OF THE PERCEPTION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Often in society, one is confronted by the stereotypical view of students as highly social individuals that are fond of consuming alcohol and do so frequently and heavily. This perception from the side of the public may contribute to the perception of future students and current students that that is the way students should and do act. This idea is reliant on the premise that people's behaviour is influenced by the way they think they are viewed by others. Moreover, such a perceived perception from the outside world may contribute to students' own perception that there is an ideal behaviour within university culture, namely the highly social, drinking student.

I have heard it a few times that people say 'don't go to Stellenbosch, all they do there is get drunk!' and I think they just hear all these drunk stories and they don't hear about the academic things. . . . I

mean, you always hear about the drunk accidents and so on. You just hear it's a bad university, everybody drinks there, I've heard so many aunties, and my mom called me one day, very upset, saying that the aunties are saying this and that about Stellenbosch. I was like 'it's okay mom, there is a lot of us that are disciplined . . . . It's usually scandals that are going around, not good things. People aren't like, 'this person got South African colours' or 'this person got a degree, yeah!'. That's not stories that you tell to other people, because they are just going to be like 'oh, okay, that happens every day'. But as soon as something out of the ordinary happens, and alcohol is usually involved, then it will draw a lot of attention. Why do you think Heat sells, its scandals, people like scandals and they like talking about other people. (Translated, Interview 2)

I think people in general, because they don't know, or they aren't among students really, they hear a story or they hear of one twenty-firsts. And they think it's all students that are like that. But I think a lot of the times, my parents as well, then a bunch of students come into the town, [and they say] 'but it's such nice children, how can they be students'. Then I'm like 'mom, not everyone is like that'. So I think it depends a lot on what you hear about students. A lot of the time, like when I've been at a few twenty-firsts, then the people say, you are such a nice bunch together. Then it's like, not everyone just parties and is rude and breaks post boxes down, and steals car mirrors. I think the perception people have is just of what they hear from other people, I don't think it's because of personal experience. (Translated, Interview 13)

As these testimonials reflect, people's perceptions of student drinking behaviour may spoil a university's reputation in the eyes of some. They also explain how these perceptions are possibly formed by singular events, hearsay, the media, and how visible and memorable these experiences are. These stories and experiences are discussed with, or experienced by, prospective students and might therefore influence their perceptions as well, as the following two interviewees explain:

I think they think much worse of us. I think they expect that there are more people that drink much worse and gets more drunk. Like a lot of people I talked with before I came were like, oh, you have to watch out. And when I arrived here, that's why I was so shocked, it isn't as bad as everyone told me it was going to be. (Interview 5)

I think there is that stereotype, it's the same perception I came here with. I just had this perception that everyone drank. And I think that's what's out there, especially of Stellenbosch. (Interview 8)

Hence, from the interviews it is apparent that participants thought that the public had a certain perception of student social life, a picture that usually included alcohol. Students seem to be aware of this perception before they enrol at university as well as during their time here. However, although the majority of participants had this opinion, not all participants thought of this perception as extreme:

I think they see Stellenbosch as a nice bubble where you have nice parties, where you have nice wine tours, where you pleasurably drink. But not drinking like it's a hub of alcoholism. Or a thing of like Bacchus lives here or something like that. But I think it is definitely more of a social environment, and that's how the public sees it. They see you are going to drink alcohol here. (Translated, Interview 18)

In relation to the prior two sections regarding student perceptions from before their enrolment at university and their idea of perceptions of the general public, it seemed as if students had a more general perception of drinking at university, as almost a rite of passage; this idea will consequently be discussed.

4.1.3   STUDENT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AS A RITE OF PASSAGE

It's a student life, you know, you can't really [drink] at school, because you live with your parents, they have control, and then you've got these years at varsity to do it, and everyone's doing it and sooner or later we all going to want to settle down within the next few years, find a husband, start working, you can't do that when you're working, you've got a job, you've got a family and stuff. The way I see it, these are our years, and if you want to do it, you must do it now and get it out of our systems because you don't want to look back when you're thirty and be like 'aaah, I didn't party and I didn't do anything when I was at varsity', so I think these are the years. (Interview 14)

[I]t is definitely that there isn't someone looking over your shoulder like mamma saying like why did you only come in at four or things like that, that makes quite a difference, so many of the girls, that I saw because I'm in residence, did go on a bit worse than the rest, because like I said, the parents hold them too tightly when they are at school. (Translated, Interview 13)

From the interviewee narratives, it seemed as if some students entertain the notion that drinking is an element that is intrinsically related to student life and to being a student; the mere idea of being a student is enough justification for consuming alcohol. The latter is related to the idea of freedom, which various participants associate with their perception of 'student life', as life after university is partly seen in a more restrictive light.

I do think that they can over-consume because they have the opinion that that's what's part of being a student. I know people that their parents practically told them like this is your student years go wild because afterwards it's like sit down and study but do they actually make it to the end? . . . [S]tudying is drinking. It's Wednesday night . . . or after a test night, so for every occasion there is a reason to drink. (Interview 3)

For me it's like, I'm a student now, I am never going to get a chance to drink like this when I eventually start working, and take on more responsibilities. I'm just trying to enjoy myself as much as possible, obviously within the academic boundaries, I have to pass everything. (Translated, Interview 2)

The idea of a rite of passage creates a certain definition about social drinking and its acceptability and because this definition is seen as common, it creates an expectation among students to mutually reaffirm the definition of the situation. They expect fellow students to behave in a certain way and to have a similar attitude towards drinking.

I mean if you're not a fan of drinking too heavily, then you would go to like Wits or you do like the UNISA sort of thing, you come to a university like Rhodes or Stellenbosch to enjoy that sort of student life, that's why they call it student life. (Interview 8)

[D]efinitely, you come here and you've got this freedom after school, and you're allowed to indulge and do it and it's a life experience. If you haven't done it then it's almost like worrisome that it might happen to you later on in life. (Interview 8)

I think in general, in the beginning of your course you're kind of like this is the time of your life you have to enjoy it, you're only young once. So, just get the balance between your friends and your academic [life], so that you at least pass but not neglect your friends. (Translated, Interview 13)

According to social norms theory, when students arrive at university they are confronted by a certain culture, which they perceive as a social atmosphere in support of this urge to have a

student life, free from the constraints of parents and school. However, this perception is not always accurate for the majority, as the perceived culture does not support drinking behaviour as a rite of passage to the extent that is perceived. If students act as if this perception is a reality, they act and interact in a way they probably would not have done if their perceptions had been accurate. Hence, initial experiences at university may play a large role in confirming students' ideas and perceptions of student life. In the following section student perceptions of one specific event, RAG, which is orchestrated during the arrival of first-year students at university, is reviewed.

4.1.4   PERCEIVED DRINKING BEHAVIOUR DURING RAG

One highlight on the Stellenbosch University social calendar is RAG, or carnival as it was formally known. This event takes place during the first week of the year, before classes commence and comprises various events that are mainly orchestrated with the help of the new first-year students. It is attended by senior students, townsfolk as well as people from outside Stellenbosch. As the interviewee's statement below reflects, this time is also known for its drinking. Many first year students are initially not allowed by the university residences or private-wards they occupy to participate in the celebratory drinking. They are therefore placed in an optimal position to observe other students behaviours. Due to its scheduling on the calendar at the beginning of the year, which coincides with the arrival of first-years, RAG is therefore in a strategic position to influence perceptions of student culture. For this reason, students were questioned about their perceptions of this event.

> *RAG is wild; RAG is an excuse to get drunk every day for seven days however long it is. That's how we see it, that's what we do, that's what everyone does. It's an excuse to go absolutely mental seven days of a week. (Interview 14)*

The above statement brings to the fore several aspects of student drinking during this period. Firstly, it is an occasion or, as this particular interviewee phrases it, an 'excuse' that necessitates the consumption of alcohol. Secondly, it is perceived in this manner by 'everyone', i.e. there is a perceived universality of drinking behaviour and the approval of drinking behaviour during this time by students in general.

> *I mean classes haven't started, you've been on holiday with your buddies and you don't have any reason to like not wake up with a hangover the next morning because you don't have to get up for class so, so your responsibilities are almost like completely gone, [the reasons] why you wouldn't normally drink so much. (Interview 3)*

> *I think definitely [students drink heavier], because you don't have academic pressure in that time, you have nothing that prevents you from getting up at 12 o'clock the next morning and it's kind of, everyone does it, you kind of fall into the status quo. (Translated, Interview 10)*

> *I definitely think the feeling, the vibe, the festivities. Everyone's positive. No one is really worried about anything serious that's coming, you know, [like] studying, tests, responsibility. During that time students are actually very free then. I think it plays a role then, to go where you haven't been before . . . you risk a bit more. . . . [Y]our friends can push you home in a wheelbarrow. (Translated, Interview 12)*

Here another aspect of drinking behaviour during the RAG period is brought to the fore, namely the lack of responsibilities during this time, especially academic responsibilities. The first

participant (Interview 3) mentions hangovers, and it seems as if in general she sees it as an interfering factor in class participation. Not having the responsibility of class attendance means the need to avoid a hangover is absent, which seems to be sufficient reason to drink. It is also an example of how this student plans her drinking around her academic responsibilities in order to avoid the former interfering with the latter. Another reason that is offered for the apparent behaviour during RAG is being reunited with friends. Here alcohol plays a role in celebration. Drinking is seen as an activity to perform together that creates a relaxed atmosphere within which social interaction can occur.

> *As a first year, I would just look at the okes, sitting in the pools while we had to stand in the hot sun, I could see the okes were partying and I looked forward to doing it myself. This year I did it myself, like during Jool (Afrikaans for RAG), I would classify like each day as a binge-drinking day. You wake up at 10 o'clock in the morning and you go to the bottle store. There's no lying about that, that's what we did every day, for like 10 days. (Interview 8)*

> *I think it's an excuse for everyone, especially the seniors to party together of course, while the first-years sit locked up in residence. But yes, they party hard, but I think it isn't the majority of students; it's also only those that make the choice to be here during that time. Maybe they celebrate a bit more because they don't have academic responsibilities then. So I think they definitely party nicely if it's RAG time, but I can't really say, because we were locked up literally the whole time. 'You won't go out, [you must] fold flowers', 'okay'. (Translated, Interview 13)*

These two participants express their perception of RAG during their first academic year. The first participants' statement provides evidence of how some first-year students may experience the observed behaviour of senior students. He envied the behaviour of the senior students at his residence. His observation of senior students' drinking gave him the impression that they approve of such behaviour, that it is the liberty that seniority brings and that it is the norm during this time. This particular participant, clearly already approving of drinking upon arrival at university, therefore found support for his attitude towards drinking from senior peers, and when he became a senior student he modelled the behaviour of his seniors. The second participant shows how her perception was influenced, even though they were 'locked up' during that time. It also reflects how perceptions are often characterised by contradictions. In her first sentence she says it is an excuse for 'everyone' to 'party', and in the second sentence she corrects the first by indicating that she does not think it is the majority.

It is clear that participants see RAG as a special time of the year, during which 'partying' and drinking is perceived as the norm. It also seems as if this perception is universal, as perceived by all students or the whole campus. The first-year students again mentioned visible and memorable occurrences during this time that seemingly influenced their perception of drinking during RAG as an occasion and maybe their perception of student drinking behaviour in general. As an introduction to campus culture, it may therefore influence their future drinking behaviour and especially their behaviour during future RAG festivities. Consequently, in the next section, student perceptions of Stellenbosch University's attention to or concern about student drinking behaviour will be considered.

4.1.5 INTERVENTION/PREVENTION AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Qualitative research reflected that none of the interview participants was aware or sure of any alcohol-related policy that is implemented by Stellenbosch University. Nevertheless, 55% of survey respondents indicated they were aware of such a policy compared to the rest that either did not know or were not aware of a policy (Figure 4). However, in contrast, 77% of respondents thought the alcohol policy either was not enforced or did not know if it was being enforced (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Student awareness of an alcohol policy at Stellenbosch University (N = 640)
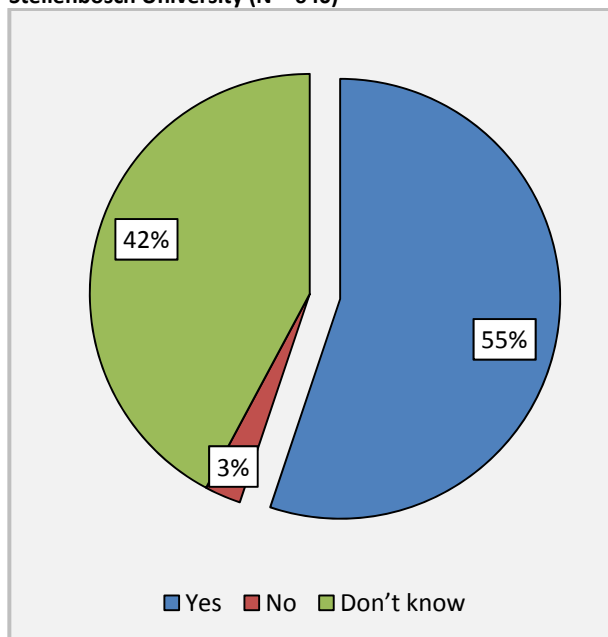
Figure 5: Student belief that alcohol policy is enforced (N = 640)
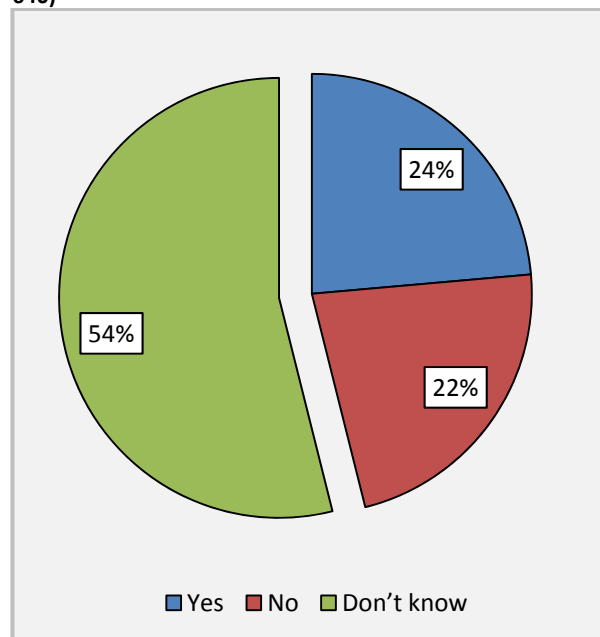
These results reflect sentiments that were voiced in the interviews as well. Students are of the opinion that there is a policy, or at least, there should be one. However, this opinion is overshadowed by doubt, as they are unaware that it is actually being enforced.

Figure 6: Students' belief that Stellenbosch University is concerned about alcohol use among students (N = 640)
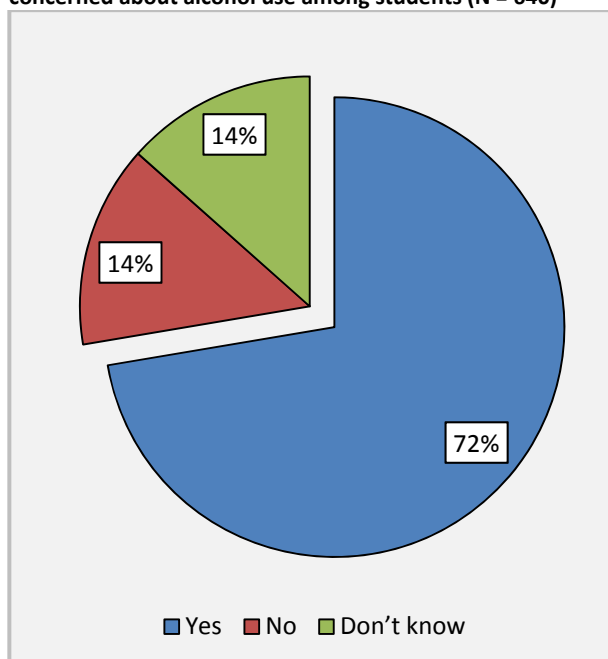
Figure 7: Student awareness of an alcohol-use prevention programme at Stellenbosch University (N = 640)
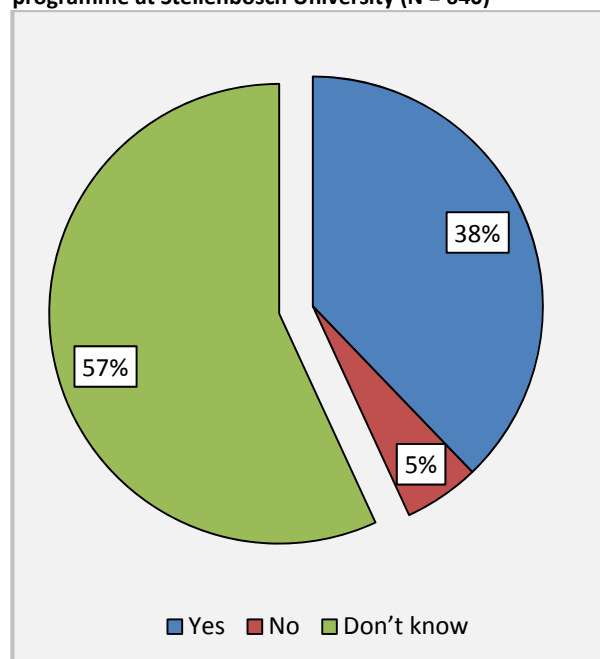
Some of the interview participants were aware of the alcohol-awareness programme that forms part of RAG activities, namely the Buddy campaign and the alcohol-monitoring system that is implemented by the university to limit the amount of alcohol available at university residence and private-ward functions such as house dances. Of survey respondents, 38% were aware of an alcohol prevention programme, compared to 62% that were unsure or were not aware of anything to this effect (Figure 7). The majority of survey respondents (72%) indicated they believed the university's administration is concerned about alcohol use among students (Figure 6). Although some interviewees have the perception that the university is not concerned about alcohol consumption among students, the majority share the sentiment that Stellenbosch University's administration should be worried and that there is some reason for concern. Both the interview and the survey results therefore indicate that students have the perception that there is a problem on campus concerning drinking that needs to be attended to.

Well [the university] should be concerned if it is affecting their academic work, and they should be concerned because it's affecting some of the students that do not drink, like I said, because of their shouting and stuff like that, they should be concerned on that level. . . . In most students' lives it does play a role, but on the other hand, the university would think that 'no, obviously if they came to university then they are adults, they should be able to differentiate', you know, be able to focus on their studies or have a balance between their studies and drinking. It becomes a problem when that drinking is affecting their academics and that's where the university comes in, because obviously the university deals with academics. (Interview 16)

As the interviewee above states, students are young adults and possibly have to take responsibility for their own actions. However, when other students' drinking behaviour starts affecting students that do not drink or drink responsibly, and when drinking affects the academic responsibilities of both groups, then possibly one can justify some concern from the university. However, students had varying reactions to questions regarding prevention programmes and the possibility of regulating alcohol consumption among students. As will be seen from the comments below, students are cynical about the possibility of changing their own or other students' drinking behaviour. Many participants largely see drinking as a personal choice, one that a person has to make for him- or herself and accordingly, take responsibility for his or her own actions. In this regard, students have an idea of themselves and others as young adults. For that reason, they have an aversion to the idea of being policed or told what to do.

'Don't drink, it's bad for you', I don't really care, it's not going to affect me. It would actually be stupid of them to try, because students won't listen. And they can put in as much rules as they want, they are not going to be able to curb it, it's just going to make students sneakier. (Translated, Interview 1)

[L]et's look at smoking, smoking kills you, I know it, everyone else knows it, but still you smoke. The same with drinking, people still drink, it's kind of an escape, it's a chance to get away from things, yes it isn't the best solution, but some people do what they have to do and I don't think they are going to stop because someone tells them, 'hey it's unhealthy, come here eat a health bun' or something like that. I don't think anyone would stop, maybe a small percentage would maybe, but like I said before, everyone is aware of everything at this time of your life. You know about everything of the human anatomy and everything since you were in standard five. (Translated, Interview 11)

Regarding the only implemented alcohol programme that participants were aware of at Stellenbosch University, namely the Buddy campaign, participants were quite doubtful of its effectiveness and the underlying rational.

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I know for a fact that it doesn't work because I was on the Buddy committee now for Jool [RAG] because it's something I feel quite strongly about, drinking and driving, because at school there were a lot of accidents and it's something me and my friendship group have like come up to realise that it's quite a heavy thing, we feel quite strongly about it. So I felt strongly working for Buddy and working with Buddy I actually realised how useless it is and how people just laugh at it. Literally, after Jool when you try to set up Buddy events, people walk past you and actually laugh at you and okes in res mock you for being on the Buddy committee, so no, it doesn't work at all. (Interview 8)

No, in my first year I was like 'what's Buddy about', I only got to find out when I was actually in my second year like organising Jool and all that stuff, that I actually found out, oh that's Buddy. Because I know in Jool time, when every res is supposed to have their own Buddy campaign thing, we actually forgot that we had to have a Buddy thing, we actually just needed an hour to quickly sort out our Buddy thing. . . . It's not implemented and it's impractical, now I'm going to drink less and watch over you guys. So now you have that parental where this person goes all crazy and starts dancing on all the tables and you have to go like 'hey, you can't do that'. No, I don't want to be like that the whole night, I want to have fun myself. (Interview 19)

Concerning the question of why the Buddy campaign is not effective, various reasons could be extrapolated from the interviewees' responses. Firstly, many participants were not even aware of the Buddy campaign and those that were, were not always sure what the idea behind the campaign is. Therefore, the campaign does not permeate deep enough into the student population and where it actually does reach people, the message is sometimes lost. In addition, Buddy events only occur during RAG at the beginning of the year and one week, called Buddy week, close to the end of the year. Therefore, it seems obvious why students are not aware of the Buddy campaign, as it is hardly presented in a continuous fashion. Another factor contributing to the apparent failure of the Buddy campaign is students' motivations to participate in the campaign. It seems they merely take part because the university expects them to do so and therefore it lacks passion and commitment from the actual students that organise it. Lastly, it seems the Buddy campaign is not taken seriously by the people that present it and/or the general student population.

I don't know hey, maybe because the university Buddy has just taken the wrong approach. They have just come out of the blocks and been like, don't do this, don't don't don't don't don't stop stop stop. You can't approach it like that. You got to be like, and I want to say moderation, but you can't use the word moderation, because it's just as much a cliché as 'don't' and 'stop' is now, so they got to find something else, where they got to accept that it's part of student life and it happens but it's got to be controlled and they've got to find a way of controlling it and getting people to become aware. (Interview 8)

I think the people do Buddy, and they do the promotions for Buddy, to attain points for RAG to win RAG. So number one, the reason why they are doing it is wrong. I'm a believer in if you don't put passion, put heart into something, it isn't going to be so effective, and it's not going to be carried over well, doesn't matter how good your campaign is, I think it isn't going to work. So number one, you have to look at the people that are initiating it, understand, if they don't themselves promote a culture of responsible drinking, and that's difficult . . . For me it's like this, if someone tries to sell me something but they don't use it themselves, why should I buy into it, and I think that is also a problem, because like I said, there is a stigma, or there is a perception, and it might not be that way anymore, but unfortunately perceptions are the reality people sees. If people see the RAG committee as the people that have fun partying and drinking, then they are shooting themselves in the foot, I think, and I was there, so I can say. That's why I think it should really come from people that have the heart for it, that have passion to drive something, that take it seriously, and once again I'm not saying that you should go launch a total abstinence campaign. . . . Understand, you know [the message behind the

Buddy campaign], but do you apply it? Do you take interest? I think it gets lost. It gets lost, because it's in a time when it's too busy to properly [work] … yes, in the fourth term you have your Buddy week round about 'Henne' and 'Hane' but that's so ironic. Like our Buddy campaign our first year when we linked with [a woman's university residence], some of the guys were on the Buddy committee and they went and drank tequila shots out of the girls belly buttons, and 'is this the Buddy promotion, what are you trying to say? Maybe I'm just too stupid to understand it'. So I think the meaning and the message are lost, it's very funny. (Translated, Interview 18)

Therefore, in general students' perception of Stellenbosch University's attention or concern about students drinking behaviour seems rather bleak. The only awareness programme that is currently being implemented may actually contribute to perception that students have a tendency to drink too much. The Buddy campaign legitimises the idea that there is a student drinking problem, that students need a 'buddy' to assist them, as they cannot look after themselves because they drink too much.

For me it is, and it's contentious, once again, it's different moral standards. Look at abstinence in not having sex before marriage, understand, there are definitely people that is for it, and others that say no, use condoms, condoms are available everywhere, put these posters up of people standing like this. Then I just think, sometimes there should just be no marketing, sometimes how to solve a problem, I'm not saying avoiding it, but it's to not market it. Because the more you show that there is a problem, the more the people buy in, 'well, let's maybe be part of that problem'. I sometimes think sometimes you should just leave it. Understand, if you agree with abstinence or not, just leave it, because the more you market, the people that you actually want to convince, exactly say 'let's go make out with someone in "Die Laan"' and then maybe something more happens in 'Die Laan'. Sometimes I think you should just do nothing, but a lot of people don't like that, they don't like saying let's do nothing. Take the nonchalant backseat. (Translated, Interview 18)

The comment suggests that marketing campaigns possibly give out mixed messages and might contribute to the behaviour it is trying to prevent or influence. Such campaigns publically acknowledge that there is a drinking problem that requires a system to minimise the risks associated with it. Social norms theory supports this notion concerning more traditional awareness programmes. However, in cases where social norms marketing campaigns have been employed to attempt to rectify the erroneously perceived norm, marketing campaigns have been shown to be more effective. Nonetheless, social norms marketing campaigns are well-planned and well-organised to ensure maximum exposure to students. The point here is that proper intervention/prevention/awareness programmes require a certain level of effort to be effective, provided that the right message is being communicated to students.

If you are going to put up things like that . . . there are people that always say they don't worry about it or whatever, it's just a bunch of nonsense, but somewhere it sticks and somewhere they start paying attention and realises 'but am I not busy falling into that category?'. So I think you can't lose anything by actually doing something and to say, we tried, than saying we didn't try at all, so we wouldn't know if it works. So I think you could try, and somewhere you will touch someone, even if it's only one person, then I think it's already effective. So I think they can definitely try it and see. (Translated, Interview 13)

4.2   PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

The purpose of this section is to provide a basic description of students' own behaviour and, in so doing, to create an idea of the actual normative behaviour on Stellenbosch University campus. More specifically, it will explore students' drinking behaviour, and their attitude towards drinking and academic behaviour at the hand of predominantly simple univariate analysis and thematic analysis of qualitative interviews.

4.2.1   DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

4.2.1.1   Motivations to drink

The motivations to drink that were mentioned by interview participants can be divided into those reasons that influence them to start drinking or to drink more and the reasons that prevent them from drinking or inhibit their drinking. Firstly, the most basic reason provided for the consumption of alcohol is its taste. Some students indicate that they enjoy the taste of certain drinks, like wine or beer. Conversely, two students, one that abstains and the other, a light drinker, indicated that they do not like the taste of alcohol, and so avoid consuming it.

A more prominent motivation was the physical effects of alcohol, which seemed predominantly functional, as it facilitates social interaction. While some admit that they drink merely to get drunk, others say drinking helps them to relax, to be more confident and to rid themselves of inhibitions. This motivation is related to the use of alcohol in social circumstances, and each individual's need to interact within these circumstances. In a sense, students are self-medicating with alcohol in order to attain certain desired effects, which in turn will lead to certain social outcomes, whether relaxed conversation or romantic encounters. Within this spectrum of motivation falls the idea of drinking as a social activity, a constant in the background of social interaction acting as a catalyst for meeting new people, conversation and to be merely more sociable in general. If everyone is drinking, everyone is perceived as approving thereof, as being relaxed and therefore mutually approachable for social interaction. If a person is not drinking, then that person is out of place and in conflict with the façade of the holistic, alcohol-induced, relaxed atmosphere. Therefore, the expectation to drink is possibly created within social circumstances where everyone else is perceived as drinking, with the end goal of everyone being more sociable. This is accompanied by the anticipation of social sanction, subtle or overt, if one does not consume alcohol, or at least does not appear to be consuming alcohol, and therefore not subscribing to the idea of the relaxed social environment.

I think people feel like, when you're not drinking, they get like a bit, um, I don't know, they know that they are drinking and they need to drink to get to that party level, and if you're not drinking they feel a bit like you are judging them. I am very shy, so like if I don't drink I am very quiet and then I hate the fact that if I drink, then I am a party person. Because obviously, I mean, you get more confidence and you talk more, so I think like drinking is expected of you because they want you to party with them. (Interview 3)

I don't know [why guys are so competitive], it's just a guy's thing, I don't really understand it. We have no competition, as long as we are all drunk when we go out, then that's it, it doesn't really matter who's drank how much and whatever, if we can all see that we're all pissed, then were like, hey, sweet. (Interview 14)

What prompts me to drink . . . at the beginning, it was maybe to have a bit more courage, or you just want to relax, you want to be more sociable. When you are at a party or gathering where everyone is

like that, then you sometimes feel if you don't join, then you might as well leave, because the communication level, I wouldn't say declines, but you're just not on the same level and then it isn't conducive to anything. . . . I think whether one wants to admit it or not, [it] doesn't matter how old you are, peer pressure plays an important role in it. I think whether you are 50 or 12 [years old], you are influenced by the social atmosphere you are in. What I try to be is the same person with everyone. Sometimes you do want to drink a bit more, just to enjoy yourself, just to let go in a way. But then you think, what is this person going to think if you do that. (Translated, Interview 18)

The idea of alcohol as playing a role in inducing a relaxed and more enjoyable atmosphere than would otherwise be the case, even when among friends, again came to the fore when I discussed participants' perceptions of their friends drinking behaviour.

I'm the only one in my group of friends that can go out sober to Terrace, and I can go out at 10 [o'clock] and I come back at 3 [o'clock] and have an awesome night, I'm just like that, and they're not like that. So they kind of have to drink a lot to be able to have a really good night, I don't feel like I have to. It's a bonus if I do get really pissed because it's just more fun but I don't have to. . . . [My friends] just say they enjoy their night so much more, and I can see it, I can relate to them, if I could drink what I used to drink, I would, because it's not that I need the confidence, it's that you relax so much and everything's fun and you do stupid things but it's funny because everyone else is drunk, but when you're sober you don't do those stupid things because your more conscious of it, so then you're almost a bit more boring, like not to you, but to the other people because everyone's like crazy and you're like 'huh'. (Interview 14)

Another influence on drinking, that almost all participants mentioned, concerns academic aspects. The first aspect is academic stress. Students indicate that after a test, a long academic week or because of exam anxiety, they would often go out and drink to relax or 'to let go'. In a sense then, drinking is functional as it is consumed to allow students to relax or to relieve stress. Related to this are some of the emotional reasons mentioned, such as depression. The second academic aspect is whether or not students have class early the next day, or has class at all, which would be a reason to go out and/or drink more, or not to go out and/or drink less. This also points to the main factor participants say would stop them from drinking, namely academic responsibilities. Students specify that when they are writing a test the next day, or later the week, or have academic work, they would refrain from drinking or limit their consumption and/or not go out. For most participants then, serious academic responsibilities (that contribute to students' academic performance) do play a role in their drinking habits.

[L]ike on a normal Friday I would [drink], or if on a Wednesday night I didn't have an 8 o'clock class, I would drink, go out and drink but I know tomorrow it would affect me. So obviously, whatever affects you, I wouldn't say that I'm totally against drinking during the week, but me personally, like getting up on 6 o'clock and if I was out till like 2 [o'clock in the morning], and you've got a hangover and you've got to drive through [from Somerset West], you know. People rock up to class and they're still drunk. Their drinking depends on what they have to do the next day. I think you almost find like a person that's out of control, is the one that doesn't care that their drinking affects their responsibilities. You can say that ah, he's got a problem . . . But you can still have a problem and still be coping with everything else. With drinking, everything, like wishy washy. I mean you can't put up 'if you drink more than five beers, you're an alcoholic'. If you can drink those five beers and not be like completely drunk or you can still like get up and have all your responsibilities. (Interview 3)

I don't know, that's sometimes the most difficult thing to say, 'I'm not going along tonight'. For me, especially in my course, I have to tell myself, if you are not going to do your work, then you are obviously not going to pass, but I think for me definitely it's when I have tests that lie ahead, then it's

for me having my priorities right, because I am here primarily for studying and to attain my degree. . . . So I think your priorities are definitely one. I think then also it's nice when your friends know where their responsibilities are, so if they feel they can't go [out] due to academics, then some of them will stay, but we are usually a large group that goes out, so if two can't go along then we leave them, then it's fine, then they can study. But round about the third time we ask and they don't want to come along, we will tell them, listen here, we think it's time that you guys come out a bit. (Translated, Interview 13)

Very importantly, most students mentioned friends as an influence on their personal drinking behaviour. This is largely ascribed to the direct invitations from friends that students receive to drink socially. In a sense then, friends create occasions for the consumption of alcohol, whether they are birthday parties, braais, wine tours or merely going out on the town for the night. Events, occasions and situations where alcohol is available, are significant motivations as well. In addition, the people accompanying students while they are consuming alcohol may influence how little or how much alcohol they consume. According to some, the more or the less the group you are part of drinks, the more or the less you will be inclined to drink. Lastly, camaraderie effects alcohol consumption as drinking is seen as something to do together, a way to spend time with friends and to maintain friendships.

I would say my friends, because you do fall in with your friends, you do what they do, that's a big influence . . . like for example if I am with friends that drink a bit more, then I would also maybe have an extra beer maybe, that I wouldn't usually. But my general friendship group are also guys that don't drink terribly much, they would drink once in a blue moon. (Translated, Interview 10)

Well let's put it this way, it depends who I am with, will depend on how much I drink or what I drink. Like if I'm with guys who like to dance, or whatever, they would like to go to Springboks or Entourage or something, they want to jam. I'm not a dancer myself, so like then I'll probably have a bit more to get rid of the inhibitions and stuff. . . Like some nights you decide, like this is going to be a heavy night, you had a rough week of tests or whatever, let's go have fun and some nights it's just like, let's just do something, and you just chill out and you don't get too trashed or you just have like three or four beers and that's it. So it all depends on the occasion I suppose. (Interview 8)

[My friends] do influence it a bit, like there would be nights where I say no, I'm not drinking. Friday night I went out and I wrote a semester test at 9am Saturday morning and I said I'm not drinking. By the time I left pre-drinks[25] I was absolutely hammered, because they wouldn't accept it. So obviously, they play a role or whatever. (Interview 14)

Various participants mentioned the state of their financial resources as an important determining factor in their drinking behaviour. Since going out to town and/or purchasing drinks costs money, sufficient financial resources are needed to be able to sustain drinking habits. Therefore, in some circumstances, even if students want to drink, they are unable to do so, due to insufficient finances, unless other arrangements can be made for the procurement of funds. One participant indicated that she actually attained employment to support her social life (Interview 14).

The remaining factors that discourage drinking were only mentioned by a few respondents. Firstly, anticipating having a hangover the next day or having had a bad hangover recently inhibits further excessive alcohol consumption among some. Related to this, two participants, both abstainers, indicated that they were concerned with the effects of drinking on their physical well-being.

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[25] This term often refers to an social activity where students drink alcohol and socialize at someone's home before they go out to town

Another two participants expressed that they would drink less in certain circumstances if they knew they had to drive later. Some of the female participants said they would limit their drinking due to safety concerns when they are in public spaces, when they still have to walk home, as well as more generally when they merely have to look after themselves while in town. Some of the lighter consumers of alcohol and abstainers also mentioned a discomfort with the notion of losing control due to excessive alcohol consumption, an idea with which they are personally not comfortable. Lastly, two participants indicated that residing with their parents discourages their alcohol consumption, out of respect for their parents as well as the possibility of their activities still being monitored. Others mentioned the way they were raised as a general influence on their drinking behaviour.

> [T]he way I was raised. My parents raised me very openly with alcohol. They offered it to me, I didn't like it at all at the beginning. It wasn't a forbidden thing for me in my home. You were kind of just dissuaded to do it for which I am very thankful towards my parents now, now that I can see to what it leads. (Translated, Interview 10)

Although motivations to drink were not the focus of the current study, its consideration was a necessity in understanding the role alcohol consumption plays in students' everyday lives. It furthermore reflected the importance of social processes involved in drinking at university, which is of great importance for this research.

4.2.1.2   Average consumption

In terms of the average number of alcoholic drinks students usually consume per drinking occasion while with friends (*average consumption*, refer to section 3.2.5.3; Q14), 6% of survey respondents indicated they have not consumed a whole alcoholic drink in their lifetime[26] (Table 11). A further 11% specified that they had not consumed a complete alcoholic drink in the past year (2009)[27]. These two groups were classified as abstainers. Accordingly, 83% of the sampled students were classified as drinkers.

Table 11: Average number of alcoholic drinks students consumed per drinking occasion, while with friends, in 2009

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Abstain (never consumed a whole alcoholic drink in lifetime)	39	6.1%	6.1%
0 drinks	71	11.1%	17.2%
1 drink	45	7.0%	24.2%
2 drinks	105	16.4%	40.6%
3 drinks	86	13.4%	54.1%
4 drinks	75	11.7%	65.9%
5 drinks	61	9.5%	75.3%
6 drinks	54	8.4%	83.8%
7 drinks	14	2.2%	85.9%
8 drinks	25	3.9%	89.8%
9 drinks	11	1.7%	91.6%
10 drinks	26	4.1%	95.6%
11 drinks	2	0.3%	95.9%
12 drinks	10	1.6%	97.5%
13 drinks	1	0.2%	97.7%
14 drinks	4	0.6%	98.3%
at least 15 drinks	11	1.7%	100.0%
Total	640	100.0%	

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[26] Respondents that indicated "No, have never drunk alcohol/only had a few sips" to Q3
[27] Respondents that indicated, "I don't drink at all", "I didn't drink this year", "I don't usually drink", "I usually only have a few sips" to Q14, were all reclassified as abstainers.

The above measure of average consumption was transformed into a five-category gender-specific measure of average level of drinking per occasion. The categories were defined as follows: abstain (*'never consumed a whole drink in their lifetime'*), abstain (*'did not consume a whole drink in the past year'*), light drinking (Men: 1 to 2 drinks / Women: 1 drink), moderate drinking (Men: 3 to 4 drinks / Women: 2 to 3 drinks) and heavy drinking (Men: 5 or more drinks / Women: 4 or more drinks)[28]. In total, 17% of respondents could be classified as abstainers, 12% as light drinkers, 30% as moderate drinkers and 41% as heavy drinkers (Figure 8). Therefore, it appears that, contrary to the stereotypical perception that students typically drink heavily, the majority of students (59%) can be classified as moderate drinkers, light drinkers or abstainers according to this classification.

Figure 8: Gender-specific measure of average level of alcohol consumption per occasion, while with friends (N = 640)
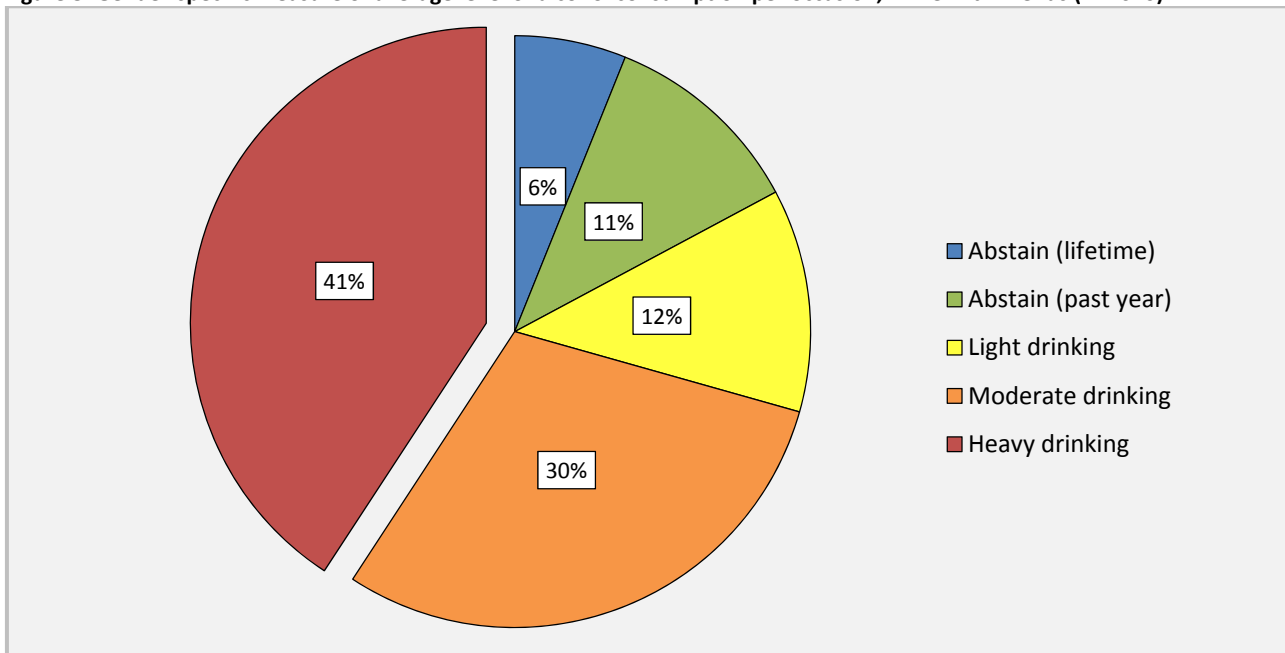
Students with a wide range of drinking levels took part in the qualitative interviews, from abstainers to extremely heavy drinkers[29]. The following participant is possibly an example of the latter:

> [L]ast year I was an absolute tank, I could drink half a bottle of vodka, half a bottle of whiskey before I even got out, and I would be pretty drunk, but I would be fine. Now I've done such damage to my body from the alcohol, really, I've genuinely done damage. I had to see a doctor. I screwed up my body, I've screwed up my intestines, I've got irritable bowel syndrome from the alcohol, I'm allergic to spirits now, I can't touch spirits. . . . My own fault. (Interview 14)

Interestingly enough, this participant did not have any regrets about her behaviour, still classified herself as a heavy drinker and indicated that she would do it again if she had a chance. In such circumstances, where a student actually does harm to herself, and still continues drinking, one has to question how ingrained drinking has become in that persons social life, and to what degree it is differentially reinforced by peers to continue that behaviour.

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[28] Categories were derived from the five/four measure of binge drinking (see section 3.2.5.3, *two-week binge frequency*).
[29] To be exact, two abstainers, four light drinkers, eight moderate drinkers and four heavy drinkers

4.2.1.3 Heavy drinking

Interviews revealed that students have various personal definitions of what they see as 'heavy drinking' and that this does not necessarily correspond with the classification in the survey. Often heavy drinking is interpreted as having both a frequency and a quantity component, and many perceive the quantity associated with heavy drinking as different for every person. Some also referred to a state of intoxication. The following narratives reflect this difference in perception:

For every person it's different, I mean, my idea of heavy drinking is when you're starting to get drunk. I know people that can have two beers and they would be almost like really really tipsy. You also think that heavy drinking is like strong stuff like vodka or just a beer, even if you have six beers, it's not the same as like having a double brandy and coke, different effects, different alcohols. So it's hard to say what heavy drinking exactly is, probably more than like five, but maybe more than four, but that's just me, because I can sometimes drink a whole bottle of Four Cousins[30], but it's like 8%. I'm drinking like a whole bottle of Four Cousins (wine), and you have like two vodka shots and a Jägermeister, you're probably going to be more wasted than I am, so it's definitely hard to say. (Interview 3)

Some people have this extreme drinking capacity, for me it's when you get drunk, then it's just too much. But that can be two drinks for me, and ten beers for someone else. (Interview 5)

I think like four, four is fine, then I can't anymore. I am very light on petrol. (Translated, Interview 1)

A bottle spirits, a bottle cane or a bottle brandy, or that equivalent in drinks. I don't really like ciders. They make me feel nauseous very quickly, so then my night ends much earlier. (Translated, Interview 2)

It's weird, we were talking about this the other day, and someone said like binge drinking and one of the okes was like 'what is binge drinking', and I was like 'you know that stuff we do on Friday nights, that's binge drinking'. I reckon what students do in like a warm-up before they go out, I think can be classified as binge drinking . . . A binge drinking session like when we go heavy would be like 12 drinks plus. On an average night, it would be like eight and I don't classify that as binge drinking. Binge drinking for me is when you go out and your wasted and you can't remember the next night or you might need to chunder (vomit) when you come back, that's binge drinking, that's heavy stuff. (Interview 8)

I don't know, the other night I drank out R250, that isn't that much, but I was at Bok for two for one [special], and I didn't go home long after 12 [o'clock]. Heavy drinking, probably like 12, 13 [drinks], around there. (Interview 11)

These varying ideas of heavy drinking show the problematic aspect of applying one definition of heavy drinking to an entire student population. Due to other variables, especially tolerance, people experience the feeling of drunkenness in different ways and after varying amounts of drinks. For some, such as the lighter consumers, the initial effects of alcohol are seen as being drunk, whilst others see the later effects of too much alcohol, such as nausea and memory loss, as being drunk. It hints at the diverse 'drinking styles' of students, some drink slowly, others fast, whilst some will stop after three or four drinks and go home at 12 o'clock, others will carry on drinking continuously into the early morning hours.

Question 19 (for men) and Question 20 (for women) in the survey asked students who drink to indicate how frequently they had drunk heavily during the past two weeks (*two week binge*

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[30] Four Cousins refers to a brand of rosé wine that is quite popular amongst students.

frequency, refer to section 3.2.5.3). The results of these questions were combined to form a gender-specific measure of frequency of heavy drinking (Table 12). Seven per cent of students could be classified as non-heavy drinkers[31]. These students indicated they drink, but they do not drink heavily and they have never done so. Twenty-six per cent of students also specified that they had not drunk heavily in the past two weeks.

Table 12: Heavy drinking/binge frequency

Binge classification	Heavy drink frequency in past two weeks	Frequency	Heavy drinkers	Binge classification
Abstainers	Abstainers	110	17.2%	17.2%
Non-binge drinkers	Non-heavy drinkers	43	6.7%	32.7%
	None	166	25.9%	
Occasional binge drinkers	Once	146	22.8%	35.2%
	Twice	79	12.3%	
Frequent binge drinkers	3 to 5 times	81	12.7%	15.0%
	6 to 9 times	13	2.0%	
	10 or more times	2	0.3%	
Total		**640**	**100.0%**	**100 .0%**

Certain studies (e.g. Wechsler & Kuo, 2000: 58) divide heavy drinking frequency into four binge categories. Firstly, *frequent binge drinkers* are seen as students who binged three or more times in the past two weeks. Secondly, *occasional binge drinkers* binged once or twice in the past two weeks, and *non-binge drinkers* consumed alcohol in the past year, but have not binged in the past two weeks. Lastly, *abstainers* (17%) are represented by students who have not consumed alcohol in the past year. As can be seen from the last column of Table 12 (Binge classification), the largest proportion of Stellenbosch students (35%) can be classified as occasional binge drinkers, closely followed by non-binge drinkers (33%), while frequent binge drinkers represent 15% of students in the sample. In total then, 50% of students were classified as binge drinkers, i.e. had at least one episode of five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women during the past two weeks before their completion of the questionnaire. One interview participant had the following to say about her frequency of drinking per week:

> *Three or four nights a week, it depends, it completely depends. Two weeks ago I did Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, so I did five. Last week I did Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. I already gone out last night, not for long, I just went out for a drink, definitely won't do anything tonight, definitely Wednesday, definitely Friday, like I would say probably three or four . . . I definitely get very very pissed two nights, and the others are usually quite moderate. (Interview 14)*

Heavy-drinking students and their peer groups play a significant role in influencing other students' perception of students' drinking behaviour in general. Their behaviour can be seen as extremely excessive, but they usually do not see their own behaviour as wrong. Rather, due to false consensus, they have the perception that the majority acts as they do. According to social norms theory, these students will be overrepresented in the minds of the general student population although they are in the minority in comparison to the more moderate to non-consuming cohort of students.

4.2.1.4 Typical weekly consumption

Student drinking patterns for a typical week are presented in Table 13 and Figure 9 (*typical weekly consumption*, refer to section 3.2.5.3; Q18). As in the case of *average consumption,* the number of

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[31]Indicated "No" to Question 5/Question 6.

drinks per day was reclassified into a gender-specific measure of the level of alcohol consumption per day with four categories, namely no drinking and light, moderate and heavy drinking. Abstainers were excluded from the table, as their typical weekly alcohol consumption equals zero. As can be seen, of the students that drink, the vast majority (90%) do not drink on Mondays and Tuesdays. On Wednesdays however, one in two drinkers (50%) typically consume alcohol, of which 20% drink heavily, 16% moderately and 14% lightly. Thursdays, again, the majority of students do not drink (85%). However, compared to other days in the week, on Fridays the largest proportion of students drink heavily, namely 35%, followed by Saturdays, when 25% of students drink heavily. Fridays and Saturdays are also characterised by the smallest proportions of students that do not drink, 22% and 24% respectively. The majority of students do not drink on Sundays (78%).

Table 13: Typical weekday consumption in terms of level of alcohol consumption

	No drinking	Light drinking	Moderate drinking	Heavy drinking	Total %	Total N
Monday	89.8%	6.4%	2.3%	1.5%	100.0%	530
Tuesday	89.6%	7.5%	1.7%	1.1%	100.0%	530
Wednesday	50.4%	13.6%	15.8%	20.2%	100.0%	530
Thursday	84.7%	7.2%	4.5%	3.6%	100.0%	530
Friday	21.9%	19.6%	23.8%	34.7%	100.0%	530
Saturday	23.8%	25.8%	24.9%	25.5%	100.0%	530
Sunday	78.1%	16.8%	2.8%	2.3%	100.0%	530

Figure 9: Typical weekly consumption in terms of gender-specific level of alcohol consumption per day (N = 530)
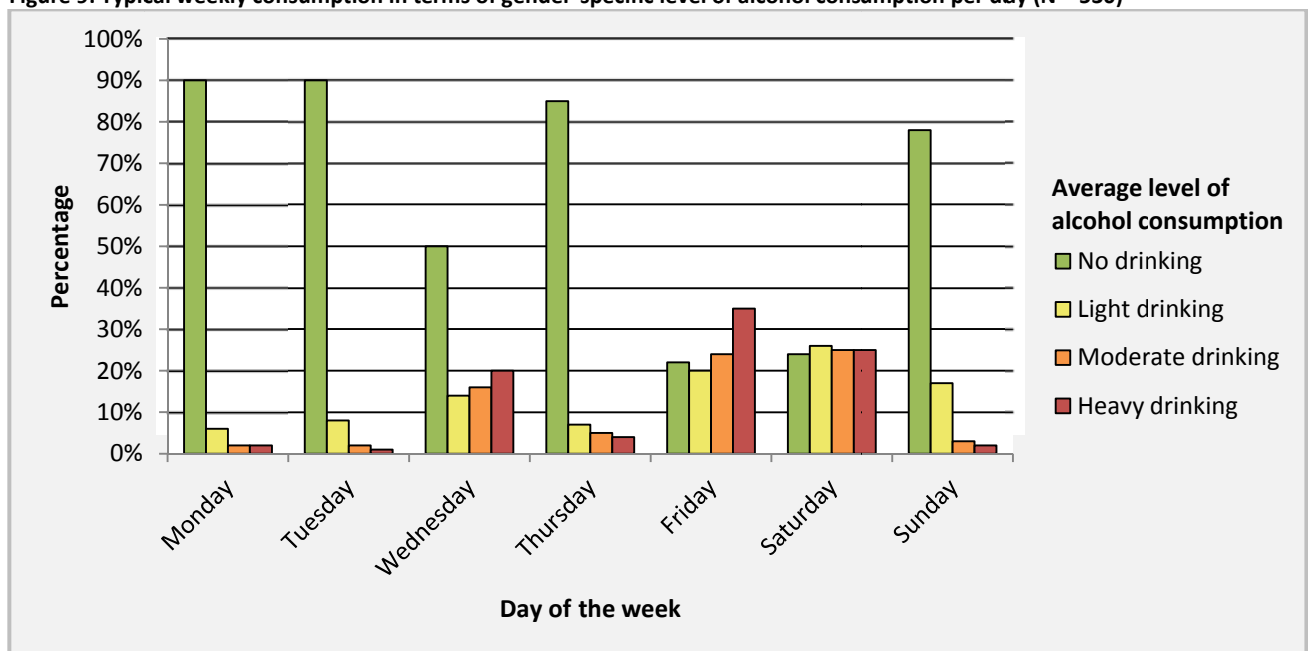
The interviews reflected that for most students, but almost exclusively for lighter drinkers, drinking revolved around occasions. For the heavier drinkers, there always seems to be an occasion to drink. For example, Wednesday nights are popularly known among students as 'student night' or 'klein Saterdag'. The fact that it is Wednesday night is seen as an occasion by some, which somehow obliges them to go out and/or drink. In addition, As Figure 9 reflects, many students drink over weekends, which might be the most regular and basic occasion to drink.

4.2.1.5   Change in drinking from high school to arrival at university

In Table 14, first-year respondents' high school drinking level is compared with their current drinking level, again making use of the gender-specific categorisation of average alcohol consumption, per occasion, while with friends. The purpose of this comparison is to acquire an idea of the change in their drinking level that has taken place since their last year of high school. As can be seen, of the first-year respondents that did not drink in high school, 61% still did not drink after almost a year at university, while 39% had started drinking after high school. Of those who drank lightly, 40% sustained the same level of drinking at university and 40% increased their drinking compared to 20% who decreased their average consumption. Fifty-seven per cent of respondents who drank moderately still drank moderately at university compared to 8% that had decreased their consumption and 35% that had increased their consumption. Lastly, the vast majority of respondents (79%) that were heavy drinkers during high school were still heavy drinkers. In total, 13% of first-year respondents, of which 8% had been heavy drinkers, had decreased their average drinking after high school. Almost two-thirds (63%) indicated that their average drinking had remained the same. Of the 24% of first-year respondents that had increased their drinking after high school, 13% now showed heavy drinking tendencies.

Table 14: Comparison between high-school level of alcohol consumption and current level of alcohol consumption for first-year respondents

Average level of alcohol consumption (gender-specific)		Average level of alcohol consumption during last year of high school (gender-specific)				Total	
		Abstain	Light drinking	Moderate drinking	Heavy drinking	%	N
Abstain		61.4%	20.0%	6.1%	3.1%	20.2%	37
Light drinking		11.4%	40.0%	2.0%	1.5%	9.3%	17
Moderate drinking		15.9%	32.0%	57.1%	16.9%	29.5%	54
Heavy drinking		11.4%	8.0%	34.7%	78.5%	41.0%	75
Total	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0% (183)	
	N	44	25	49	65		

$\chi^2 = 141.45$ $p = .000$ Kendall's tau-b = .616 sig. = .000

In general, interview participants seemed to indicate that their drinking had become more controlled or less since the initial arrival period at university, but some indicated that it had remained constant. Likewise, the participants that were in their first year at university also indicated that their drinking had decreased since the beginning of the year. The main reason mentioned in both instances was academic responsibilities or a change in priorities. It also has to be mentioned that the interviews were conducted in quite an academically intensive time of the year, namely the final term, in the month of October, right before the start of the final exams. Therefore, students indicated that this time of the year required more attention on an academic level. However, some indicated that their courses had become more difficult since the previous years. One participant in her first year at university described the change in her drinking behaviour as follows:

> [I]t was something different for a while, then you go out. Later you gradually get over it, or you start to realise, you know, that place isn't really so cool, we rather go to Bok or whatever, I think you start to sort out your places like that. You also find that places like the Mystic Boer, Die Bok and Tollies has different crowds also, and Nu Bars' Afrikaans night, definitely like different crowds. So, I think it also depends on when you start selecting crowds, and where your friends also go. And I think in the beginning, yes it's different, it's fun, you're a student . . . but I don't think afterwards . . . Now you go out, it's still fun, I'm not going to argue, but yes I think in the beginning a bit more . . . You just come

*to a point where you are so tired, you can't anymore, 'tonight we are going to sleep'. I think you get
to a point where you kind of start to realise, maybe it isn't that fun. This every night going out and
partying, maybe we should chill a bit, or when you start writing your first tests, then it's like aaah . . .
(Translated, Interview 13)*

4.2.1.6   Alcohol-related negative consequences

As expected, the alcohol-related negative consequences experienced by students tend to increase
as respondents weekly drinking increases (Table 15). Significant positive correlations exist
between drinking behaviour and the various dimensions of negative consequences due to drinking
(all $p < .001$). Therefore, the more drinks respondents consume on average per week, the more
likely they are to experience alcohol-related negative consequences. Furthermore, effect sizes
were large.

Table 15: Relationship between typical weekly consumption and alcohol-related negative consequences

	Actual weekly drinking	Consequences for oneself: physical effects and illicit drug use	Irresponsible behaviour involving/affecting others: sexual behaviour/abuse, property damage, problems with authorities	Consequences of an academic nature
Actual weekly drinking	1.00	.65***	.42***	.56***
Consequences for oneself: physical effects and illicit drug use	530	1.00	.43***	.60***
Irresponsible behaviour involving/affecting others: sexual behaviour/abuse, property damage, problems with authorities	530	530	1.00	.45***
Consequences of an academic nature	530	530	530	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)
Note: Only students who consumed alcohol on a usual basis answered this question

4.2.2   ATTITUDE TOWARDS DRINKING

4.2.2.1   Approval of drinking

Table 16: Students' attitude towards drinking (Indicator 1)

Statement about alcohol consumption that best represents own personal attitude	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Drinking is never a good thing to do	53	8.3%	8.3%
Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk	281	43.9%	52.2%
Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academic or other responsibilities	269	42.0%	94.2%
Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academic or other responsibilities	13	2.0%	96.3%
Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do	24	3.8%	100.0%
Total	640	100.0%	

The first question in the survey regarding students' approval of drinking behaviour asked students
to indicate which of five statements about alcohol consumption best represented their own
attitude (Table 16). A small portion of students thought that *drinking is never a good thing to do*
(8%). However, the largest percentage of students (44%) thought that *drinking is all right but a
person should not get drunk*, closely followed by 42% of students who indicated that *occasionally
getting drunk is okay as long as it does not interfere with academic or other responsibilities.*

Testaments from interview participants reflected these views. Most of them approved of their own drinking behaviour and felt that it did not largely influence their lives negatively:

> . . . I think I am completely comfortable with how I do it . . . I have found my limits through experience, [through] hitting my head. So I know where I have to stop. I don't feel it influences me negatively at all. (Translated, Interview 10)

As this participant explains, students possibly learn from experience and fine-tune their drinking behaviour to suite their personal approval levels and lifestyle so that it does not interfere with academic and other responsibilities. Some interviewees did however express some dissatisfaction with their previous drinking behaviour, when questioned about whether their own drinking behaviour bothers them:

> Ya, there was a time, in first year whenever I would get pocket money I would stock the fridge with alcohol and looking back now, I was like 'no, you were turning into something'. So ya, it did become a problem . . . [T]hen it didn't bother me, like I would go to class, and after class I would have a drink, and I would be like 'ah, hectic'. But now it bothers me, like what was I thinking then. (Interview 19)

> I must admit, after a heavy, heavy night, where I didn't intend it to be like that, it bothers me. And I think how could I let myself do that. When I plan to do it, it doesn't bother me at all because I know what I am getting myself into. It is always when it gets out of control when I find other people are like 'ah, just have one more', and then I'm like 'okay, everyone's doing it'. Then I wake up the next morning and I'm like 'that was a bit dumb, I should never do that again'. (Interview 8)

Accordingly, the question remains whether all students do learn from their mistakes and find an adequate balance conducive of both being socially adequate and academically efficient. Each student's definition of the adequate balance may also differ. For some the social side of campus culture may enjoy prominence with lower grades being viewed as adequate. For others, maintaining a balance where alcohol consumption does not affect other responsibilities might be more difficult, as one interview participant explained when asked whether she thought her life would be better if she did not drink:

> My academics would have, but I think it has a balance, if you take it too far then it would be negative. I think I am still at the stage where I don't let alcohol rule my life. So I am still in control of my life, I wouldn't be so much better, academics is the only thing that would be better. . . . I don't think it influences my life in a bad way, as long as I stay in control and not the alcohol. (Translated, Interview 2)

The second question in the survey concerning students' approval of alcohol consumption asked respondents to indicate how they would personally feel about drinking in four scenarios (Table 17). In terms of '*drinking every weekend*', 36% of students approved this behaviour, in comparison with 40% of students who disapproved. In addition, 24% of students indicated they have no opinion regarding '*drinking every weekend*'. A smaller proportion of students approved of drinking daily, with more than three-quarters (76%) indicating they strongly disapproved or disapproved of such behaviour. Only 5% of students approved of this behaviour to any extent. Ninety-two per cent of students strongly disapproved or disapproved of drinking before driving, and 86% felt the same about drinking enough to pass out.

Table 17: Students' attitude towards drinking (Indicator 2)

How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about:	Strongly disapprove/ Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral No opinion	Slightly approve	Strongly approve/ Approve	Total	
						%	N
Drinking every weekend	26.1%	13.8%	24.4%	13.6%	22.2%	100.0%	640
Drinking daily	76.4%	12.7%	6.4%	3.0%	1.6%	100.0%	640
Drinking before driving	91.7%	5.8%	2.2%	0.3%	0.0%	100.0%	640
Drinking enough to pass out	86.1%	5.6%	6.4%	0.8%	1.1%	100.0%	640

4.2.2.2 Opinion of appropriate drinking among university students

Thus far, students' personal approval of drinking behaviour has been explored. This section looks at interview participants' and survey respondents' approval of other students' drinking behaviour, including their friends and students in general.

[I]f they come and complain about something that they did, they can't remember, or stuff like that, then for me it's like your own choice. But I don't judge people because they drink or so, but in a way if someone came and told me that this person did this and this to them, but him or herself was drunk, then I would say that it's actually your own fault. . . . [F]urther I think it's your own choice and you have to take responsibility, we aren't at school anymore, someone isn't supposed to tell you to do this or that anymore, you have to take responsibility for your own decisions. So I think here (at university) you bring it onto yourself, except of course if your drink is spiked. If I see someone changing completely and they don't really realise that they are completely losing control, I think it would bother me, but if they are aware of what they are doing and it doesn't bother them, I don't think it's for me to judge them in the first place because it's their own choice. You are responsible for your own choices here. (Translated, Interview 13)

I approve to a certain extent, it's just part of being a student. You are going to party some or other time, even the most conservative people are going to go out one night. They will for instance go to Tollies or wherever and they will enjoy their night and party peacefully, people wouldn't do it if it wasn't fun . . . We are here to study, but sometimes it just gets a bit out of hand, but as long as it's within boundaries. . . . You came here to get a degree. It's a lot of money you are going to waste if you don't pass. So I think you should be able to at least complete your academics here. As soon as it starts interfering with that then you have to start either managing time more or drinking less. But I think for a lot of people it's more about time management than the alcohol, I can definitely testify to that in the case of a few people. They just don't know how to manage their time. (Translated, Interview 2)

As can be interpreted from the above statements, students seem to take a tolerant approach towards other students drinking, and many mention that they see it as a personal choice. Furthermore, associated with this 'own choice' is responsibility. Students expect other students to take responsibility for their actions as these actions result from their own decisions. This idea cannot be separated from the notion of freedom that participants refer to in relation to their arrival at university, which is associated with the expectation of taking responsibility for one's own choices and actions. In line with this, there seems to be a general perception that participants are okay with other students' drinking, as long as fellow students do not take it 'too far' or start getting out of hand. The latter is also reflected in the majority of survey respondents' disapproval of drinking daily, drinking before driving and drinking enough to pass out (Table 17).

Well personally, I really have nothing against it, I mean you know, I don't drink, but if I met you I would buy you a beer you know. If people go too far, like if they get drunk or something then I'm sort of against it, you know, generally it seems fine. (Interview 4)

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It doesn't really bother me. . . . I don't necessarily agree with it, but if they have the money and the time to waste, then go for it. (Interview 5)

It's like I don't care if people get drunk or whatever, but as long as I don't have to see it and have to view their vulgarity, I don't really care. (Translated, Interview 6)

The survey results confirmed that respondents have the perception that it is appropriate for students to drink moderately or heavily, while their own drinking is generally lower than what they see as appropriate. Therefore, the idea students maintain in their minds of the appropriate drinking for a university student is more permissive than their own average alcohol consumption. Respondents' average alcohol consumption (Mdn = 3) was significantly lower than their opinion of the appropriate number of drinks for a university student to usually consume (Mdn = 4, $p < .001$, r = .13), although the magnitude of the difference was small. To explore this difference further, both variables were categorised into gender-specific measures and compared (Table 18). As can be seen, the majority of abstaining and light-drinking respondents were of the opinion that it is appropriate for a university student to drink more heavily than they themselves do. For both groups, almost half indicated moderate drinking is appropriate for a university student. Of the moderate-drinking respondents, 65% thought it appropriate for a university student to drink moderately as they do, while 30% thought it appropriate if students drink heavily per occasion. The majority of heavy drinkers (81%) were of the opinion that it is appropriate for a university student to also drink heavily.

Table 18: Students' average alcohol consumption compared to their opinion of the appropriate alcohol consumption for a university student

Students' opinion of the appropriate number of drinks for a university student to usually consume per occasion, while with friends (gender-specific)	Average level of alcohol consumption per occasion, while with friends (gender-specific)				Total	
	Abstain	Light drinking	Moderate drinking	Heavy drinking	%	N
Abstain	14.5%	.0%	.5%	.4%	2.8%	18
Light drinking	27.3%	37.2%	3.7%	1.5%	10.9%	70
Moderate drinking	49.1%	51.3%	65.4%	17.2%	41.3%	264
Heavy drinking	9.1%	11.5%	30.4%	80.8%	45.0%	288
Total % N	100.0% 110	100.0% 78	100.0% 191	100.0% 261	100% (640)	

χ^2 = 373.01 p = .000 Kendall's tau-b = .591 sig. = .000

4.2.3 ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR

I think we are here to study, you came here to get a degree. It's a lot of money you are going to waste if you don't pass. So I think you should be able to just complete your academics here. As soon as it starts interfering with that then you have to start either managing time more or drinking less. But I think for a lot of people it's more about time management than the alcohol. I can definitely testify that for a few people. They just don't know how to manage their time. . . . You can party, I mean, I partied very hard last year, but I still did very well, but you just have to learn to manage yourself. You go drinking the whole night, wake up before lunch, do an hour's work, after lunch you do another bit, sleep a bit more and then you go out again. You just have to do your work. (Translated, Interview 2)

Interview participants voiced various approaches towards academic behaviour in relation to drinking behaviour. Various participants indicated that they thought their drinking does, to a certain extent, influence their academic lives negatively. This negative effect seems mostly with

regard to class attendance. Participants indicated that drinking and staying up late negatively influenced their ability to attend classes as well as to be productive in general.

Yes, it does, obviously, I mean the next day you feel so shit, so you can't do anything. You try and sit in a chemistry practical where there are bubbling smells and try not to throw up from your hangover. I think brain cells also suffer because of it. (Translated, Interview 1)

Yes . . . I have to get about 10 hours sleep in a night, to function correctly, so if I only get into bed at four o'clock in the morning, then I wake up in the afternoon, and I have most of my classes in the morning. (Interview 11)

[W]hen you wake up in the morning and your head's pounding, you feel like you're going to vomit, your stomach's sore, chances are you're not going to get up and go to class. What's more important, going to your class or vomiting in your class? . . . but like I said, everyone's different, everyone's very like differently disciplined, some people won't bother getting up for classes, but other people will. (Interview 14)

However, some participants seemed to plan their drinking to facilitate going to classes. This is reflected by the majority of survey respondents who seemed to place a high value on coursework. Table 19 reviews survey respondents' responses regarding their personal academic behaviour for the previous academic semester. The vast majority (92%) indicated that they put in medium (56%) to maximum effort (36%) into general coursework. In terms of students' class/predicate/progress marks, the largest proportion (41%) thought they performed better than class average, followed by 39% of students, who indicated they thought they performed as well as the class average. In accordance, from the interviews it appeared as if students do try to maintain a balance between their academic and social lives concerning more important academic responsibilities such as tests and assignments, which directly influence their grades.

I think I get more done because I force myself to do something within a certain time and on a certain standard and I think I actually get more done, because I like doing my work well and finishing it off. I'm good with my time management and I go out a lot, if you think at how much work we have. There are obviously a few exceptions, like Candy who studies with me, who goes out more than I do. But I think I get much more done. It's about motivation. . . . I do my work and then I have time left and if I watch a movie or drink alcohol, it's not going to make a difference to my work. Maybe if I'm writing a test and I drink the night before, but I'm not stupid. I place my academics first, but I finish my work. Time between classes I do my work, then I have the rest of the day off, then it's fun, because then you don't stress about anything, at the back of your mind you don't have anything to worry about and then you can enjoy your night even more and you know the next morning it's just me and my bed. (Translated, Interview 2)

[L]ook academics are sort of what you are here to do. You are also here to make friends and to grow and everything, but academics is the one that limits that, because if you don't pass your course, then you are sort of in trouble. There are people that go in for the party and for who the course is second, I personally am studying on a bursary. So I can't really afford to fail subjects or not to pass or something. (Translated, Interview 10)

Furthermore, in response to the question of how hard they studied for their exams the previous semester, the majority of survey respondents indicated they had studied hard (50%), to very hard (29%). Lastly, students were asked about their overall or average performance marks for the previous semester. A total of 57% of students thought they had performed better or much better than the class average.

Table 19: Students' academic behaviour

		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
In the previous semester, how hard did you generally work on coursework (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?	Almost no effort	3	.5%	.5%
	Minimum effort	46	7.2%	7.7%
	Medium effort	360	56.3%	63.9%
	Maximum effort	231	36.1%	100.0%
Total		**640**	**100.0%**	
If you think about your class/predicate/ progress marks (average for all modules) for last semester, would you say your marks are generally:	Much worse than class average	5	.8%	.8%
	Worse than class average	38	6.0%	6.8%
	More or less class average	245	38.5%	45.2%
	Better than class average	258	40.5%	85.7%
	Much better than class average	91	14.3%	100.0%
Total		**637**	**100.0%**	
In general, how hard did you study for exams in the previous semester?	Not hard at all	11	1.8%	1.8%
	Not hard	119	18.9%	20.7%
	Hard	315	50.2%	70.9%
	Very hard	183	29.1%	100.0%
Total		**628**	**100%**	
How would you describe the overall performance marks (average for all modules) you received after the previous semester?	Much worse than class average	3	0.5%	.5%
	Worse than class average	31	4.9%	5.4%
	More or less class average	236	37.6%	43.0%
	Better than class average	271	43.2%	86.1%
	Much better than class average	87	13.9%	100.0%
Total		**628**	**100.0%**	

From these results, it seems that most respondents attach value to their academic work. During the qualitative interviews students referred to the issue of balancing their social life and academic work. Of course, due to individual variation, for some students finding the balance between social life and academic responsibilities might initially be easier than for others. Some of those students, who struggle, possibly learn from experience and become more adept at finding a balance between the two that personally suits them, as the following two participants illustrate:

I remember in first year we went out more than anything else, and then when June came, all of us didn't make SANSU[32], so my parents are like, 'what is happening here, now tell me. We have never seen this now', so I couldn't really tell them I've been going out the whole time, I mean that would be like 'then what are you doing there'. So it's kind of good to be able to strike a balance in between, to know that it's okay to be social, but you know I can be social Friday night after class and then Saturday I can work till a certain time and then go out to a certain time, and then I can go out again Saturday night, and not go overboard, because you need the Saturday to kind of work and stuff. (Interview 19)

[I]n my first year I nevertheless maintained a balance, you're still seen in residence, you still take part, but you also realise that your academics are important, well that's just my personal opinion, and you work. And I think there are obviously first years that don't do that at all. They come here, they have the freedom, they don't have to do homework, and I know a lot of people, I know in our section of the 14 guys, we lost five of the people, and it's because they stopped studying. During the year round about September, due to them studying the wrong course, or academically they just couldn't do it. I couldn't necessarily say that I attribute it to alcohol, but I think it is definitely that social [thing] of let's go to the beach if I'm writing a test tomorrow. I think in my years at Stellenbosch, you also realize that you can be smarter, you adapt, you know what classes you don't have to attend, from who you can get notes, you form you core study people with who you can exchange notes. I think, you

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[32] SANSU is the former name of the points system that the university administration employed to determine whether students could remain in university residence for the next academic year.

start to study less, but more effectively. I think there are people that did drink a lot and then they couldn't study the next day. (Translated, Interview 18)

Interviews reflected that for some students and in some instances, drinking does influence their academic behaviour to a degree. However, most students revealed a degree of personal planning in the form of time management to minimise the influence of their social life on their academic behaviour. Survey results also show that the majority of students seem generally positive about their own academic performance and behaviour. Academic behaviour can be seen in direct conflict with this stereotypical idea of social drinking, because a successful university career is characterised by an adequate use of the available free time to ensure sufficient academic performance. Social drinking can be seen as infringing on the time available for academic studies. Nevertheless, it was apparent from the section on students' motivations to drink that alcohol use might play a functional role in relation to academic behaviour. Students often portray alcohol use and socialising as functional in helping to relax or to relieve the stress of academic pressure. In this view then, drinking seems to have a role to play in student academic culture due to the pressure associated with an academic lifestyle.

4.3 PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR COMPARED TO PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR

The analysis now shifts to the focus of the research, namely the misperception of peer behaviour. Each subsection starts with a comparison between the actual norm (own behaviour) and the perceived norm (students' perception of other students' behaviour) in terms of the indicators used in the questionnaire. After this introductory investigation of students' accuracy in perceiving the norm in each subsection, the focus shifts to statistically testing the specific hypotheses of interest with the use of index scores calculated in section 3.2.6. Where applicable, the norm was viewed as the central tendency of all reported scores on a particular indicator of behaviour. For variables with a large degree of variation, such as total weekly drinking, the mean represented the norm. For variables with only a few values, such as the frequency of weekly drinking, the median represented the norm (e.g. Perkins *et al.* 2005: 472).

4.3.1 ACTUAL DRINKING BEHAVIOUR COMPARED TO PERCEIVED DRINKING NORM

4.3.1.1 Accuracy in perceiving the drinking norm of students in general

Table 20: Students' accuracy in perceiving the average drinking norm for students in general

| Actual norm (median)	Accuracy in perceiving the norm of general students' average drinking quantity				Total	
	Underestimates by 1 to 2 drinks	Accurate estimates	Overestimates by 1 to 2 drinks	Overestimates by 3 or more drinks	%	N
3 drinks	2.5%	9.8%	31.9%	55.8%	100.0%	640
Cumulative	2.5%	12.3%	44.2%	100.0%		

Table 20 compares students' actual median drinking (*average consumption*, refer to section 3.2.5.3; Q14) to their perception of students' typical drinking. As can be seen, the vast majority (88%) grossly overestimated the drinking norm, with more than half (56%) overestimating by three or more drinks.

Table 21: Students' accuracy in perceiving the frequency of heavy drinking of students in general

Question	Actual norm (median)	Accuracy in perceiving the norm of general students' drinking frequency			Total	
		Underestimates	Accurate perceptions	Overestimates	%	N
Heavy drinking frequency for the past two weeks	Once	1.1%	13.4%	85.5%	100.0%	640

Table 21 illustrates students' accuracy in perceiving other students' heavy drinking frequency in the past two weeks. The vast majority (86%) of students again overestimated the actual norm on campus.

Figure 10: Comparison between students' actual drinking and their perception of drinking by friends, co-residents and students in general for every day of the week
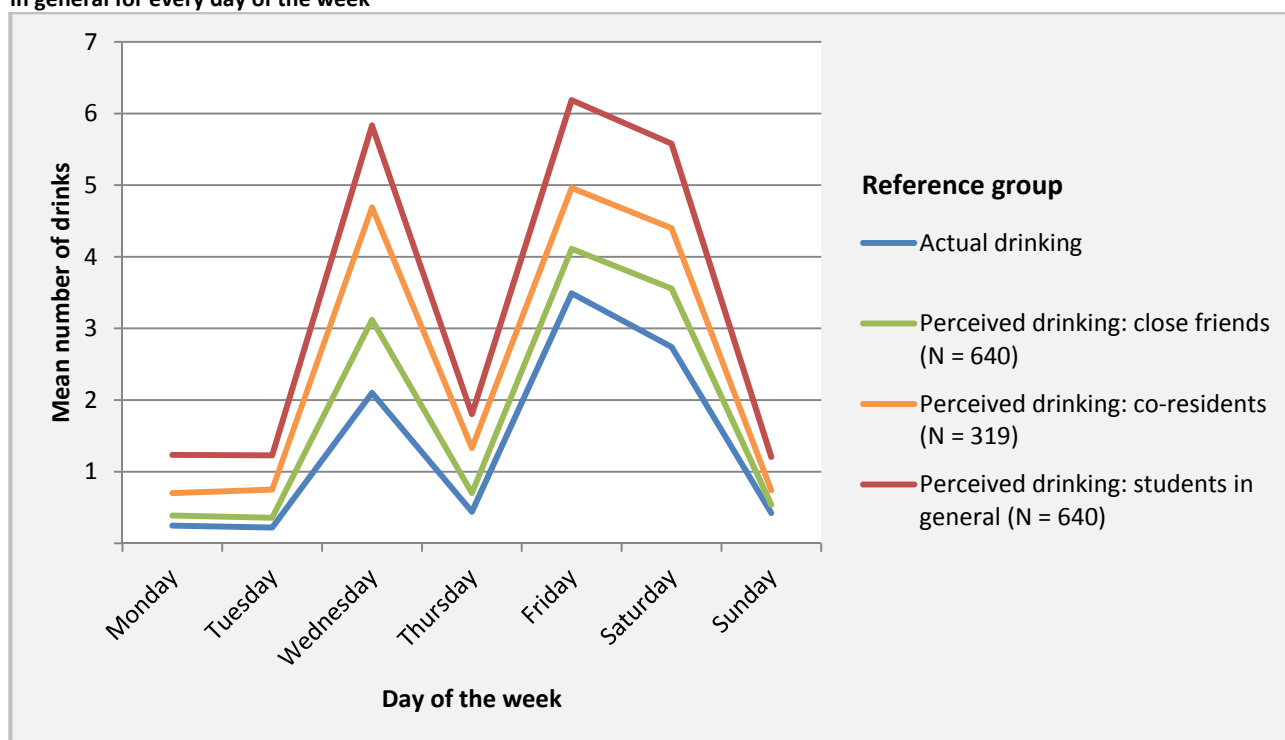
In Figure 10, the mean for students' own daily drinking is compared to the mean of the perceived daily drinking of close friends, co-residents and students in general. As is shown, for every day of the week, students' own daily drinking is less than the perceived daily drinking of all reference groups. The degree of the difference also seems to increase as the proximal difference of reference groups increases. For example, on Fridays, students' own drinking on average is 3 drinks, in comparison with the perceived drinking of close friends, 4 drinks; co-residents, 5 drinks; and students in general, 6 drinks.

4.3.1.2 Relationship between own drinking behaviour and the perceived drinking norm

As shown (Table 22), a significant correlation exists between students' own drinking and the perceived drinking of their close friends (r = .75), co-residents (r = .48) and students in general (r = .41) (all p [two-tailed] < .001). The positive relationship indicates that as students' own drinking increases, their perception of the peer drinking norm increases as well. Students that drink more will be more likely to perceive the drinking norm of their peers as higher. Additionally, the magnitude of the relationship between own drinking and the perceived drinking of close friends is

significantly larger than the effect size for perceived drinking of co-residents and students in general.

Table 22: Relationship between students' own drinking behaviour and the perceived drinking behaviour of close friends, co-residents and students in general

	Own weekly drinking	Perceived weekly drinking of close friends	Perceived weekly drinking of co-residents	Perceived weekly drinking of students in general
Own weekly drinking	1.00	.75***	.48***	.41***
Perceived weekly drinking of close friends	640	1.00	.63***	.51***
Perceived weekly drinking of co-residents	319	319	1.00	.70***
Perceived weekly drinking of students in general	640	640	319	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

4.3.1.3 Difference between own drinking and the perceived drinking norm

It appears that students' views of their own drinking are more conservative than the perceived drinking of their student peers. Firstly, the differences in perceptions according to gender were examined. According to the perception of male students, other male students in general consume on average 13 drinks more than they personally do per typical week (Table 23) ($p < .001$, $r = .68$). A significant difference also exists between male students' actual drinking and their perception of female students' drinking ($p < .001$, $r = .37$). Men think that women on average consume five drinks more than they themselves do per week. Regarding female students' perception, they perceive their female counterparts as consuming on average 11 drinks more than they personally do per week ($p < .001$, $r = .74$) (Table 23). Furthermore, female respondents think that male students consume on average 20 drinks more than they themselves do per week ($p < .001$, $r = .82$).

Table 23: Difference between personal drinking behaviour (by gender) and perceived drinking behaviour of men and women in general

		Descriptive statistics				Paired differences					
		Mean	N	SD	Std. error mean	Mean diff.	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% CI of diff.		t
									Lower	Upper	
Men											
Pair 1	Actual weekly drinking	11.00	293	10.71	0.63	-12.54***	13.46	0.79	-14.09	-10.99	-15.94
	Perceived weekly drinking of men in general	23.54	293	15.17	0.89						
Pair 2	Actual weekly drinking	11.00	293	10.71	0.63	-5.03***	12.62	0.74	-6.48	-3.58	-6.82
	Perceived weekly drinking of women in general	16.03	293	11.74	0.69						
Women											
Pair 1	Actual weekly drinking	5.47	347	7.08	0.38	-19.72***	13.60	0.73	-21.16	-18.29	-27.02
	Perceived weekly drinking of men in general	25.19	347	14.45	0.78						
Pair 2	Actual weekly drinking	5.47	347	7.08	0.38	-10.93***	10.09	0.54	-11.99	-9.86	-20.17
	Perceived weekly drinking of women in general	16.39	347	10.62	0.57						

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

From the interviews, it appeared that students mentally position themselves within their friendship group in terms of their drinking behaviour and then position their friendship group within the larger student community. They see themselves in comparison to their friends and then

again, they see their friendship group as falling into a certain drinking cohort. Furthermore, the survey results show that if students are forced to generalise, they view their group of friends as if they are more or less homogeneous in their drinking. However, in the qualitative interviews this appears not to be the case, necessarily.

I've got quite a diverse friendship group, so some of them fall into the abstaining group, they don't drink, they would go out with the guys and party, but they would drink coke or something. There is not that many of them. Then most of my friends are actually average I think. They also enjoy their drink once in a while, they don't drink too much, then I have a few friends that just go overboard. I've got one friend living across in res from me, and like every night he takes his drink and some nights he takes too much and gets a bit jolly but ya, I'm spread out between groups. (Translated, Interview 10)

However, the survey results show that students' perception of their friends' drinking behaviour take on a certain character, namely that their own drinking is less than their friends' drinking is. Survey respondents tend to perceive their close friends as typically drinking five drinks more than they do per week (Pair 1, Table 24) ($p < .001$, $r = .54$). Moreover, survey respondents living in university residence and university student housing also thought their co-residents consume on average 10 drinks more than they do per week (Pair 2, Table 24) ($p < .001$, $r = .63$). Therefore, they also perceive their own drinking and their close friends' drinking as less than the norm of their co-residents' drinking. In explanation, many interview participants thought that the perceptions students have of other students' drinking is influenced by their friendship groups and their more direct social circumstances, for example their living arrangements. One participant explains:

I think [perceptions of others' drinking] depend a lot on your friendship group. Like that was a surprise to me, like when I came down I pretty much thought that everyone [drank], especially because it's Stellenbosch. And I get here, and I meet these people and make friends with these people who just don't do it, and it's like wow, that's pretty cool that you can make that choice. Like even guys in res that don't do it, and it's like wow. But then it definitely depends on where you are. If you're in like a serious party place, like Academia for example. Then I think your friendship group is always going out all the time, I don't think you would know that there are people who don't [drink]. (Interview 8)

With regard to their perceptions of students in general, it seemed as if interview participants had a more diversified perception of their friends' drinking than the drinking of students in general. In the case of the latter, survey respondents again thought students in general drink on average 15 drinks more than they do in a typical week (Pair 3, Table 24) ($p < .001$, $r = .75$). In accordance, most interview participants were of the general opinion that the majority of students drink a lot. Moreover, several participants also had the perception that students in general drink too much. They had the following to say when asked about the perceived drinking of students in general:

Well, according to what I've heard, it's bad. But like I said, I don't like going out, I don't enjoy it at all, so in my experience . . . between me and my friends, we almost never drink. (Translated, Interview 6)

They drink a lot, as I have realised so far. The most probably on a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and some on a Sunday, and I know people that drink every day, they believe that they should [drink] every day, even if it's just one beer, or one drink that they go drink, and then they stink like alcohol in class. (Translated, Interview 9)

I think they just drink terribly much. (Translated, Interview 11)

In the three years I've been here I've found it quite excessively much. . . . I think it's a 60/40 relationship. I think there are more students that drink heavily than don't. (Translated, Interview 12)

I think, I have never in my life seen so many people that party so much, back home, there in Namibia, we go out maybe Fridays . . . but here, it's almost like every day of the week there is someone somewhere. For me it seems the students like it a lot. I don't know if they like it or if they have to do it or whatever, but that's how I feel, students drink a lot. (Translated, Interview 15)

Heavily. The larger majority drinks too much. (Interview, 17)

I think judging on each day, like during the week, it's I think moderate and then there's Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, those are heavy days, I think they go overboard, binge drinking. (Interview 19)

In general then, survey respondents tended to perceive other students' drinking behaviour as more permissive than their own with the largest difference between women's weekly drinking and their perception of men's weekly drinking, with a mean difference of 20 drinks[33]. Furthermore, as will be noted in Table 24 (mean difference column), as the proximal distance of each reference group increases, the mean difference between students' own drinking and the perceived drinking of each reference group increases as well (Figure 11). Perceptions of the drinking behaviour of close friends are therefore closer to respondents' actual drinking than their perceptions of the drinking behaviour of co-residents and students in general (all $p < .001$).

Table 24: Actual weekly drinking norm compared with the perceived norm of close friends, co-residents and students in general

		Descriptive Statistics				Paired Differences					
					Std. error mean	Mean diff.		Std. error mean	95% CI of diff.		
		Mean	N	SD			SD		Lower	Upper	t
Pair 1	Personal weekly drinking	8.00	640	9.34	0.37	-4.77***	7.43	0.29	-5.35	-4.20	-16.25
	Perceived weekly drinking of close friends	12.77	640	11.16	0.44						
Pair 2	Personal weekly drinking	7.91	319	9.23	0.52	-9.64***	11.90	0.67	-10.95	-8.33	-14.47
	Perceived weekly drinking of co-residents	17.55	319	13.15	0.74						
Pair 3	Personal weekly drinking	8.00	640	9.34	0.37	-15.07***	13.51	0.53	-16.12	-14.02	-28.22
	Perceived weekly drinking of students in general	23.07	640	14.25	0.56						

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)

Another important objective of the current research was to understand *how* students perceive the student population. Do they perceive it as consisting of one large bulk of individuals that can largely be classified as a single, prototypical type of drinker, or do they see it as differentiated, as ever-changing, influenced by temporality, friends and a range of other factors? Moreover, how students classify their social environment according to drinking habits will depend on the personal definitions they have of drinking behaviour. One person's idea of heavy drinking might be another's idea of moderate drinking, as was reflected in interview participants' perceptions of heavy drinking (section 4.2.1.3).

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[33]All effect sizes were large, with the exception of men's perception of women's weekly drinking, which had a moderate effect size. This indicates that the magnitude of these differences between actual and perceived drinking is substantial.

Figure 11: Actual weekly drinking norm compared with the perceived norm of close friends, co-residents and students in general
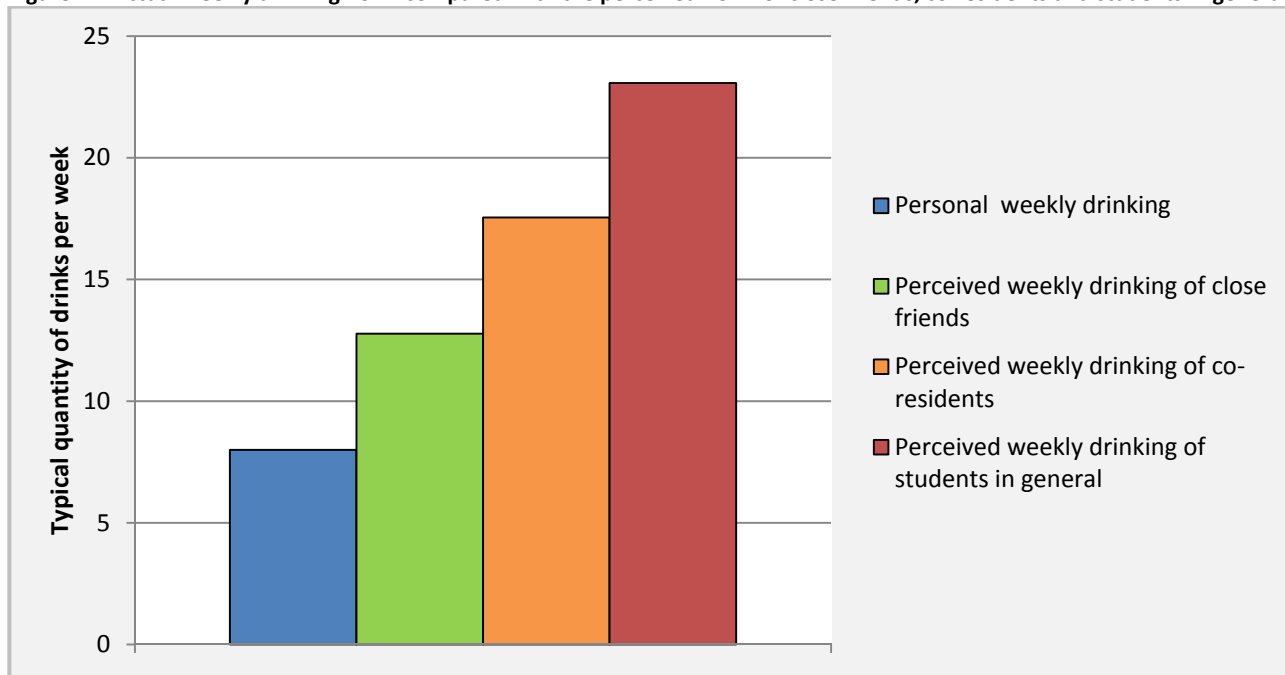
From their interview narratives it appears as if students distinguish certain strata. For instance, participants seemed to be aware of a group of excessive drinkers that, according to them, sometimes took drinking too far.

I think there are the people that party super frequently, like every night of the week or from Wednesday, and then there are the people that are more academic. . . . I think campus is divided in that way. Sixty per cent are like 'let's party' and 40% are 'let's study'. (Translated, Interview 1)

In res as well, you get your people that are known for their heavy drinking, you get your medium guys, you get the guys that completely abstain, okay they are a minority of course. (Translated, Interview 10)

I think, I must say I have worked in many different environments and been in contact with people and I think there are definitely people that drink very hard and there are people that I have come in contact with that drink nothing. Maybe it's also the people you are exposed to, understand I was on the Jool committee and they are a fun group, I don't know how they are now, but in my years there, it was really people that go out to party and to get drunk. . . . If I could just say, I think the majority of Stellenbosch students, 23 000 students, there is a majority that, or I would say that at least 10% drinks very heavily. I think there is definitely a large group of students that just drink for a social atmosphere, not necessarily to get drunk. If that's your mission, you know: 'I want to get drunk tonight', but I think there are people that say, 'let's drink, we will have a fun time, what happens is what happens', something like that. (Translated, Interview 18)

[Y]ou have to think about all these people. Like I think with just my class alone . . . there are a few hundred people in it. Like what does that girl over there think. I think everyone knows that it happens. So everyone's tolerant of it, then there are those people who are completely against it and all that. Who think it's stupid and pathetic if you drink, you're dumb and you're an idiot. And then there are those people who do it a lot and look at the people who don't do it, and say you are a loser, you are a nerd. And I think that's dumb, I think you make your own personal choices as to how you want to view it and what you think about it. I think in majority, this is Stellenbosch, this is party town of the year since like 1993 or whatever. It happens. You wouldn't be here if you were completely against it. (Interview 8)

Social norms theory suggests that the high visibility of this group may contribute to the perception that drinking in the general student community is heavier than it actually is. In this regard, participants were confronted with the statement that the majority of students, namely 60%, consume four drinks or fewer, and consequently were asked if they found it believable. Out of the 18 interviewees, 11 indicated they would not believe such a statement and were sceptical – they thought there were more heavier drinkers in the student population. Participants were then confronted with a scenario where posters with this statement would be placed around campus and asked whether they thought students in general would believe such a statement. In response, the majority thought students would not believe it. One participant espoused the following theory with regard to how students perceive their social environment:

> People that party harder or that drink heavily, are going to tell you it's nonsense, because to them it feels like all their friends drink heavily, and those that drink tea will say, hi shame, only 60%, because they think everyone sits in the tea room and the tee room is full, so I don't know, maybe. But because I'm in the middle it feels like . . . guys obviously party more than girls, or for me it feels that way, and because I'm around the guys the whole time, it feels to me like the majority of students party a bit more, the 60% sounds a bit high that drink too little, I don't know. My friends aren't [that heavy drinkers] . . . understand, but if I heard the perception that all students . . . then I'm going to think, 'don't you think it's a bit optimistic?' (Translated, Interview 13)

Subsequently, participants were asked why they would not believe such a statement and why they think other students have the perception that students in general drink so heavily. One very important aspect that came to the fore is visibility, as the following testimonies reflect:

> I think, those that party less, don't see what goes on in town, so they can't judge for themselves. So I think it depends on people that party from little to a lot. The people that party a lot only know people that party a lot. And those that don't party, all they know is people that don't party and it's just the select few drunk guys that fall around (that they see). One night we came back from the Study Centre at 3'o clock in the morning on a Wednesday and we saw two guys diving into rubbish, which was quite funny. . . . I think you see it easier, it's much more noticeable when people drink and get drunk than when people do nothing, because I mean that's what you see, you see people run around drunk. But you don't see everyone drinking and working simultaneously. So you see more cases of alcohol, drunkenness, falling over. . . and it's very audible, you hear drunk people. You realise it more (that people drink) than people that don't drink. (Translated, Interview 2)

> I don't know, I just see the people when I go out and I think these okes have not like had four or less drinks. (Interview 8)

> It depends again on group to group and the individual. People that drink heavier will look and think 'agfffff'. 60% no man, if you were there yesterday night, then you would have seen'. . . . [T]he people that don't drink at all, or drink less, they are sometimes a bit secluded, they don't always know what the numbers are and how it looks, because they get less chance to see it. (Translated, Interview 10)

> But late at night, when you are here for functions, we walk around quite late in the streets, and then yes, then you see what's going on. You don't need a doctor's degree to see that. . . . It's maybe also perception, stereotyping, you come here and you hear it, you HEAR it, you see it happen. (Translated, Interview 12)

> [O]kay, I'm between guys in the faculty, because we are just a handful of girls. If I listen to guys, their mission is kind of to go out and to go party, and I don't know, if I was in a friendship group that just

goes for tea, understand, then I would believe it, I would have thought everyone was so innocent. But you go out and you see. (Translated, Interview 13)

Well I know, because I go to class in the morning and I'm like hung over, and I can see everyone else is like aaaaah, with their water bottles, then I recognise faces that I've seen out and stuff. Or you go to a Thursday morning lecture and there is a quarter of the [number] of people in the class, then you know everyone has been out on the Wednesday night. Stellenbosch is a ghost town on Thursday mornings. (Interview 14)

As can be seen, participants do seem to refer to discrete situations during which they or others observe evidence of heavy-drinking behaviour, highly visible and memorable experiences which create the idea in their minds, and according to them, in other students' minds as well, that students in general drink a lot. These observations give rise to the perception of a campus atmosphere that approves of a certain type of drinking behaviour, a perception that the majority drink more heavily than they do. However, the quantitative results and theory suggest that perception does not always reflect reality, and the following participant's conclusion about student drinking highlights this possibility:

I think the perception around student drinking is kind of all students drink and all students are just drunk all the time, but I think it isn't like that always in reality. Yes, they go out and party, some of them get drunker than others, but people judge people to say 'it's just a bunch of drunk young people, that's all it is'. And I don't think it's possibly how all students are. I think people are just exploring and just enjoying their young lives. Maybe they do sometimes go over the limit, especially in the beginning . . . (Translated, Interview 13)

Interview participants were consequently also questioned about their perceptions of the proportion of heavy drinkers in the student population according to a specific definition of heavy drinking, which was defined as five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women per occasion. Students were asked to indicate what percentage of the student population they think drink heavily according to this definition. Firstly, five interviewees indicated that they thought heavy drinkers were in the minority in comparison to the rest of the campus. These participants were of the opinion that the proportion of heavy drinkers ranged from 20% to 40% of the student population. Additionally, another five participants indicated that they thought half or 50% of the student population drink heavily. The remaining eight participants thought that the majority of students drink heavily, and these estimates ranged from 60% to 85% of the student population.

Survey respondents were also questioned about their perceptions of the proportion of heavy drinkers on campus. The results are summarised in Table 25. Due to the negatively skewed nature of the resulting distribution, the median is a more accurate reflection of the central tendency of students' perception. As can be seen, in general respondents thought that 60% of students in general had drunk heavily in the past two weeks. If the actual proportion of respondents that indicated that they had drunk heavily at least on one occasion in the past two weeks, namely 50%, is accepted as the actual norm (Table 12), it is evident that students overestimated the heavy-drinking proportion of the student population by approximately 10%.

Table 25: Perception of the percentage of student population that had drunk heavily in the past two weeks

			Statistic	Std. error
If 'heavy' drinking is seen as having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row for men and four or more alcoholic drinks in a row for women, overall, what percentage of Stellenbosch University students do you think drank 'heavily' (at at least one occasion) in the past two weeks?	Mean		56.74	.86
	95% confidence interval for mean	Lower bound	55.06	
		Upper bound	58.43	
	5% trimmed mean		57.27	
	Median		60.00	
	Standard deviation		21.73	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		100	
	Interquartile range		35	
	Skewness		-.32	.10
	Kurtosis		-.61	.19

Similarly, survey respondents were asked about their perception of the proportion of abstainers in the student population (Table 26). They estimated that 10% of the student population abstains, compared to 17% of the sampled students that indicated they abstain. Again, if the prior is accepted as the norm, respondents underestimated the proportion of students in the population that abstain.

Table 26: Perception of the percentage of student population that abstain from alcohol consumption

			Statistic	Std. error
Overall, what percentage of Stellenbosch University students do you think do not drink alcohol at all?	Mean		15.62	.53
	95% confidence interval for mean	Lower bound	14.58	
		Upper bound	16.67	
	5% trimmed mean		14.28	
	Median		10.00	
	Standard deviation		13.45	
	Minimum		0	
	Maximum		97	
	Interquartile range		15	
	Skewness		1.94	.10
	Kurtosis		5.89	.19

These questions regarding the perceptions of interview participants' of the segmentation of the student population in terms of drinking levels were not merely asked to quantify perceptions; they were also asked to determine how students think about the student population in terms of drinking behaviour. For example, various participants, when trying to provide an estimate of the percentage of heavy drinkers, resorted to thinking about a smaller unit or group that is closer to their proximity of perception. Instead of considering the whole student population, some would use their university residence and its residents as reference, whereas others thought of the collection of students in their class. This again brings the very important notion to the fore that students do not have access to the complete student population on which to base their perceptions; they only have their rudimentary observations. All students probably know someone that consumes more alcohol than they do and acts crazier than they do when they are drunk. The error that is made is assuming universality from those few individuals, as one participant indicates:

Everyone thinks that everyone drinks heavily from what I understand. (Interview 14)

In this context then, it is important to note whether students perceive one type of behaviour as dominating the student population or if they see the student population as stratified, noting differences in behaviour, as the following participants' testimonies show:

Okay, from the entire . . . yo, it makes it somewhat difficult, if for instance you look at the study denomination, which is a reasonably large percentage and you don't ever see them out, so you don't

know how much they drink. For those that do go out, it's rather little, I think 50% at least. . . . Okay, I think in numbers, I think 50%, if you just take the people in university residences, then I think it's already . . . not even 50%, okay girl residences is less. . . . Because you often forget about students that drive in and out, that probably wouldn't go out so regularly, also the people that stay in flats also have their own social lives, you don't really know about them, and then you also have the colleges that are added, so you don't know how much of the people in Springboks are really from Stellenbosch or not. (Translated, Interview 2)

The majority, sort of an average or the majority? . . . [S]hit how do I . . . because I can think of the going out crowd, because you can see at the different places like Tollies, Terrace, and Springboks and stuff, and I think, that's like only some of the varsity. I mean the varsity is how many thousand strong. So how do you work out an average? . . . I would have to say it's a moderate sort of thing, because you have to account for people that don't do it at all and then you've got to account for the okes that kind of do do it a lot, so I would put it at about moderately. (Interview 8)

Girls, I don't know really, I don't come into contact with a lot of different girls that drink, so that's very difficult for me to say. I almost want to say that fewer girls than guys are prone to drink heavily. Guys, [that drink] more than five drinks per occasion, if I think of guys in res, a third, maybe a bit more. Depends on occasion to occasion, you get large parties where there would be more guys that would drink more heavily. In general, not necessarily so much. . . . I think you don't always necessarily see the people that don't drink. They are the people that rather sit quietly at home, so you don't always know about them, so it's difficult to link a level there. (Translated, Interview 10)

4.3.2 ACTUAL APPROVAL OF DRINKING COMPARED TO THE PERCEIVED NORM OF THE APPROVAL OF DRINKING

4.3.2.1 Accuracy perceiving the approval of drinking norm of students in general

Table 27 and Table 28 illustrate the correspondence between the norm for students' own approval of drinking and their perception of other students' approval of drinking (the injunctive norm). As can be seen, the majority of students overestimate the approval of drinking by students in general. The majority of students therefore personally think that other students in general have a more permissive attitude towards drinking than themselves. For the first indicator (Table 27), only 0.5% of students perceived other students as more conservative than themselves in terms of their approval of drinking. In comparison, 93% perceived other students' attitude as more permissive than their own.

Table 27: Students' accuracy in perceiving the injunctive drinking norm of general students (Indicator 1)

Question	Actual norm (median)	Accuracy in perceiving the injunctive norm of general students			Total	
		Underestimate	Accurate perception	Overestimate	%	N
Statement about alcohol consumption that best represents the most common attitude among Stellenbosch students in general	Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk	0.5%	6.6%	93.0%	100.0%	640

In comparison to other indicators from the second group of indicators, '*drinking every weekend*' had the largest proportion of students (19%) who accurately perceived the norm and 9% of students who underestimated the norm (Table 28). Regarding '*drinking daily*', on the other hand, the largest proportion of students (93%) overestimated how much students in general approved of drinking every day. For '*drinking before driving*' and '*drinking enough to pass out*', more than 85%

of students overestimated the norm as well, thinking other students approved more of the behaviour than the actual norm.

Table 28: Students accuracy in perceiving the injunctive drinking norm of general students (Indicator 2)

How do you think students in general feel (or would you feel) about :	Actual norm (median)	Accuracy in perceiving the injunctive norm of general students			Total	
		Underestimate	Accurate perception	Overestimate	%	N
Drinking every weekend	Neutral / No opinion	8.9%	18.8%	72.3%	100.0%	640
Drinking daily	Strongly disapprove	N/A	6.7%	93.3%	100.0%	640
Drinking before driving	Strongly disapprove	N/A	14.7%	85.3%	100.0%	640
Drinking enough to pass out	Strongly disapprove	N/A	10.3%	89.7%	100.0%	640

4.3.2.2 Relationship between own approval of drinking and the perceived norm of approval

There is a significant correlation between respondents' approval of drinking and the perceived approval of drinking by close friends (r = .55, p [two-tailed] < .001) and co-residents (r = .14, p [two-tailed] < .05) (Table 29). The positive nature of these relationships indicate that, as respondents' own approval of drinking increased, their perception of their close friends' approval of drinking and, to a lesser degree, co-residents' approval, increased as well. However, no relationship was found between personal approval of drinking and the perceived approval of drinking by students in general (p [two-tailed] > .05).

Table 29: Relationship between students' own approval of drinking and the perceived approval of drinking by close friends, co-residents and students in general

	Own weekly drinking	Personal approval of drinking	Perceived approval of drinking by close friends	Perceived approval of drinking by students in residence	Perceived approval of drinking by students in general
Own weekly drinking	1.00	.69***	.41***	.05	-.09*
Personal approval of drinking	640	1.00	.55***	.14*	.02
Perceived approval of drinking by close friends	640	640	1.00	.36***	.25***
Perceived approval of drinking by students in residence	319	319	319	1.00	.39***
Perceived approval of drinking by students in general	640	640	640	319	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

4.3.2.3 Difference between own approval of drinking and the perceived norm of approval

For all reference groups, students' own approval of drinking was more conservative than the perceived approval of drinking by other students (Table 30; Figure 12). On average, students' own approval of drinking is 9 points more conservative than the perceived approval by their close friends (p < .001, r = .50). The same trend was noticed for co-residents, with students' own approval score being 14 points less than the perceived approval by co-residents (p < .000, r = .51). The third comparison with the perceived approval of students in general revealed that on average, it is 29 points higher than students' own approval score (p < .000, r = .78). Furthermore, as in the case of the difference between personal drinking and the perceived drinking of peers, the difference between students' own approval of drinking and the perceived approval of drinking by other students increased as the proximal distance of each reference group increased (all p < .001).

Table 30: Actual approval of drinking score compared to the score of the perceived approval of drinking by close friends, co-residents and students in general

		Descriptive statistics				Paired differences					
					Std. error mean	Mean diff.	SD	Std. error mean	95% CI of diff.		
		Mean	N	SD					Lower	Upper	t
Pair 1	Personal approval of drinking	22.61	640	14.60	0.58	-9.30***	16.05	0.63	-10.55	-8.06	-14.66
	Perception of close friends' approval of drinking	31.92	640	18.38	0.73						
Pair 2	Personal approval of drinking	22.37	319	14.70	0.82	-14.38***	24.07	1.35	-17.03	-11.73	-10.67
	Perception of approval of drinking by students in residence	36.76	319	21.24	1.19						
Pair 3	Personal approval of drinking	22.61	640	14.60	0.58	-28.81***	23.04	0.91	-30.60	-27.02	-31.64
	Perception of approval of drinking by students in general	51.42	640	18.15	0.72						

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed)*

Figure 12: Actual approval of drinking score compared to the score of the perceived approval of drinking by close friends, co-residents and general students
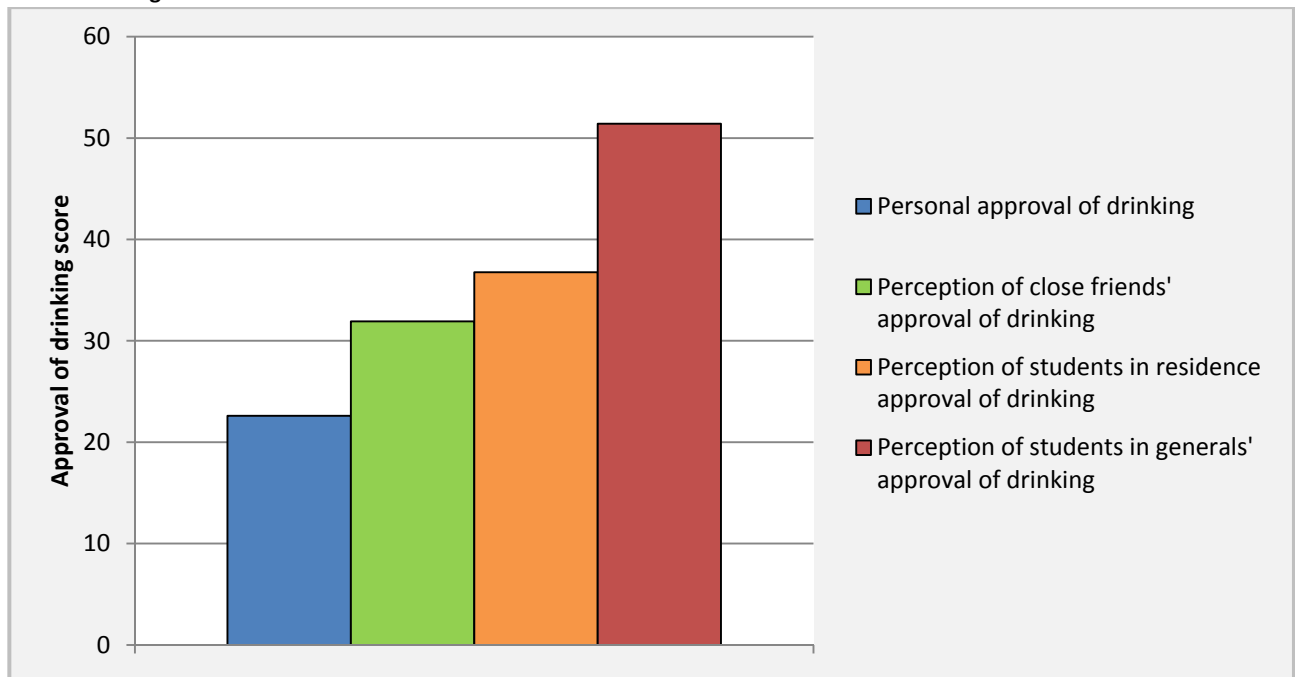
Additionally, it also became clear through the qualitative interviews that participants in general had the perception that the larger majority of students approved of drinking in general. Moreover, various participants indicated that they thought students in general quite like drinking. One participant summarised her perception of students' approval of drinking as follows:

> *I also think that many students think you have to get drunk, or you have to drink, or alcohol has to be present to enjoy yourself . . . I don't think it bothers them, not the most of them, I'm sure if it bothered them then they wouldn't have drunk that much. There can't be so many alcoholics . . . Well let's put it this way, for the larger majority, you will be more acceptable if you do drink than if you don't drink. (Interview 6)*

Another dominating sentiment in the interviews was the perception that students are quite laissez-faire about drinking, that they do not actually care and do not even think about it, as the following participant's perception illustrates:

I just don't think they care. I don't think it bothers them, it's not something when you're sitting around with your friends, like 'what do you think about all these people drinking?' For them it's just one of those things that they know are happening, as long as it doesn't affect them then they don't care. You know, they will be like 'some drunk ass did this', then it's a problem but other than that like I don't think it really bothers them . . .[Y]ou expect it, you're so used to it being the norm, that it's not something you go like 'yo, people are starting to really drink a lot these days'. It's not a problem to you because as long as you party too, as long as you're not really affected physically by someone else, it doesn't bother you. It's like how people are about people that are doing drugs, you're like . . . I don't care as long as I'm not doing drugs, so who cares what they're doing. (Interview 3)

Related to this is the idea that the university's social atmosphere is a non-judgemental environment, where the choice to drink is your own:

Well, that's like where I was surprised, is because I thought everyone would do it, and then I come here to class and you meet these people and you find that there are people that don't do it and then like, no one really looks down on it, there are a few that obviously do and then there are the guys that look down on those who don't. But the majority thing is, everyone seems to be okay with it and understand that it's there and it happens and it just becomes your choice if you do it or not. (Interview 8)

However, at the same time, some participants expressed their awareness of a proportion of students that do not always agree with other students' drinking behaviour, although it seemed that these students are generally regarded as a minority compared to those that approve of drinking:

I think the people that act like they approve, approve, and I think there are very few people that don't like it but it's usually your very conservative people that don't like it at all. I think more people approve than don't approve. I don't think that everyone approves of drinking the whole time, but it's fun to go out every now and again. Most people enjoy it. Most people will approve of having one fun night out. (Translated, Interview 2)

I think there are people that are strongly against it, and then I think there are people that don't mind it at all . . . Then I think there are people that just don't have an opinion about it at all. (Translated, Interview 18)

[My friendship group] is very diverse, I have the guys that don't like drinking at all, they avoid it, and you get guys that go out every week, they make a point of it. I would say it's very diverse, but I think in general alcohol is accepted in Stellenbosch. It's part of the social life. (Translated, Interview 10)

To illustrate the perception of the more conservative students, the following participant explained her perception of her friends' approval of other students' drinking behaviour:

They look down upon it a bit, they say it straight out sometimes. The one girl is very adamant, the other is a bit less so. I am not at all; they sometimes don't understand me at all. Then I say [other students] are young people, grown-ups, they know what they are doing, and hopefully those that don't know, somebody will get hold of them and explain to them what they do wrong. But [my friends] are prone to look down upon it, or to judge, not to judge . . . They are very talkative about

how things go here, and how students waste money and don't appreciate . . . But I know they also have very strict parents. And they wouldn't just mix with those groups, which I kind of noticed. I have a more diverse group that I have collected over the years than they have; they still only have that morsel, that island where they are safe . . . (Translated, Interview 12)

Students that drink less are more likely to experience the negative effects of others' drinking, because they themselves do not participate in the behaviour. Consequently, not all cultural aspects associated with that behaviour will be normalised in their frame of reference. One student's sentiments reflect this: she was of the opinion that the effects of alcohol on consumers cause them to disturb more conservative students:

[D]runk people running past their bedroom window, pissed (drunk) at two [o'clock] in the morning, screaming shouting, waking them up, they come slam a door next to their bedroom. Bang things over. I'm sure a lot of people have a serious problem with it. Go to their car in the morning, a little vomit on the side of their tyre, I'm sure a lot of people don't like it at all . . . [Y]ou are always going to get the conservative people, I mean there are a lot of very conservative prudish people who aren't going to like it, and you're always going to get that, you'll never get away from that, so they don't really bother me, if they want to judge, they must judge, it's fine. (Interview 14)

In summary, even though there was an awareness of people that do not agree with drinking to such a large degree, the general perception among interview participants was either that the majority of students had no problem with student drinking or that they accepted it. From both the qualitative findings and the survey results it appears that students perceive the cultural environment on campus as generally in favour of drinking behaviour, and even more approving of drinking behaviour than they themselves are.

4.3.3   ACTUAL ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR COMPARED TO THE PERCEIVED ACADEMIC NORM

4.3.3.1   Accuracy in perceiving the academic norm of students in general

First, it should be noted that for academic behaviour, in contrast to drinking behaviour, the hypothesis is that students will underestimate the academic norm, meaning that students will tend to perceive other students as being less academic than they are. Table 31 summarises students' accuracy in their perceptions of other students' academic behaviour (the descriptive academic norm).

Table 31: Students' accuracy in perceiving the descriptive academic norm of students in general

Indicator[34]	Actual norm (median)	Accuracy perceiving the descriptive academic norm of students in general			Total	
		Underestimate	Accurate perception	Overestimate	%	N
Perceived effort typically put into general coursework (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)	Medium effort	24.4	70.3	5.3	100.0	640
Perceived performance in class/ predicate/progress marks	Better than class average	89.8	8.5	1.7	100.0	639
Perception of how hard students generally study for exams	Hard	69.8	25.5	4.7	100.0	635
Perceived overall performance marks	Better than class average	90.9	8.3	0.8	100.0	629

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[34] All questions referred to the previous academic semester

For the question regarding the effort students devoted to coursework, the majority of students (70%) accurately perceived the norm. However, concerning students' perceptions of other students' performance in class/predicate/progress marks, 90% of students underestimated the campus norm. Therefore, the majority of students perceived students in general as performing worse than the actual norm of doing *'better than class average'*. Concerning the question of how hard students had studied for exams in the previous semester, the campus norm was 'hard'. However, the majority of students (70%) thought that students in general studied less than this. A quarter of students (26%) were accurate in their perceptions of the norm in comparison with the sample's norm. The norm for how well students performed overall in the previous semester is *'better than class average'*. Again, the majority of students (91%) thought that students in general did worse than this. Therefore, for three of the four indicators, the majority of students underestimated the academic norm and therefore thought other students worked less and performed worse than they personally did.

4.3.3.2 Relationship between own academic behaviour and the perceived academic norm

Table 32 shows that as students' own academic performance increased, the perceived academic performance of close friends increased as well (r = .19, p [two-tailed] < .001). However, the relationship with the perceived academic performance of students in the same course (r = -.08, p [two-tailed] < .05) and students in general was negative (r = -.08, p [two-tailed] < .05), indicating that as students' own academic performance increased, the perceived academic performance of these reference groups tended to decrease. The perceived behaviour of the latter two groups was however only weakly related to personal academic performance.

Table 32: Relationship between students' own academic performance and the perceived academic performance of close friends, students in the same course and students in general

		Own academic performance	Perceived academic performance		
			Close friends	Students in same course	Students in general
	Own academic performance	1	.19***	-.08*	-.09*
Perceived academic performance of:	Close friends	623	1	.19***	.15***
	Students in same course	621	630	1	.34***
	Students in general	618	627	629	1

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

The results also show that the greater the academic effort of respondents, the greater the perceived effort by their close friends (r = .34, p [two-tailed] < .001) and other students in their course (r = .20, p [two-tailed] < .001) (Table 33). However, there was no statistically significant relationship with the perceived academic effort of students in general (p [two-tailed] > .05).

Table 33: Relationship between students' own academic effort and the perceived academic effort of close friends, students in the same course and students in general

		Own academic effort	Perceived academic effort of:		
			Close friends	Students in same course	Students in general
	Own academic effort	1	.34***	.20***	.05
Perceived academic effort of:	Close friends	626	1	.34***	.21***
	Students in same course	626	634	1	.41***
	Students in general	624	632	634	1

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

4.3.3.3   Difference between own academic behaviour and the perceived academic norm

Firstly, students were asked to judge the academic behaviour of close friends. On average, students perceived their close friends as putting in less effort (p [two-tailed] < .05; Figure 13) and performing (p [two-tailed] < .01; Figure 14) worse than they do (Table 34). The magnitude of the effect was however small for both academic effort (r = .10) and academic performance (r = .11).

Secondly, students were asked about their perceptions of the academic behaviour of fellow students in their course. On average, students perceived their own academic effort as greater than that of students in their course (p [two-tailed] < .001). Likewise, the mean academic performance was better than the perceived academic performance of fellow students in their course (p [two-tailed] < .001). For academic effort, the magnitude of the effect size was small (r = .18), whereas for academic performance, the effect size was medium (r = .35).

Lastly, students were asked about their perceptions of the academic behaviour of students in general. Students perceive their own academic effort as more than that of students in general (p [two-tailed] < .001). The effect size indicated that the magnitude of this difference was large (r = .65). Consistent with the latter, in terms of academic performance, students perceived students in general as performing worse than they did on average (p [two-tailed] < .001). The effect size was large again, indicating a substantial difference (r = .58).

Table 34: Actual academic behaviour score (in terms of effort and performance) compared to the perceived academic behaviour score of close friends, students in the same course and students in general

		Descriptive statistics				Paired differences					
		Mean	N	SD	Std. error mean	Mean diff.	SD	Std. error mean	95% CI of diff. Lower	95% CI of diff. Upper	t
Pair 1	Personal academic effort	7.24	626	1.98	0.08	0.24*	2.36	0.09	0.06	0.43	2.6
	Perceived academic effort of close friends	7.00	626	2.14	0.09						
Pair 2	Personal academic performance	6.59	623	1.94	0.08	0.24**	2.26	0.09	0.07	0.42	2.69
	Perceived academic performance of close friends	6.35	623	1.59	0.06						
Pair 3	Personal academic effort	7.24	626	1.97	0.08	0.47***	2.56	0.1	0.27	0.68	4.62
	Perceived academic effort of students in the same course	6.77	626	2.08	0.08						
Pair 4	Personal academic performance	6.58	621	1.94	0.08	0.92***	2.42	0.1	0.72	1.11	9.42
	Perceived academic performance of students in the same course	5.67	621	1.30	0.05						
Pair 5	Personal academic effort	7.24	624	1.98	0.08	2.25***	2.63	0.11	2.04	2.46	21.33
	Perceived academic effort of students in general	4.99	624	1.85	0.07						
Pair 6	Personal academic performance	6.59	618	1.95	0.08	1.68***	2.35	0.09	1.5	1.87	17.79
	Perceived academic performance of students in general	4.91	618	1.15	0.05						

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*

Again, as with drinking behaviour and approval of drinking, the proximal distance of the reference group determined the size of the perceived difference from that group. The more socially distant reference groups are, the lower the perceived rigour of their academic behaviour. For academic effort, as the proximal distance increased from close friends to students in the same course and finally, to students in general, the sizes of the average difference between students' own academic

effort and that of other students, steadily increased. For academic performance, the relationship held true.

Figure 13: Actual academic effort score compared to the perceived academic effort score of close friends, students in the same course and students in general
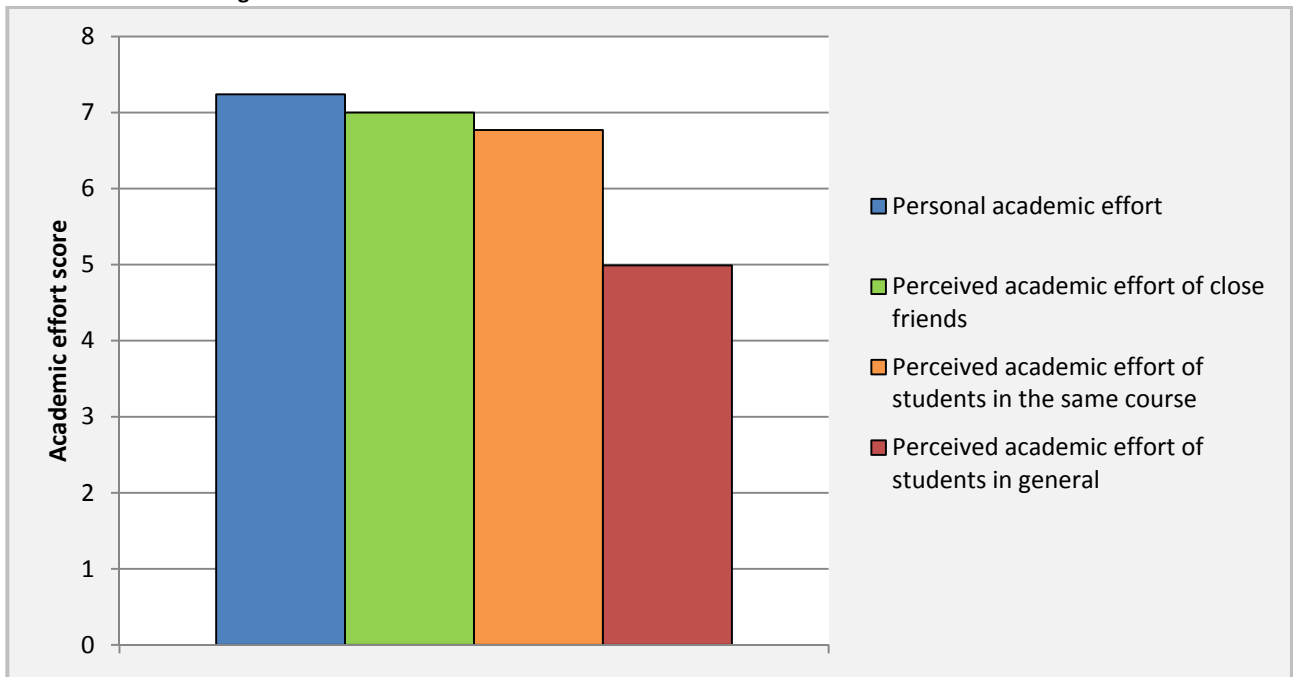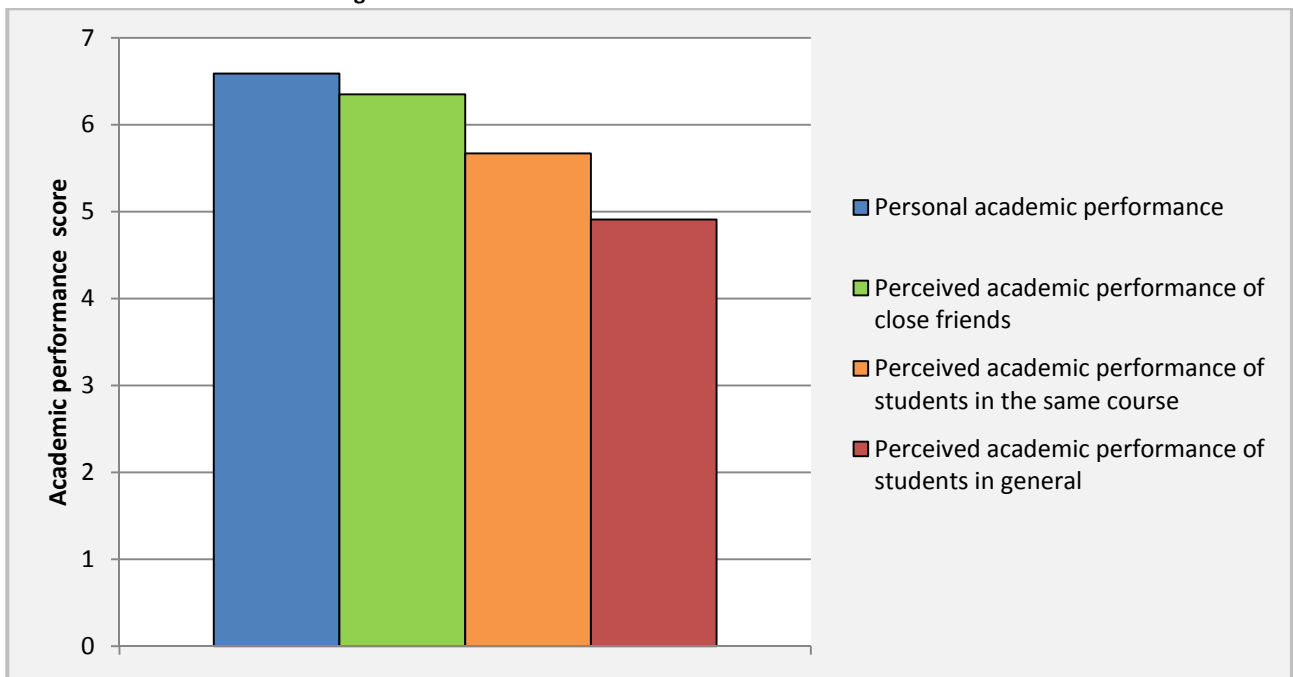

Figure 14: Actual academic performance score compared to the perceived academic performance score of close friends, fellow students in course and students in general

With regard to interview participants' perception of other students' academic behaviour, perceptions were mixed. Many thought that students in general maintained a balance. However, there seemed to be a quite general perception that other students tended to work more when necessary, rather than continuously, as the following participants' statements illustrate:

I think they work hard when they have to, like for example, in exams the town is empty, there isn't really people that party then. So then everyone realises it's make or break, you have to study now, but otherwise it's party, like normal, or just chilling. (Translated, Interview 1)

I think many students do the social thing and then they catch up academically. Cram! I think that's one thing students don't do, they don't plan ahead, they usually just cram. There isn't really a balance. It's like social, and then catch up, catch up, catch up. (Translated, Interview 2)

I think the majority would argue that, work when you have to, like if it's crunch time, then you have to put in an effort before a test, even if you have to pull an all-nighter. . . . I would say there is a small percentage that works continuously, for the majority it's necessity. (Translated, Interview 11)

Participants' sentiments were varied regarding their close friends ability to strike a balance between academic performance and drinking. Some also reported that their friends planned their drinking around major academic events such as tests and exams, but many were perceptive of the negative academic consequences accruing to those unable to plan appropriately.

[M]y friends are very balanced, they 'party hard' and 'drink hard' but work very hard, they've got like a very good balance. I mean my ex-boyfriend, he's fourth year at varsity and he is still carrying first-year subjects, and he drinks like a fish, he doesn't stop for a minute and it's definitely that, definitely. He goes out and he gets hammered and he can't do anything for the next day. He does nothing, he doesn't go to his classes, so it depends. Everyone's different, some people like my roommate drinks heavily and she's studying engineering and she's very ambitious and very hard-working and she can get into bed at four o'clock in the morning hammered, and she will be up at 7 showered and leave that room at eight o'clock looking like a movie star. She doesn't stop, last night we went to bed at half past one, we both were hammered and she got up and was out by eight o'clock this morning. So everyone's different, and everyone's discipline is different and stuff. (Interview 14)

To be honest, most people I think drink sort of cleverly. If you speak to most people and they say no they've got a test on Thursday and like okay I'll take it light on Wednesday or what not. Or if they write a test on Saturday, then I'll take it light on Friday, most people do drink responsibly and cleverly but I think sometimes people go way too far. For example after the test, and it went extremely bad. Then they say 'I need to get completely wasted'. Generally, when we're studying and stuff, 21st and other things like that come up and people tend to get drunk. It's like people sort of saying like fine, I have to drink. I think even in my res for example, a lot of the okes do drink responsibly but then like now, before the exams, the okes will drink (a lot) because they are saying this is the last time I want to completely relax, so let's go crazy. (Interview 4)

In general, that comes down again to the 50/50. There are those people who like do not go out at all, and they would just work and graft and they would do really well. And then there are others, like me, who would party hard and then like the last minute we get things done, just to pass, whereas others are doing really well and getting good marks. (Interview 8)

I think especially in first year, there are a lot of people, they unfortunately fall out, that struggle to get the balance between the drinking and the partying and the academics. For example, I was in a section, we were 20 first years altogether. There are now 12 of them left, 8 of them fell out in first year, some of them went in for the party. I think the people that stay behind get that balance, even if they drink heavily, they still do balance it out. (Translated, Interview 18)

Nevertheless, positive peer pressure is also evident, as the following participant explains:

I must admit I was actually quite surprised at the ability of the okes, when they know it's time to stop, like come test and exam time. I thought it was going to be, like I hear this thing about Rhodes where there is no sort of line or distinction, everybody is just like all the time. And here there was sort of a limit as to how it goes on and when it stops. . . . [C]ome test time, test week exams, okes tend to stop completely. . . . [T]hat's exactly what's great about it because you as a first year, if I think back, I was just so keen to party all the time, I have got this complete freedom now. Then you see the seniors like stop, there is not so many braais happening outside, and the pub is closed at res and you think, hey if these okes are doing it, maybe I should do it. (Interview 8)

4.3.4 COMPARISON BETWEEN PERSONAL AND PEER BEHAVIOUR-ATTITUDE DISCREPANCIES

In this section, focus is directed towards the magnitude of difference between respondents' own attitude and behaviour in comparison to what they report for their peers. This comparison is necessary to understand the relationship between perceptions of other students' behaviour in relation to their attitude, because theory suggests this will be different from the way a student perceives his or her own behaviour in relation to own attitude. As is seen in Table 35, personal behaviour-attitude discrepancies are significantly less than those for friends, co-residents and students in general (all p [two-tailed] < .001). This indicates that students report a larger difference between others' behaviour and attitude than their own behaviour and attitude. However, all effect sizes were relatively small (all r < .23), indicating that the differences are not so substantial. However, it should be noted that the difference for students in general is almost triple the perceived difference for close friends and co-residents. The size of the attitude-behaviour discrepancies for the latter two reference groups does not seem to differ considerably.

Table 35: Personal behaviour-attitude discrepancy compared to the behaviour-attitude discrepancy for friends, co-residents and general students

		Descriptive statistics				Paired differences					
									95% CI of diff.		
		Mean	N	SD	Std. error mean	Mean diff.	SD	Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t
Pair 1	Behaviour-attitude discrepancy	-14.61	640	10.62	.42	4.53***	14.36	.57	3.41	5.64	7.98
	Perceived behaviour-attitude discrepancy for friends	-19.14	640	15.29	.60						
Pair 2	Behaviour-attitude discrepancy	-14.46	319	10.72	.60	4.74***	19.54	1.09	2.59	6.89	4.33
	Perceived behaviour-attitude discrepancy for co-residents	-19.20	319	19.27	1.08						
Pair 3	Behaviour-attitude discrepancy	-14.61	640	10.62	.42	13.74***	20.90	.83	12.12	15.36	16.63
	Perceived behaviour-attitude discrepancy for students in general	-28.35	640	19.97	.79						

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)

4.4 INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED SELF-OTHER DIFFERENCES

In the previous section, results confirmed that for drinking behaviour, attitude towards drinking and academic behaviour, students tend to see their own behaviour as more conservative than that of their peers. More precisely, they tend to think they personally drink less, they have less liberal attitudes towards drinking and they are more serious towards their studies than their student peers. Proximity to peer reference groups also influences these differences, e.g. for close friends

the differences are less pronounced than for students in general. In this section, these differences between own behaviour and others' behaviour, also referred to as self-other differences (see section 3.2.5.5), will be explored with reference to both qualitative and quantitative data.

[Y]ou gravitate towards the people you feel comfortable with. (Translated, Interview 18)

The importance of self-other differences was highlighted during the qualitative interviews in the role it seemingly plays in the selection of friends and the formation of peer clusters.

[I]t was very interesting for me when I came here how people immediately kind of divide themselves. You get your non-drinkers and your light drinkers and your drinkers, and they kind of form your friendship group. They do overlap, but it's sort of like those guys just get along much better. . . . As soon as RAG was done, the guys started doing their own thing, and you got your differentiation between the different groups. . . . There are some that are pushed out of groups because they don't drink, but they don't necessarily want to be included in those groups, but you get the stereotypes. The one guy doesn't like the other guy because he doesn't drink type of thing. (Translated, Interview 10)

Friendships and associations with others are based on a diversity of factors. From the example above it seems to be partly influenced by similarities in drinking behaviour. This may partly be due to the assumption that similar drinking behaviour is associated with various aspects such as similar moral values, similar interests and similar pastimes, for example. Still, all friends do not exclusively exhibit the same drinking behaviour. Some participants indicated that they have friends with differing levels of drinking, but others again indicated that these would not necessarily be close friends. Peer groups do not exist in isolation from one another and intermingling does of course occur. In this regard, the concept of the peer cluster is useful to define a group of individuals with similar interests and similar behaviour that tend to cluster together, as opposed to viewing a peer group as a rigidly delineated faction. Subsequently, various reasons became evident that explain why students might gravitate to people with similar drinking habits.

. . . I surround myself with friends that don't normally drink anyway, so I don't feel personally pressured, but if you go out and it does feel like you're standing there and they are like what do you want to drink, and you say like a coke, I'm driving. And they're like, 'one [drink] here, one [drink] here'. Then you have some wine, and they're like 'have some more'. (Interview 3)

As the participant above explains, she does not choose to drink in some situations, but is confronted by her friends' expectation that she should drink. Of course this could be uncomfortable for some and may result in either alcohol consumption or possibly becoming less close with the group. Eventually, such situations may even lead to an individual no longer associating with the group. However, if she were friends with individuals who did not harbour such an expectation of her, then she could behave as she chooses, and there would be no discomfort. The same participant was asked if she thought her friendships were suffering because she does not drink much:

Yes, because it's a social thing. It's a bit more extreme, but in like high school, I had quite a few friends that did drugs, and it comes [down to] the same thing, like they are going to go off and they are tripping and you're not, your friendship is going to suffer. Even not drinking, they're sitting there . . . 'let's go have a drink after varsity', and I'm just like, 'no guys, I'm tired, I am going to drive home'. And they're just like, 'ja, one drink', and 'ah, you're so lame', or 'you fader'. But you know they're going to drink and they're going to get to that party level, and you are tired, so you are not going to feel the same like fun and party. So it does suffer quite a bit. Or like yesterday I was like looking for a

flat, and some guy, his actual advertisement was 'I don't want geeks, nerds or dorks, I want a party animal roommate'. And you're just like, 'yo, you define a person like that. If you don't drink you are a geek nerd dork'. (Interview 3)

Another reason why friendships might suffer due to differing drinking habits is ascribed to these individuals spending less time together, as one participant explained:

I think there is about a handful of guys that I am like very good mates with that really drink and get smashed and smoke whatever and stuff. When they do those type of things I don't hang out with them. I mean they are really nice mates, and I see them in class and do sports and stuff, but then we go out to watch a movie, they say no, they're going to go out to wherever [afterwards] and I'm like no, I'll go back. But most of my mates really don't drink, because I do hang out with a lot of sports guys. A lot of my mates are just like casual drinkers, they'll have just one or two and then that's it. (Interview 4)

The idea that peers cluster together in terms of drinking habits relates to another aspect of drinking, which has also been discussed in the section on motivations to drink (see section 4.2.1.1), namely the role of drinking to create relaxed social spaces where friends can interact and spend time with each other. For many students, alcohol is the medium through which their friendships are facilitated and maintained. If a person in that situation disrupts the normal definition of the situation by not consuming alcohol and in so doing provides evidence that they do not subscribe to the same definition of the situation, that person's presence in that situation may make alcohol consumers uncomfortable.

I think it depends on the people you associate with and surround yourself [with]. . . . I just by chance discovered friends like me that had the same drinking habits as I do. (Interview 4)

I know as well that if you walk down there by the tennis fields, then there is a girl [that says] 'aah, I only came back now, I was out till half past six', and now she's on her way to class. Well congrats that you are going to class, but how much are you going to listen? I don't know, but they obviously use too much alcohol. I don't really know, I can't really judge them and say, 'you shouldn't', but I'm not really going to think less of you if you tell me you go out every night. I probably won't become very good friends with you, because it's not my interest. (Interview 6)

Public social spaces are occupied by different people with various drinking patterns. Some are better equipped socially to cope with being an abstainer or a light drinker when conversing with a heavier-drinking crowd. Some participants indicated that it did not bother them when they were confronted by constant offers to drink or expectations to drink. These participants just casually refused and said they would 'rather have a coke'. However, one participant did indicate that he gets cross if someone that is aware of the fact that he does not drink 'makes a scene' about his non-consumption (Interview 4). Often participants provide their peers with reasons for not drinking under such circumstances, e.g. one participant indicated that he is very sporty and another said she has to drive. In addition, some said that when things started getting 'a bit rough', they would remove themselves from the situation. For instance, one participant said the following when asked if his fellow students' drinking behaviour ever bothered him:

Obviously if they are a bit merry, then you know fine, whatever, [but] when it starts getting really rough, after like five or six drinks and okes are sort of shouting or whatever, then I'm like okay, this is not my scene so I just leave. (Interview 4)

At social events that involve drinking and where students are familiar with the drinking habits of their peers, there appears to be an automatic stratification. One interviewee voiced an interesting opinion related to peer cluster formation and the subsequent influences the social environment has on individuals.

> *At such events, I think people have gotten into their groups already because they expect that the people that usually drink are going to drink. Those that don't drink, they are going to move in between, but they are not going to drink. I kind of want to say there are preconceived boundaries, of who is and who isn't. So at that time I think the pressure situation has been sorted out kind of. . . . [Y]ou were already pressured into that [heavy drinking] group, or chosen. And for the people that don't drink that much, there isn't such a large expectation because they have basically made their choice beforehand. (Translated, Interview 10)*

What he explains is an adjustment period that larger social clusters go through during which students get to know one another and show interest in or commit to a certain type of drinking behaviour. Some students may still experiment to establish where they fit in, whereas others may have certain predefined ideas of the type of people they want to befriend and consequently, the type of student life they personally want to live. Of course, being new to a group, one is not aware of others' approval of or approach towards drinking. During situations such as these, there might be some pressure to drink (or, as I will explain later, some expectation). How students respond to these situations reflects similarities or differences among individuals and so, possible future drinking 'buddies' are identified who may later become friends. However, according to this view, once this period passes and each is aware of the other's drinking preferences, the pressure to conform decreases to a certain extent as a stance has already been taken and friendship associations have been made. In this way then, students identify similarities and differences between themselves and others and this defines group membership. Certainly, preferences towards drinking behaviour need not necessarily remain constant, but this theory possibly highlights the initial process of self-selection into peer clusters on the grounds of similarity and, in so doing, creating the 'other'. In addition, it creates a situation where a certain peer cluster has its own expectations and pressures that maintain certain behaviours, as mutual moral values are constantly reaffirmed and similar interests expressed.

> *I don't think students really care about other students' drinking habits. I think it depends again on in which groups you move. In your heavier drinking groups it would be expected that you go out a bit more than the guys that don't go out at all. So it depends on your group and yourself, where you fit in. (Translated, Interview 10)*

In line with this argument, students are expected to have more similar perceptions for more proximal reference groups such as close friends, because associations are formed in terms of similarity. Nonetheless, for all reference groups there is still the expectation that students will perceive them as consuming more than they actually do.

4.4.1   SELF-OTHER DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF DRINKING

The survey data confirmed that the less students drink, the more likely they are to perceive a difference between their own drinking behaviour and the perceived norm of peer drinking behaviour. Stated differently, the more students drink, the more likely they are to view their own behaviour as normative (Table 36). Students that drink less therefore have a stronger tendency to perceive a norm that is more permissive than their own behaviour. Those that drink more heavily

are more likely to think that their own behaviour is similar to the norm or, in some instances that they drink more than the norm.

Table 36: Relationship between personal drinking behaviour and perceived self-other differences for close friends, co-residents and students in general

		Actual weekly drinking	Perceived self-other differences in terms of weekly drinking for:		
			Close friends	Co-residents	Students in general
	Actual weekly drinking	1.00	-.13[**]	-.25[***]	-.26[***]
Perceived self-other differences in terms of weekly drinking for:	Close friends	640	1.00	.48[***]	.37[***]
	Co-residents	319	319	1.00	.65[***]
	Students in general	640	640	319	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*

Figure 15 illustrates self-other differences between students' actual weekly drinking and the perceived weekly drinking of friends, co-residents and students in general. As mentioned before, self-other differences are calculated by subtracting students' own drinking from the perceived drinking of other students. Therefore, students that perceive other students as drinking more than they do will have a positive value (above the zero line on the line graph) and those that perceive other students as drinking less than they do will have a negative value (below the zero line on the line graph). As can be seen from the graph, the vast majority of respondents thought that students in general drink more than they do.

Figure 15: The relationship between students' perceived similarity with the campus drinking norm and personal drinking
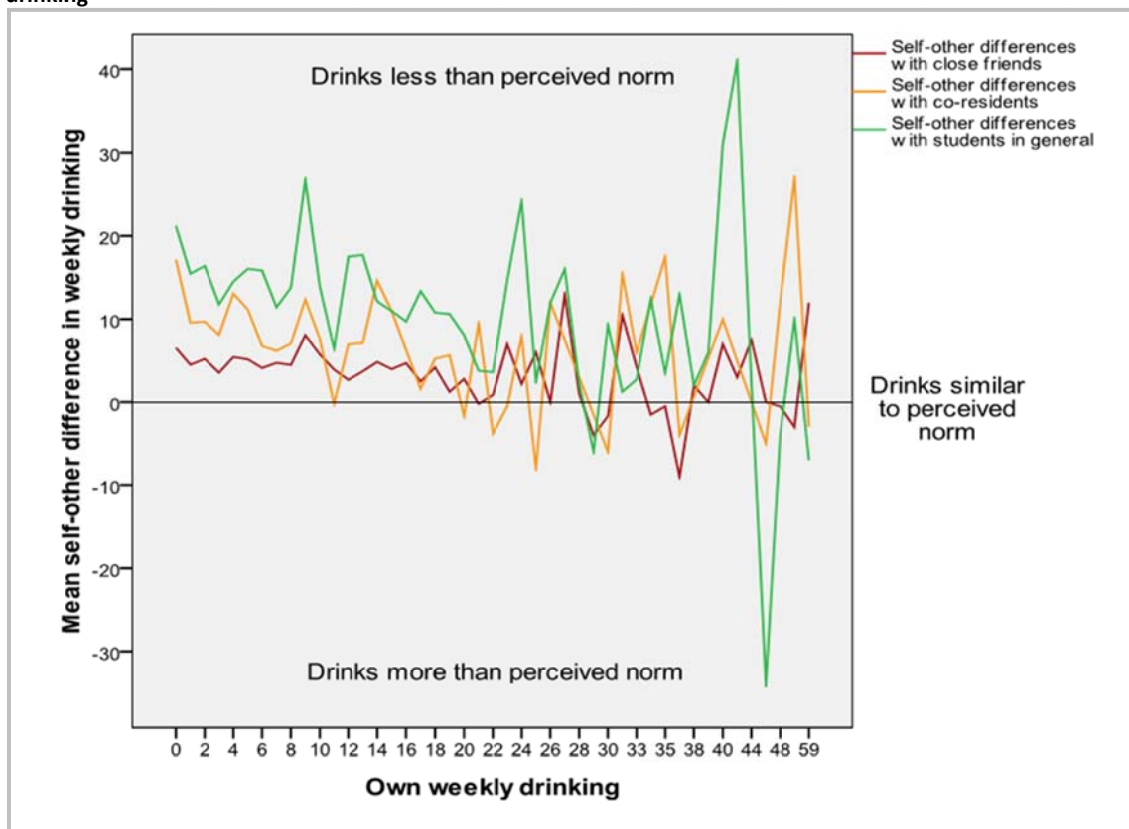
However, in this instance, the linear relationships between respondents' own drinking behaviour and the perception of similarity with their friends' drinking norm are weak. This might be because, across the levels of drinking, the proportion of students that view their own drinking behaviour as

similar to that of their friends as well as the proportion that view their friends' drinking as more than their own, is relatively equal. Compared to their lighter-drinking counterparts, heavy-drinking respondents are slightly more likely to think they drink more heavily than their friends do. This is illustrated by the tendency of the lines in the graph to dip below zero as personal weekly drinking reaches higher levels. Accordingly, they were also less likely to think their drinking behaviour was similar to that of their friends.

In terms of respondents' perception of the norm of their co-residents' drinking, lighter-drinking respondents were less likely to see their own drinking behaviour as similar to the residence norm. Heavy drinkers were more likely to see their own drinking as similar to the residence norm. In comparison with the perception of similarity with the drinking norm of close friends, fewer respondents thought their own drinking and the perceived drinking of co-residents were similar. Overall, respondents were more likely to think they drink less than the perceived residence norm.

Likewise, the likelihood of respondents perceiving their own drinking behaviour as similar to the campus drinking norm tends to decrease steadily as their own drinking decreases. Heavier-drinking students are therefore more likely to see their own drinking as similar to the campus drinking norm compared to lighter-drinking students and abstainers.

Also important with regard to self-other differences is how these differences relate to students' perceptions of negative consequences due to others drinking. There is an association between how respondents see themselves in relation to the drinking norm and the negative consequences they experience due to drinking. The closer students see their own drinking to the norm, or as more than the norm, the less they will perceive negative consequences due to others' drinking behaviour. Firstly, there was a significant relationship between the self-other differences with close friends and the negative consequences for private life (r = .07, p [one-tailed] < .05) and general and social life (r = .12, p [one-tailed] < .01). The more students see themselves as drinking less than their close friends, the more negative consequences they tend to perceive due to others drinking (Table 37). However, for both relationships the effect sizes were small.

Table 37: Relationship between drinking self-other differences with close friends and the perception of negative consequences due to others drinking

	Drinking self-other differences with friends	Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking
Drinking self-other differences with close friends	1.00	.07[*]	.12[**]
Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	640	1.00	.50[***]
Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking	640	640	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

Secondly, for drinking self-other differences with co-residents, significant relationships exist with the perceived negative consequences for private (r = .30, p [one-tailed] < .001) and general and social life (r = .28, p [one-tailed] < .001) (Table 38). Hence, the more students perceive their co-residents as drinking more than they do, the more negative consequences they tend to perceive due to others drinking. For this reference group, however, the effect size was medium.

Table 38: Relationship between drinking self-other differences with co-residents and the perception of negative consequences due to others drinking

	Drinking self-other differences with co-residents	Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking
Drinking self-other differences with co-residents	1.00	.30***	.28***
Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	319	1.00	.50***
Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking	319	640	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

Lastly, there is no significant correlation between the drinking self-other differences with general students and the perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking (r = .02, p [one-tailed] > .05). However, there was a significant relationship with the perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking (r = .20, p [one-tailed] < .001) with a small to medium effect size. The more students therefore see themselves as drinking less than the norm, the more likely they are to perceive negative consequences for their general or social life due to other students drinking (Table 39).

Table 39: Relationship between drinking self-other differences with students in general and the perception of negative consequences due to others drinking

	Drinking self-other differences with students in general	Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking
Drinking self-other differences with students in general	1.00	.02	.20***
Perceived negative consequences for private life due to others drinking	640	1.00	.50***
Perceived negative consequences for general or social life due to others drinking	640	640	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

4.6.2 SELF-OTHER DIFFERENCE IN TERMS OF APPROVAL OF DRINKING

From the survey results, it appears that the more students drink, the more likely they will be to perceive their own approval of drinking as normative. Similar to drinking self-other differences, there are significant relationships between the self-other differences in terms of the approval of drinking by close friends (r = -.161), co-residents (r = -.372) and students in general (r = -.504) and students' own drinking behaviour (all p [one-tailed] < .001) (Table 40).

Table 40: Correlation matrix for actual drinking behaviour and the perceived self-other differences in terms of the approval of drinking for close friends, co-residents and students in general

		Actual weekly drinking	Perceived self-other differences in terms of approval of drinking for:		
			Close friends	Co-residents	Students in general
	Actual weekly drinking	1.00	-.16***	-.37***	-.50***
Perceived self-other differences in terms of approval of drinking for:	Friends	640	1.00	.44***	.38***
	Co-residents	319	319	1.00	.56***
	Students in general	640	640	319	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

Alternatively, the less students drink the more likely they are to view their own approval as deviating from the norm of close friends, co-residents and students in general. Effect sizes range from small to large and increase as proximal distance of the reference group increases.

4.4.2   SELF-OTHER DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR

In section 4.3.3, we saw that on average respondents view their close friends, students in their course and students in general as working less and performing worse than they do. Therefore, on average, respondents view the academic norm as less rigorous than their own academic effort and performance. The following results present an association between how students see themselves in relation to the academic norm on the one hand and their personal academic and drinking behaviour on the other.

Firstly, with regard to academic behaviour, the results show that the harder students work and the better they perform, the more likely they are to perceive their own behaviour as deviating from the norm. As can be seen in Table 41 and Table 42, strong negative relationships exist between students' own academic effort and performance and their perceived similarity or difference from the norm of academic behaviour for each of the three reference groups (all r_s > .50, all p > .001). The direction of the relationship indicates that the greater students' effort and performance, the greater the likelihood that they perceive their own academic behaviour as more rigorous than the norm.

Table 41: Relationship between personal drinking, personal academic performance and perceived self-other differences for academic performance (Spearman's rho)

		Own weekly drinking	Own academic performance	Perceived self-other differences in terms of academic performance for:		
				Close friends	Students in course	Students in general
	Own weekly drinking	1.00	-.19***	-.02	.14**	.13**
	Own academic performance	627	1.00	-.72***	-.86***	-.88***
Perceived self-other differences in terms of academic performance for:	Close friends	623	623	1.00	.69***	.68***
	Students in course	621	621	619	1.00	.83***
	Students in general	618	618	616	618	1.00

*p <.05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

However, concerning drinking behaviour, no significant relationship was found between personal drinking and the perceived self-other differences with reference to the academic effort and the performance of close friends (all p > [two-tailed] .05) (Table 41 and Table 42). This indicates that there is no linear relationship between respondents' drinking and their perception of how normative their academic behaviour is compared to that of their friends. However, the data show a significant relationship with the perceived self-other differences with co-residents and students in general.

Hence, the less students drink, the more likely they are to see their own academic effort and performance as greater than the norm for peers in their course and students in general. A positive correlation exists between respondents' own drinking and the perceived self-other differences with students in their course in terms of academic effort (r_s = .19, p [two-tailed] < .001) and performance (r_s = .14, p [two-tailed] < .001) and students in general in terms of the academic effort (r_s = .20, p [two-tailed] < .001) and performance, (r_s = .12, p [two-tailed] < .01). Effect sizes

indicate that the magnitude of the relationships ranges from small to medium with no large differences between the reference groups of students in one's course and students in general.

Table 42: Relationship between personal drinking, personal academic effort and perceived self-other differences for academic effort (Spearman's rho)

		Own weekly drinking	Own academic effort	Perceived self-other differences in terms of academic effort for:		
				Close friends	Students in course	Students in general
	Own weekly drinking	1.00	-.24***	-.03	.19***	.20***
	Own academic effort	628	1.00	-.50**	-.56***	-.70***
Perceived self-other differences in terms of academic effort for:	Close friends	626	626	1.00	.50***	.50***
	Students in course	626	626	624	1.00	.63***
	Students in general	624	624	622	624	1.00

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed)*
Note: Missing values were excluded pairwise

4.5   PEER BEHAVIOUR AND CONVERSATION

Thus far, we have explored students' own behaviour in terms of drinking, approval of drinking and academic work, how this behaviour compares to their perception of peers' behaviour, and finally, how the differences between own behaviour and the perceived behaviour of others are related to certain aspects of respondents' lives. This section seeks to explore the socialisation processes of peer group interaction with reference to the qualitative narratives.

If I have to use myself as an example, I think I would be ambivalent if someone talks to me about partying the previous night and how drunk they got. I accept it as an everyday thing, although I know for some people it is, for me personally it isn't an everyday thing. So I would think it's heavy, while I know there are people that would really be sided against it, for them it's not in their frame of reference, while for other people it's going to be 'yes, I also did it'. For them it's so acceptable, they become so desensitised towards it, if they did it or not. If it's necessarily a good thing, I have my doubts about it. That's the thing, people want everybody to be accepted, and we all want to be accepted and we want to accept others, but I think there is always different views, different perceptions . . . (Translated, Interview 18)

4.5.1   PEER PRESSURE, EXPECTATION AND THE NORMALISATION OF DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

When students were confronted by the general question of whether or not they experienced a degree of pressure from the general university environment to drink or upon their arrival at Stellenbosch University, the general sentiment was that they did not. It seems that students, when considering pressure from peers, predominantly picture direct peer pressure in the form of other students actually telling them or forcing them to drink. But this is only one form of direct peer pressure. Although several participants also mentioned the other forms of direct peer pressure, such as continuous invitations by fellow students to come out to town, to have a drink or even offering them a drink or buying them a drink, they did not define these as peer pressure.

In addition, the interviews also produced evidence of indirect peer pressure and of a perceived norm of behaviour and attitude in the social space students occupy. But once again, participants did not identify this as peer pressure. However, direct and indirect peer pressure does not operate independently from one another, but rather have a very important factor in common, namely *expectation*. In the presence of a norm, individuals develop a sense of expectation to conform. In conjunction with this is the expectation each individual has that others should act normatively.

Therefore, in any social space where norms are present, expectation is created. What is seen as acceptable, what is perceived as the expectation, defines what is normal. An example is the expectation friends have that you should accompany them for a drink to town or the expectation from general students that you should indeed have a drink when you are out to town.

> [Y]ou feel like you did your duty towards your friends, to see your friends again, by spending time with them. You go out with two, three friends, and at the end of the night you've seen everyone. (Translated, Interview 2)

Students are aware of this expectation and feel obliged to not disappoint their friends. This is not peer pressure as perceived in the traditional sense by participants, but rather an expectation that a person should behave in a certain way and, as the above quote reflects, fulfil their 'duty'. For instance, I asked one of the lighter drinkers what role her friends played and how they influenced her drinking habits. She said the following:

> A fairly large role, I think they are the people that influence you the most to drink or not to drink. But the friends that I have are really like light drinkers. They play a role in discouraging me to drink. . . . It depends, we often party without drinks, that there isn't anything at all, that's probably the biggest reason that we don't drink, but if there is, then it's kind of like, you would drink with your friends but you don't want to go overboard because you know they have a specific view of you and you want to retain that. (Interview 5)

Here it seems clear that this student is aware that her friends expect her to behave in a certain way. The literature often neglects the positive side of peer pressure or expectation, the side that encourages healthy behaviour. She describes the situation in her friendship group where there is an expectation to consume alcohol to a lesser extent, which yet again demonstrates why students tend to associate with people with similar moral values and similar interests. It is not ideal for any individual to be involved in a peer group in which the members have expectations of one that are not in line with one's own moral values. In addition, expectations explain how an individual's behaviour is maintained once he or she becomes part of a peer cluster. If this participant's peer group had been heavier drinkers, then in that scenario, she might have drunk more in order to preserve her peers' perception of her in that sense. The conclusion that can be drawn from this line of thought is that peer clusters have their own norms that regulate member behaviour. Peer clusters are however situated within the campus social environment, and may therefore not be free from the influences of a perceived overarching campus norm and other peer cluster norms. Neither are these clusters internally completely homogeneous. As hinted at in the quantitative results, the peer cluster norm may trump the perceived campus norm, as it is more proximal and therefore more important to individual members. People experience social life at campus predominantly through these smaller groupings, which are therefore most probably the dominant socialising agents. The general campus norm exists mostly as an abstraction.

Other interview participants had the following to say when asked whether they experienced an expectation or pressure to drink on campus and from their friends:

> To a degree yes, to a degree I feel like kind of it's expected that you have to drink and you have to enjoy it. I just don't give attention to that. (Interview 6)

> It's almost like, if you don't drink, then you are seen as the nerd that can't drink, because you have to study. To be cool, or not cool, but everyone drinks and everybody has the most fun and the best time when they are drunk and here you are, you are drinking water, or you drink a cool drink. . . . My

friends are probably the biggest reason that I drink, because I didn't drink. It's very weird, because they are like, 'hey, aren't you even going to have a glass for the stress, for the tiredness'. So it's difficult to say no and everyone is drinking around you and everyone just feels better, and you are so tired and it's like 'come Susan, only one glass', and now it's not only the one glass anymore, maybe it's more. (Interview 9)

[I]n res, there were occasions where it was kind of expected . . . they just expect the first years to go mad because you were in matric and you just got here and at university alcohol is cheap, as far as you can see. You can somehow get the idea that there was an expectation among seniors. They look out for the people that go crazy. For example, we have the [one] section [in our residence], they firstly get those guys for next year, bring them into the friendship group. I wouldn't really say there is an expectation of everyone, but it is kind of . . . I almost want to say, it's accepted that there are first years that will let loose. (Translated, Interview 10)

Various participants seemed to be aware of expectations, but additionally it was evident that there is an attempt to manage these expectations and to stay true to personal convictions:

Personally, there has been a few times now where I must maybe drink a glass of cool drink. People at the bar are like, 'what? Coke?', 'yes please, a Coke or a Fanta'. They make you feel sometimes like um, maybe I must rather drink something else. And people would sometimes also tell you, okay, 'are you drinking cool drink?' But because I say it is my own will, no one forces me to do something, then I just tell them or you, 'accept me as I am or you leave me alone completely'. And so I think that's again your own choice and if the people behind the bar are like that, it's still your drink, you pay for it. But I still think it does influence other people easier than me that don't really care about the people at the bar. If someone buys you a drink and brings it to you then you might drink easier and you maybe feel it's good manners to drink it. So I think that's maybe a reason why people drink a bit more, they kind of feel other people judge them. . . It probably depends on your friends. (Translated, Interview 13)

. . . I feel like they expected me to like when all of them are taking a drink, for me also to engage in that, but then I didn't. There was this one time they had like this floor initiation and then when they called you, you had to like take a drink as part of that initiation. So I was like no, I can't do that. And you know, they were like 'oh, okay'. So I didn't, so they gave me water instead. . . . I think they were surprised, because they are kind of used to that (people drinking), but then I wasn't use to it, so I think they were like trying to accommodate me. But they did seem to be a bit surprised. (Interview 16)

Indirect peer pressure is subtle and it is a continuous process. As one participant pointed out, individuals do not always notice expectations or think about them:

I think so, I think if you don't know what you stand for, and what you believe in, then it's very easy to go with the flow, either way, sometimes you will drink nothing, other times you will drink unbelievably much. I think you gravitate between two extremes. While if you take a stand, I either drink a lot then you drink a lot, or you drink nothing and then you drink nothing, or I drink moderately. I don't think people necessarily take a stand. It's more, you know your threshold or you know your limit and I think some people just go with the flow. Does other peoples' heavy drinking influence you to drink heavily? It can. But it depends if you come in contact with them, if you are exposed to them. And I don't think there is one person that has not been exposed to it. You just have to drive past a place then you can see it. So I don't think people are as naïve or ignorant as they were in the past. . . . But yes, I do think people can be influenced, if people drink heavily and you come into contact with them and you're in their environment. Like when you're placed in a section (in university residence) where a lot of people drink heavily, the chances that you start drinking with them is big. (Translated, Interview 18)

The following participant's testimony further illustrates that the influences of peer pressure might be gradual:

> *You're so exposed to it, because everyone's doing it and then you start doing it, and you just realise how much fun it is, then you start wondering why you didn't ever do it and then it just kind of goes from there I suppose, I'm not a very peer pressure person. I am very much my own person, so I'm not the kind of person who is going to get very influenced by people, not at all. (Interview 14)*

Expectation and normalisation are intrinsically linked. Certain behaviours are expected, and so they are seen as normal, and consequently, pressure and expectations are normalising determinants of behaviour.

> *My friend is [a member] of the wine society. And yesterday we were sitting and he asked me do I like red wine or something, and I was like, 'I don't drink'. And then his like, 'not at all?'. 'Of course I like a drink, but not often', and they're like 'okay'. And they kind of like look at you like 'I don't believe you, I bet I can get you drunk', so there is the perception that they don't think that no one not drinks at all. I know people that got overdosed and they've got like kidney problems and they still drink. I mean, I don't know people that don't drink at all. Unless they've had a problem and they're trying to quit. (Interview 3)*

> *I don't really go out a lot, and I do like to learn and my sport and whatever, and I go to dance because it's fun. But I don't really go out to bars and things because personally it's not my scene, and a lot of the girls tell me like 'do you go out a lot' and I'm like no, and then they are like 'but how do you have fun'. And I'm like, there are lots of other ways to have fun than just to go out. So I have met quite a few people that are astonished that I don't go out to bars. (Interview 4)*

> *It's like events you have to attend. It's not that you're forced to drink, more forced to go out. We did later, Wednesday nights, every now and again, like the one night I wasn't planning to go out, and my friends convinced me, like 'no, we have to go out now'. Sometimes it feels like Wednesday nights you are obliged to go party. I think it is more on the level just to be social, not only, let's go out and get paralytic. It's a consequence. (Translated, Interview 2)*

> *[I]ts accepted as normal, part of the Stellenbosch experience. (Interview 9)*

Very importantly, one of the interviewees mentions the concept of fun and how going out and drinking as a pastime is experienced as fun. This highlights the idea that within any given social environment, some behaviour may be normalised as appropriate pastimes more than others. In another instance, one of the participants quoted above again mentions the example of an event and the associated alcohol consumption. The role alcohol plays at social events and how its consumption is normalised in those circumstances are highlighted when students who do not drink are present at these events.

> *[W]hen you go to most events, you would find that, say for example, sometime this week, there was this function organised by the university and . . . they didn't accommodate for those that don't drink, they didn't even think about it I think, because they had free alcohol for starters and there was no juice, cool drink or whatever, just alcohol, so I just think that most of the events are structured in a way so as to that they provide alcohol and not necessarily [anything else]. (Interview 16)*

> *[W]e had girls in res, well one girl in res, that I knew, that didn't drink and it was like she felt uncomfortable in a way. Like she didn't belong because at the house dance there is alcohol, anything*

that res arranges there's alcohol, and then sometimes they like forget to . . . not forget, they don't mean it in a bad way, but they seem to forget there's people who don't drink. (Interview 19)

A further problem with the normalisation of heavy alcohol consumption is the accompanying normalisation of other things associated with alcohol use, such as sex with multiple partners, driving under the influence and drug use. As the survey results showed (4.2.1.6), alcohol-related irresponsible behaviour is highly related to personal drinking. A heavier-drinking lifestyle and more permissive attitudes are associated with other activities also associated with drinking, because this behaviour tends to occur in the context of intoxication. Therefore, if intoxication is normalised, the activities that go along with it might be normalised as well.

4.5.2 CONVERSATION

The interest of the current research in conversation relates to how the norm is established, normalised and maintained through everyday conversation between peers. Whether it is conversing about the previous night's occurrences, the approaching night's activities, how drunk you or others are or have been, or about others' actions while drunk, social norms theory suggests that constant conversation about drinking-related activities contributes to the distorted perceptions of the drinking norm. How we converse about behaviour determines how it is defined in the social space we occupy, and consequently how that behaviour is perceived.

I would talk about the big events of the night, who fought with who or if anything funny happened I would talk about it, or if a certain person was very drunk. I wouldn't necessarily talk that much with other people about it but more with people with who you spent the night. If it was a big night and funny stuff happened. I mean, we still talk about a certain night . . . I mean a week last year. (Translated, Interview 2)

Most participants admitted that they would converse about drinking-related activities, to differing degrees. For instance, conversations would be about what had happened the previous night while out 'partying'; if someone asked them how they felt the following day, they would say they were hung over or they would talk about their plans for the coming night or the weekend. In general, participants also mentioned that they often heard their fellow students converse about drinking-related activities and especially mention how drunk they had been the previous night. The lighter drinkers and the abstainers stated that conversation regarding drinking and drinking-related activities did not surface as much in their peer clusters but that they still often heard other people talk about drinking behaviour.

You hear it every day. Every single day you walk past someone, like even today I've heard it like twice already. You'll walk past someone on the Rooi Plein, and you'll hear 'last night I was so smashed', or last night this or last night that. You hear it every day. (Interview 8)

'I was so pissed last night', or 'I got so drunk I crashed my car', or 'yesterday I crashed my scooter and broke it', or 'wow Wednesday night I'm getting so battered', it goes on and on and on. (Interview 14)

[O]ver lunchtime stories tend to come out, understand, then everybody laughs together about it. Like I said, I don't necessarily agree with it, but I would laugh about it and whatever. (Interview 6)

Various participants indicated that they hear people converse about their drinking behaviour during class times. The latter, in particular, can influence student perceptions regarding drinking as talking during class time is disruptive, and therefore very visible and memorable. This is

accompanied by other drinking-related consequences that participants often mentioned during the course of the interview. For example, Thursday mornings after 'student night', classes are much emptier and some of the students show signs of hangovers, such as lying on their arms or carrying water bottles with them.

> [I hear it] [r]egularly, it's disruptive in class time. They sit around you and they have no regard for the lecturer in front of the class, so if you don't want to hear [them], then go sit completely in front. (Translated, Interview 12)

> [I]f I listen in class sometimes the one guy would say he was drunk or whatever, and then here and there you get people that it is as if they don't have anything else to talk about. You meet them and you ask 'how are you doing', 'no, it's going well, I was again so drunk yesterday night and passed out and I'm actually a bit tired'. (Translated, Interview 13)

It became apparent that some participants noticed gender differences in this regard and accordingly interviewees were asked whether they perceived such differences in terms of conversation about drinking and drinking-related activities. Most indicated that males liked talking about drinking behaviour much more and that they tended to focus on the actual drinking and the quantity they had consumed more so than their female counterparts. In general, female participants indicated that they thought it was 'not very ladylike for a girl' to talk about how much they had drunk the previous night or how drunk they were. However, they did indicate that they discussed occurrences that had taken place during the night out, including occurrences of sexual harassment.

> I think for guys it's more about bragging and girls like 'what happened', you know, like facts. 'This guy grabbed my ass and I was like so offended, and I slapped him', and the guys like, 'ah this chick was so hot, and I was so wasted', you know, for them it's bragging. (Interview 3)

> I think guys are more comfortable to talk about it, but I mean, I have heard girls talk about it, 'I drank so much that I can't remember what I did'. That's a bit scary, she couldn't remember how she got to res and so on. I think guys will talk about it more openly. Girls would rather tell their girlfriends, 'oh my word; I can't believe this happened last night'. I think girls will probably be shyer about it than guys. (Interview 6)

Participants were also asked if it ever bothered them when students conversed about drinking-related activities and if it did, whether they would ever object. Some indicated that at times it would bother them, especially if the stories were of an extreme nature or cast the speaker or others in a bad light. Other participants seemed to become irritated when certain people would constantly talk on about drinking or boast about it. Very few participants indicated that they would actually say something if an aspect of the conversation bothered them. Again, many saw this as a personal choice and as not their place to interfere or judge.

> Ya, of course it bothers me, it makes you think by yourself like, am I normal. I would never do that, but ya it bothers me, you know if they are your friends, you almost want to go like, 'this is wrong'. But you don't know how to tell them without offending them. . . . Actually that's the reason why I use to not drink so much, because I couldn't think of anything worse than a guy friend coming to me and saying: 'ah, I was so wasted last night, I threw up all over'. And you're just like, 'okay gross'. But definitely, like 'ah last night was awesome'. Like personally for me, my friends go out like once a week, and I'm with them, so it's like 'last night was awesome', but you can sit in class and hear the person behind you like talking, so definitely all the time. (Interview 3)

It doesn't bother me, but I just can't understand how it doesn't bother them. If they want to get drunk, then they can probably get drunk and do the crazy things. . . . I can't change it so, I can't get mad about it, but if they want to do it fine, but I just can't grasp it. (Interview 6)

Participants were also asked if they thought some of the more conservative students were bothered by other students' conversation. Numerous participants had the perception that it did bother some other students.

I think it bothers some people, if they go on about it the whole time. I think it makes you feel kind of self-conscious because you don't drink but if your personality is strong enough then you wouldn't really worry about it. I mean, I don't think drinking defines you as a person, or gives you a new personality, no. (Interview 5)

I'm sure it bothers them inside, like inside they think to themselves, gee'z, I don't understand why you guys do this. But I'm really chuffed with these okes because they never voice their opinions or judge or try and preach at you and say don't do it, don't do it. They handle it very well, they just accept it as a part of life. (Interview 8)

There is also a temporal dimension to the amount of conversation about drinking and the related activities. Participants indicated that it increased around certain times of the week and before and after events. This might also serve the purpose of socially legitimising the drinking behaviour while the event and the behaviour are still within temporal proximity. Discussing it with fellow peers soon before or after the behaviour could generate mutual social approval and reward.

[L]ast night . . . we had like a big ceremony thing in our res and we had like a big piss-up, today the whole day I'm just hearing about [it]. Even now, okes are like talking about what they are doing this weekend. Like I'm going to a twenty-first tonight and okes are really like psyched to sort of drink and stuff. So before and mainly afterwards, you always hear about it. (Interview 4)

Wednesday afternoons at class, then everyone talks about it, and Thursday morning almost no one is in class. And those that are in class you can see they were out. (Interview 5)

In conclusion then, the interviews provided evidence that students talk about their own and others' drinking behaviour and that they converse about it and hear other students talk about it quite often. Accordingly, conversation may play an important role in perpetuating the perception of exacerbated drinking behaviour and its approval by bringing alcohol consumption and its related activities into students' everyday lives, even when they are not drinking.

I think if you have a peaceful night and nothing much happens, then you wouldn't talk much about it. The thing is you don't really want a night that was like okay, it is nice to have something to talk about. (Translated, Interview 2)

4.5.3 REACTION TOWARDS THE POSSIBLE EARLIER CLOSING TIME OF BARS/CLUBS

Early in 2009 a rumour circulated on the Stellenbosch campus regarding the town council's intention to change the closing time of all bars and clubs in Stellenbosch to midnight. The reason interviewees were questioned about this occurrence was to gauge their perceptions of how other students would react if this came to pass, as an indirect way of understanding participants' perceptions of other students' attitudes towards drinking in relation to the way they organise their social and academic activities. Such a change could directly influence the time students have

available to drink. Participants' personal reaction towards such a rumour would therefore also provide some indirect evidence of their own attitude towards drinking and how invested they were in their drinking behaviour.

In general, participants thought that limiting the sale of alcohol to a certain time at bars or clubs would not influence students' drinking behaviour and that students would adapt their drinking habits. One of the popular reactions was the idea that students would start drinking earlier in the day. In relation to this, a few respondents again verified the idea that students plan their daily lives to accommodate both drinking and academics. In this instance, participants said that students often work after the completion of their classes (for most, at 17:00), after which they would then go out and/or start drinking. If bars and clubs were to close earlier, the time to 'party' would be reduced, which would then infringe on the available time to work after class. Such measures would consequently lead to students skipping class and/or starting to drink socially earlier. From this it seems students prioritise academic work below social drinking. Participants thought that if the time conventionally available for drinking in public spaces were decreased, other students would not necessarily reallocate the remaining time to academic work, but rather to social drinking. In relation to this perception, some participants also indicated that they thought students would drink faster to become drunk quicker within the available period.

> *No, I don't think it would work, I think it would actually make it worse because people would start drinking earlier. But now, I know a lot of people would first work till about 10 and only then would they start partying. Where if the places closed at 12 o'clock then the people would start partying directly after class and then their work isn't going to happen and they are still going to sit with a hangover the next day. It's not going to make a difference the next day. People will drink at their residence, in the road, in the end it's going to be more dangerous. . . . They would start boozing earlier, they would start bingeing much earlier, take in more alcohol in a shorter time, which will have worse consequences if compared to taking it in over a longer period because they will try to reach that state of absolute drunkenness earlier. And it's usually not that nice if you try to do it too quickly. (Translated, Interview 2)*

The other perception that dominated participants' responses was that students would not stop drinking once bars and clubs close, but would rather make other plans to continue social drinking, such as driving to other locations where bars/clubs were still open and obtaining alcohol from other sources to continue partying at private and university residences. Accordingly, various participants saw the town and its bars/clubs and its proximity to campus as a safe and a proper place to consume alcohol. They thought if bars/clubs closed earlier, it would result in various other negative consequences, such as more people driving while intoxicated, more damage to university property and residences, and noise in residential areas, as the parties would shift there.

> *Maybe if they did it, it would have an effect of less drinking, but those that want to drink are going to get alcohol somewhere. I think if that rule is implemented you will stock up at your flat or whatever. It's like that little dog, he runs and bites at your ankles, and then you put a nozzle on him, but if you take it off, then he bites you again, it doesn't stop him from biting, so it's you yourself that have to decide to stop drinking. . . (Translated, Interview 12)*

In general then, the participants' perception of other students' reaction towards the possible earlier closing time of bars and clubs was characterised either by negativity or by the idea that they would adapt their drinking habits. One participant sketched a more extreme scenario of students' possible reaction:

I'm telling you a lot of people would leave here if they did that, definitely. . . . [W]ho wants to be at a university where you can't drink after [a certain time], that's like absolute madness. (Interview 14)

4.6 THE ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS IN PERSONAL DRINKING BEHAVIOUR IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER FACTORS

Up to this point, the role of peers and the perceptions of peer drinking behaviour in relation to students' own drinking have been extensively explored with reference to both specific statistical tests and the qualitative narratives. However, as has become evident, the complexity of the student drinking culture calls for an understanding of the role of perceptions when many other possible influential factors are also accounted for. This section specifically seeks to understand the role of perceptions in personal drinking behaviour in the context of other cognitive factors as well as current contextual, socio-demographic and life-experience factors. For this purpose, multiple regression analysis will be used to determine which variables are the most important in predicting students' own drinking behaviour.

4.6.1 DATA CONSIDERATIONS

The question regarding the perception of co-residents' drinking was only asked to respondents residing in university residence or university student housing. It was consequently removed from the analysis due to the large number of cases it excluded (50%). Additionally, the variable had missing correlations for a range of variables. Of those respondents who indicated they were religious (84%), the vast majority's (97%) religious affiliation was Christian. Thus, this variable was excluded from the regression analysis as the groups available for comparison was too small. Religious attendance was consequently included in the analysis.

The correlation matrix for all variables included in the multiple regression analysis was checked for evidence of collinearity. Firstly, high correlations ($r > .7$) were found between the perception of the weekly drinking of male students, female students and students in general. The zero-order correlations of these three variables with actual weekly drinking were used as criteria for exclusion from the analysis. Consequently, the perception of male and female students' weekly drinking was excluded, as these variables had the lowest zero-order correlations with the outcome variable (actual weekly drinking) and were therefore more likely to be worse predictors than the perception of general students' weekly drinking. Secondly, a high correlation was found between the age respondents started drinking and the age they first drank heavily ($r > .7$). The age they started drinking was retained, again due to its higher correlation with the outcome. Lastly, a high correlation was found between average academic performance and the academic performance index variable ($r > .7$). The academic performance index variable was retained due to a higher correlation with the outcome.

4.6.2 PHASE ONE: SIMPLE REGRESSION

Preliminary regression analysis of the individual variables considered for the multiple regression analysis (Table 43) revealed that several of the variables significantly explain some of the variance in students' average weekly drinking, whereas others do not make a significant contribution. Predictors that stand out in terms of the amount of variance they explain are high-school level of alcohol consumption (39%), own approval of drinking (47%), perceived drinking behaviour of close friends (56%), perceived drinking behaviour of students in general (16%) and perceived approval of drinking by close friends (16%), among others.

Table 43: Regression results for individual predictors

Predictors	B	SE B	β	Explained variation (%)
Biological factors				
Body mass index	0.48	0.09	.21***	6%
Socio-demographic factors				
Gender (male vs female)	-5.33	0.71	-.30***	9%
Age	0.10	0.16	.03	0%
Home language				0%
Afrikaans vs English	-0.39	0.84	-.02	
Afrikaans vs Other South African languages	-2.30	2.19	-.04	
Afrikaans vs German	-3.64	2.54	-.06	
Afrikaans vs Other African languages	-5.93	3.56	-.07	
Race				2%
White vs Black	-3.26	1.77	-.07	
White vs Coloured	-3.32	1.14	-.11**	
White vs Indian/Asian	-6.14	3.30	-.07	
Religiosity (attendance)				6%
Attended church (past 30 days) vs Did not attend, but religious	3.28	0.82	.16***	
Attended church (past 30 days) vs Not religious or agnostic / atheist	6.25	1.03	.24***	
Money per month to spend on personal interests/leisure activities	0.005	0.001	.302	9%
Employment status (employed vs unemployed)	0.85	0.87	0.04	0%
Previous life experiences				
Age started drinking	-1.49	0.18	-.32***	11%
High-school level of alcohol consumption	1.78	0.09	.62***	39%
Family drinking problems (no problem vs mother/father/brother or sister has problem)	-1.38	1.06	-.05	0%
High school academic performance	-.05	.03	-.05	0%
Situational/contextual factors				
Own approval of drinking	0.44	0.02	.69***	47%
Own academic effort	-1.14	0.18	-.24***	7%
Own academic performance	-0.87	0.19	-.18***	3%
Historical year of study at Stellenbosch University	0.20	0.27	.03	0%
Faculty				4%
Faculty of Economic and Management vs AgriSciences	-0.02	1.77	.00	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Health Sciences	-3.75	1.36	-.12**	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Engineering	0.68	1.17	.03	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Art and Social Sciences	-0.62	1.10	-.03	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Science	-3.14	1.23	-.12*	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Education	-4.09	1.90	-.09*	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Law	1.41	1.90	.03	
Faculty of Economic and Management vs Theology	-5.39	3.35	-.06	
Type of residence and residence location (combined)				4%
On-campus: University residence vs On-campus: University student housing	2.36	1.68	.06	
On-campus: University residence vs On-campus: Private accommodation (flat or house)	2.62	1.04	.11*	
On-campus: University residence vs Off-campus (in Stellenbosch): Private accommodation	0.17	1.04	.01	
On-campus: University residence vs Outside Stellenbosch: University residence	-2.09	1.57	-.05	
On-campus: University residence vs Outside Stellenbosch: Private accommodation	-3.29	1.13	-.12**	
Type of co-residents				4%
Living with roommate(s) vs living with flat mate	2.09	0.99	.09*	
Living with roommate(s) vs living alone	-1.46	0.94	-.07	
Living with roommate(s) vs living with parent(s), other family or spouse/partner	-3.50	1.01	-.15**	
Relationship status				3%
Single vs Casually dating	4.79	1.30	.15***	
Single vs In a serious relationship	-0.11	0.78	-.01	
Single vs Engaged / Married	-5.44	2.71	-.08*	
Cognitive factors				
Perceived drinking behaviour of close friends	0.63	0.02	.75***	56%
Perceived drinking behaviour of general students	0.27	0.02	.41***	16%
Perceived approval of drinking by friends	0.21	0.02	.41***	16%
Perceived approval of drinking by students in general	-0.04	0.02	-.09*	1%
Perceived approval of drinking by mother	0.09	0.03	.12**	2%
Perceived approval of drinking by father	0.25	0.03	.31***	10%
Perceived academic effort of close friends	-1.13	0.17	-.26***	7%
Perceived academic performance of close friends	-1.45	0.23	-.25***	6%
Perceived academic effort of students in course	-0.16	0.18	-.03	0%
Perceived academic performance of students in course	-0.12	0.29	-.02	0%
Perceived academic effort students in general	0.08	0.20	.02	0%
Perceived academic performance of students in general	-.47	.33	-.06	0%

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

4.6.3 PHASE TWO: SIMULTANEOUS MULTIPLE REGRESSION

From the simple regression results, the statistically significant predictors were simultaneously entered into a multiple regression analysis. Consequently, all variables that did not uniquely contribute to the explanation of variance in student drinking were removed. Each of these removed variables, and the variables that were identified as insignificant predictors during the simple regression analysis, were then separately entered into a multiple regression analysis along with the identified significant predictors to test for possible suppression effects. Only one variable, namely, the perceived academic performance of students in general, further significantly contributed to the explanation of variance in weekly drinking and was therefore included in the final regression model.

Table 44 displays the final multiple regression model. An ANOVA showed that the final model was significantly better in predicting the outcome (drinking behaviour) than the mean, $F(11, 639) = 176.999$, $p < .001$. Cohen's d was included as an index of effect size (.20 = small, .50 = medium, and .80 = large; Neighbors *et al.*, 2007: 7). The R^2 value for the final regression analysis was .76, indicating that 76% of the variance in personal alcohol consumption is accounted for by the variation in the predictors included in the final regression model. The variables that were excluded therefore do not make a significantly unique contribution to the explanation of the variance in drinking behaviour in the presence of the other predictors (Table 44).

Table 44: Simultaneous entry multiple regression results

	B	SEB	β	95% confidence interval for B		d	Unique variation (%)
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
(Constant)	3.66	1.286		1.13	6.185		
Perceived weekly drinking of close friends	0.41	0.03	.49***	0.36	0.46	1.25	9.53
Perceived weekly drinking of students in general	0.05	0.02	.08**	0.02	0.09	.24	0.38
Perceived approval of drinking by close friends (score)	-0.07	0.01	-.14***	-0.10	-0.04	.39	0.97
Perceived approval of drinking by students in general (score)	-0.04	0.01	-.08***	-0.07	-0.02	.28	0.49
Perceived academic performance of students in general (score)	-0.58	0.17	-.07**	-0.91	-0.25	.28	0.47
Personal approval of drinking (score)	0.24	0.02	.38***	0.21	0.28	1.12	7.66
Gender (male vs female)	-0.98	0.40	-.05*	-1.76	-0.19	.19	0.23
Single vs Casually dating	-0.08	0.67	-.00	-1.41	1.22	.01	
Single vs In a serious relationship	-1.285	0.40	-.07**	-2.07	-0.50	.26	1.14
Single vs Engaged/Married	-6.422	1.38	-.09***	-9.13	-3.71	.37	
Average drinking per occasion during last year of high school	0.537	0.07	.19***	0.40	0.68	.60	2.21

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
R^2 = .76; unique variability = .23; shared variability = .53

The results indicate that the perceived drinking norm of friends clearly has the largest effect on respondents' own alcohol use (β = .49; d = 1.25)[35]. It explains the largest proportion of unique variance[36] in personal alcohol consumption (10%). For every one-drink increase in the perceived drinking of close friends, students' own drinking tended to increase by 0.4 drinks. As was

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[35] It is important to stress the fact that beta values quantify the degree to which each predictor affects personal drinking behaviour *if the effects of all other variables* in the regression analysis are held constant.

[36] Unique variation is calculated by squaring the semi-partial correlation for a specific variable. It represents the decrease in total explained variation (R^2) if a predictor is removed from the model. Hence, it represents the unique contribution of that predictor to R^2 in that specific set of predictors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001: 140).

expected, students' approval of drinking is also a strong predictor (β = .38; d = 1.12), and uniquely explains 8% of the variance in personal consumption. Next, high-school alcohol consumption accounts for the third largest proportion of unique variance (β = .19), namely 2%, and had a medium unique effect in predicting personal drinking (d = 0.60). For approximately every two additional drinks students drank on average, per occasion, during their last year of high school, they drink one drink more per week at university. Interestingly enough, relationship status emerged as an important predictor of personal alcohol consumption and accounts for 1% of the unique variance in personal drinking. Students that are in a serious intimate relationship tend to drink one drink less per week than students that are single. Moreover, students that are engaged or married, drink six drinks less per week on average. Perceived approval of drinking by close friends uniquely accounted for 1% of the variance in personal drinking, and was negatively related to the outcome (β = -.14; d = 0.39). Similarly, perceived approval of drinking by students in general (β = -.08; d = 0.28) and perceived academic performance of students in general (β = -.07; d = 0.28) were also negatively related to the outcome. Both had a small unique effect in predicting personal drinking. The perceived weekly drinking of students in general had only a small unique effect in predicting personal drinking (β = .08; d = 0.24). For example, for every increase in 20 drinks in the perceived weekly drinking norm of students in general, own weekly drinking only increased by one drink. Gender also had only a small unique effect in predicting alcohol use (β = -.05; d = 0.19). Women tend to drink one drink less per week than men do.

A noteworthy aspect of the multiple regression analysis is the large proportion of shared variance (53%) compared to unique variance (23%). However, this is not unusual, as '[i]t is rather common to find substantial R^2, with [the unique variance] for all [predictors] quite small' (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001: 140). Shared variance represents the portion of the R^2 that is accounted for by two or more predictors, whereas unique variance is what each predictor distinctly contributes to the prediction of the outcome, i.e. the variability in the outcome that other predictors cannot address (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001: 140). The large percentage of shared variance shows that a large portion of the variation in student drinking behaviour can be accounted for by a range of factors. In simultaneous multiple regression, the importance of a predictor is largely determined by the amount of unique variance in the outcome it can explain. As stated before, 76% of the variability in students' personal drinking is accounted for by all the predictors in the final model, of which only 23% is unique variance. Of that unique variance, the perceived drinking norm of close friends almost accounts for almost half (10%), followed by attitude towards drinking that accounts for more than a third (8%). As was seen in the initial regression analysis (Table 43), the perceived drinking norm of close friends', on its own, explained 56% of the variation in personal drinking, followed by own approval of drinking (47%) and high-school level of alcohol consumption (39%). The lack of an effect of other possible important variables that were identified during the simple regression analysis (such as age started drinking and perceived approval of drinking by father) but are not reflected in the final model, indicates that these variables do not make a unique contribution over and above what is explained by the variables remaining in the final model.

As can be seen, the perceived drinking norm of students in general only has a small unique effect in the prediction of drinking behaviour. However, if the perceived drinking and approval norms of close friends are excluded from the model, personal approval of drinking becomes the strongest predictor (β = .47) and perceived drinking of students in general the second strongest (β = .28), closely followed by high-school alcohol consumption. This identified the perceived drinking of friends as a possible mediator between the perceived drinking of students in general and alcohol consumption. According to Baron and Kenny (1986: 1176), evidence of mediation is present when:

- a significant relationship exists between the *predictor (X)* and the *mediator (M)*
- a significant relationship exists between the *predictor (X)* and an *outcome (Y)*
- a significant relationship exists between the *mediator (M)* and the *outcome (Y)* when controlling for the *predictor (X)*
- the relationship between the *predictor (X)* and the *outcome (Y)* becomes insignificant, or is reduced dramatically, if controlling for the *mediator (M).*

To test for evidence that the perceived drinking of friends is a mediator of the relationship between perceived drinking of students in general and personal alcohol consumption, Pearson's zero-order correlations and partial correlations were conducted. Firstly, a statistically significant relationship (r = .52, p < .001) exists between the perceived drinking of students in general (X) and that of close friends (M). Secondly, a significant relationship (r = .41, p < .001) exists between perceived drinking of students in general (X) and personal drinking (Y). Thirdly, a significant relationship (r = .69, p < .001) exists between perceived drinking of close friends (M) and personal drinking (Y) when controlling for perceived drinking of students in general. Lastly, the relationship between the perceived drinking of students in general (X) and personal drinking (Y) is no longer significant (r = .037, p > .05) when controlling for the perceived drinking of friends (M). Therefore, the perceived drinking of students in general seems to influence actual alcohol consumption largely through its relationship with the perceived drinking of friends.

An interesting occurrence in the final model is the negative relationship between the perceived approval of drinking by friends and own drinking. The negative relationship essentially means that, when controlling for the effects of the other variables in the model, the more students perceive their friends as approving of drinking, the less they personally drink. This is surprising, because one would expect a positive relationship between the perceived approval by friends of drinking behaviour and own alcohol consumption. This result warranted some further investigation, also due to the results of the preliminary simple regression analysis that showed that an increased sense of approval by friends predicts an *increase* in own drinking (Table 43). Analysis showed that, when either the perceived drinking of friends or personal approval of drinking is controlled, the positive relationship between the perceived approval of drinking by friends and own drinking becomes insignificant. However, when both are controlled (like in the final regression model) the relationship becomes negative. Further examination revealed that the perceived drinking of friends and own approval are both possible mediators between the perceived approval of drinking by friends and own drinking.

4.6.3.1   Assessing the regression model: Casewise diagnostics

The proportions of the standardised residuals above 1.96 standard deviations were analysed. According to Field, 'in a normally distributed sample, 95% of z-scores should lie between -1.96 and +1.96, 99% should lie between -2.58 and +2.58, and 99.9% (i.e. nearly all of them) should lie between -3.29 and +3.29' (2009: 216). Accordingly, when more than 5% of cases have an absolute standardised residual larger than 1.96, then there is evidence that the model is not such a good representation of the data. For the current data, 29 cases (4.5%) had z-scores above 1.96. Therefore, the proportion of these cases in this sample is smaller than what could be expected, indicating a good representation of the data. Additionally, only 1% of absolute residuals (6 cases) are expected to lie beyond 2.58 standard deviations. For the current data, 17 cases (2.7%) fall into this category, therefore, within 1.7% of what would be expected from a normal distribution. Lastly, only 0.1% of absolute residuals (1 case) should lie beyond 3.29 standard deviations (these

cases are also seen as possible outliers). In this survey, seven cases (1%) conform to meet this criterion, thus, more than expected.

These diagnostics provide cause for some concern with regard to departures from a normally distributed sample, especially in the sense of more extreme outliers. However, to be certain of the overall effect of these cases on the model as a whole, Cook's distance needs to be analysed, with values greater than 1 being cause for concern (Field, 2009: 45). Fortunately, all these cases, as well as all other cases in the dataset, have a Cook's distance smaller than one, which indicates that no cases have an undue influence on the model.

Two more measures of influence are leverage and Mahalanobis distance. A number of cases were identified (n = 24) that had values large enough on both these measures to warrant concern, indicating that these cases may exert undue influence on the model. Very interestingly, it included all engaged and married individuals, in fact, 12 of the 24 were married or engaged. The means of the predictors in the final regression model for the influential married/engaged cases, the influential non-married cases and the other cases were compared. The analysis revealed that on average, the influential married cases drank far less and perceived their friends as drinking far less than the average student did and the influential non-married cases on average drank far more and perceived their friends as drinking far more than the average student did. The influential married cases also approved less of drinking than the average student, whereas the influential non-married cases approved far more. What these factors point to is a combination of extreme values on some of the predictors, both high and low, which seem to exert undue influence on the model. If these cases are removed from the regression model, the most noticeable differences are that perceived academic performance of students in general no longer makes a unique contribution to the prediction of student drinking behaviour and the perceived drinking of close friends makes a substantially larger unique contribution to the explanation of variation in own drinking behaviour.

4.6.3.2 Assessing the regression model: Generalisation

The correlation matrix for all predictors was checked for evidence of multicollinearity, and no predictors correlated significantly (all $r < .6$) (e.g. Field, [2009: 224] suggests correlations above .8 are too high). The largest correlations were between own approval of drinking, perceived approval of drinking by close friends and perceived drinking of close friends. Additionally, perceived drinking of close friends was quite strongly correlated with perceived weekly drinking of students in general and high-school drinking. Lastly, high-school drinking was also rather highly correlated with personal approval of drinking. Although the abovementioned correlations were substantial (all $r > .5$), the relationships were not strong enough to warrant concern (all $r < .6$) Furthermore, the examination of collinearity diagnostics, namely tolerance values and variance inflation factors (VIF), confirmed the assumption of no multicollinearity. The lowest tolerance value was .40 (VIF = 2.51), therefore not approaching levels indicating problems (e.g. tolerance < .2, VIF > 10; Field, 2009: 224). The average VIF is 1.5, therefore not much larger than one, indicating that multicollinearity is not significantly biasing the regression model to a large extent (Field, 2009: 242).

Another assumption of multiple regression is the independence of residuals for any two observations. The Durbin-Watson test tests this by considering whether or not adjacent residuals are correlated. The test statistic can range from 0 to 4, with a value of 2 meaning residuals are uncorrelated. The survey data produced a value of 1.997. Given this minute difference, one can safely say the assumption has been met.

CHAPTER 5   DISCUSSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Research on alcohol use among students in general show that misperceptions are deeply ingrained in how students experience social life and that the perception of peer behaviour plays a prominent role in the way students experience university life. It appears that students, in their perception of drinking among themselves, overestimate actual consumption. Based on the theory and findings covered thus far, this chapter discusses the complex interplay between students' life experiences before enrolling at university, misperceptions in relation to the cultural context at university and alcohol consumption. This chapter is organised as follows:

- ❖ Students' precedent and initial perceptions of university culture
- ❖ Perceived normality of students' personal behaviour
  - ○ Personal behaviour in relation to the perceived norm
  - ○ The perceived difference from the norm
  - ○ Personal behaviour in relation to the perceived difference from the norm
- ❖ Situating perceived norms in a student's life
  - ○ Personal disposition and the descriptive norm
  - ○ Personal disposition and the injunctive norm
  - ○ The descriptive norm and the injunctive norm
  - ○ Experiences before entering the university context
- ❖ Situating perceived norms in the cultural context of university life
- ❖ Reflection on findings and social norms theory
- ❖ Conclusion
- ❖ Recommendations for future research

5.2   PRECEDENT AND INITIAL PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY CULTURE

A student's university career has the potential to be the climax of his or her adolescent life and it is likely that some students enrol with the idea of fulfilling the social aspect of this ideal. A statement that most students probably hear from their parents is 'don't forget what you are there for', with the answer of course being, to study. In practice, for many students this is only part of the answer. Prospective students also look forward with excitement at the possibilities the university lifestyle has to offer – a lifestyle that can potentially be very sociable. In the minds of many, social life on campus is inextricably linked to the use of alcohol; students, prospective students and the public alike regard alcohol consumption as ***stereotypical cultural behaviour*** for students (Tseng, 2001: 35). Hence students are stereotyped as individuals that enjoy drinking and they themselves are aware of this.

However, perceptions of the student drinking culture go much further than a mere stereotype. 'Partying' and drinking are regarded as a 'rite of passage' for students. Being a student is seen as sufficient justification for frequent alcohol consumption. Drinking is therefore presented as the necessary norm, as ***ideal cultural behaviour*** (Tseng, 2001: 35). Qualitative results show that this idea is not only perpetuated by students themselves, but also by parents, the media and even university faculty members. If a stereotype is legitimised through recognition by significant others, it may be perceived as an ideal behaviour. In accordance, the stereotypical nature of this behaviour then serves to justify the actions of those who behave that way.

The idea of drinking as a rite of passage possibly represents a broader perception that participants entertain of their student life. It also represents certain **expectations** they have of their student experience and it may even start playing a role before students enrol at university. Students may come to Stellenbosch University with a certain expectation of what they socially want to experience during their university career. Therefore, they may select situations and friends that are aligned with this idea with the end goal of rendering that idea a reality. Research in America has for example shown that students who plan to join fraternities tend to drink more compared to peers who do not plan to join (Baer, 2002: 48). The idea of a rite of passage is not only significant because students may seek to embrace it; it also acts as a justification for drinking. Drinking is framed as a rite; it represents something students have been doing across decades and even centuries, what students are currently doing and what prospective students will want to do when they arrive at university.

With regard to perceptions before enrolment at university, the role of the **self-fulfilling prophecy** is again in question. If students arrive at university with a (false) perception of stereotyped cultural behaviour, as viewed by individuals positioned outside the campus culture, they start their university career with a certain perception of students' behaviour that may bias their future perceptions, and as social norms theory would argue, influence their behaviour. However, the idea of the rite of passage is only substantive as long as it is maintained by the perception of support by the student masses. It is this perception that is under scrutiny in this thesis.

With this general perception of student life in mind, theory suggests that, within the cultural context of a university, **peer norms** play an important role, seemingly more important than the role of institutional norms and parental approval. For most students, upon arrival, the cultural context of university life will be new and unfamiliar. Many arrive in this context with expectations aligned to the abovementioned stereotypical views of student culture. How do students act in a situation in which they might at first feel out of place and where direct guidance is negligible? Undoubtedly, there is a large variance in terms of students' experiences and reactions to the social climate on campus. Nevertheless, attribution theory suggests that individuals innately and unconsciously turn to their observations and interpretations of the behaviour of significant others, to learn what is desirable and undesirable and to attribute causes to behaviour (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 94). This is done with the purpose of discovering what is considered normal within a given situation, to direct one's own behaviour (or rather, the impression of support for what is seen as normal) towards the perceived norm and, in so doing, facilitate social acceptance within a cultural environment.

In this sense then, through perception as a fundamental part of socialisation, the majority of students would learn to adapt to their environment with the purpose of fitting in and so become cultured according to **student social 'lifestyle requirements'**. The process of social norming within the university's social context may be simplified due to the absence of direct parental control or objections to behaviour (Perkins, 1997: 188). Furthermore, research has shown that behavioural change in the face of differential reinforcement from peers may occur even in the presence of contrasting attitudes towards that behaviour (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 251, Study 4).

However, the process of socialisation into a relatively new cultural context is partly based on the assumption that individuals can **accurately identify the social norm**. As the results of this study show, the perceptions of the drinking norm that students form are characterised by more permissive drinking behaviour and approval of drinking than their own. Thus students

undoubtedly tend to find support for the stereotypical idea about drinking with which they arrive on campus. If they did not, or they perceived counterintuitive evidence upon enrolment, there would not be evidence of such an exacerbated perception of the norm.

As the qualitative results showed, when new students arrive at Stellenbosch, they are exposed to a situation on campus that is characterised by extraordinary levels of drinking: **RAG** – the festivities of a student carnival. The campus seems to be engulfed in festive activities and events. The long December holidays have ended; senior students are excited to be back and to see their friends. To contribute even further to the joyful atmosphere, academic responsibilities are as of yet non-existent, because courses only commence after RAG. For these and many other reasons it is hypothesised that during this time a larger group of students drink more frequently and more heavily than normal, largely due to the mentioned external circumstances. The drinking behaviour, especially of the more senior students, is highly visible. Additionally, many other young people come to Stellenbosch to join in the festivities, adding to the density of the alcohol-consuming masses.

In terms of attribution theory, first-years will tend to attribute observations of other students' behaviour to their personal disposition (internal cause), rather than the festive RAG environment (external cause). The increased number of students drinking in the same period may lead them to assume that this applies to the majority of students. Consequently, they extrapolate beyond the specific situation and perceive student drinking behaviour during this time as the campus norm and as representing the normative personal attitudes of most students. They are essentially thrown head-first into (what they may perceive as) the essence of campus culture and therefore, the essence of being a student. Furthermore, first-years may feel a strong need to fit into their new social environment and will therefore be more observant of socially desirable behaviour, more responsive towards what is observed and more inclined to adopt behaviour that is differentially reinforced. As Perkins describes:

> *The behaviours and attitudes of the peers whom a student barely knows may then be generalized, turned into perceptions, misperceptions, even firm beliefs, about wider peer norms. Moreover, a student may even assume that the behaviour of other students . . . indicates what they are truly like, since they are perceived as beyond the control of parents, employers, or school administrators.*
>
> (1997: 188)

Participants in this study provided various reasons for the heavy alcohol consumption during this time of year. However, the importance of RAG to the current research is that it may lay the **foundation for the misperception of the role of drinking in student culture**. It is a highly memorable experience characterised by the perception that 'everyone' is drinking and the testimony of interviewees supported this notion. Furthermore, RAG may also contribute to the public's stereotypical perception of drinking as an ingrained part of student social life, as the event is usually well attended by townsfolk, other youth and parents.

According to social norms theory, these perceptions will have **behavioural consequences** for students. With the passage of time, and continued acculturation, these behaviours may be internalised by some or initial perceived deviance from the norm may lead to a feeling of alienation from the social context (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 249, Study 3). Anti-consumers may find themselves at a type of crossroads position. They often tacitly have to make a choice between leaving the student culture entirely, opting out of certain aspects of that culture or managing their abstinence while remaining part of the student drinking culture; each of which requires a varying

level of involvement and requires different coping strategies (Piacentini & Banister, 2009: 285). Some may gradually still learn, through experiences with students in general as well as close friends, that the observed norm is not as widely supported as first thought, a mental process known as *anchoring and adjustment* (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 99).

It is necessary to mention that the investigation of student drinking behaviour revealed that **academic behaviour** is often neglected. Findings from both the qualitative and the quantitative research indicate that practices around drinking and academic life are integrated in student culture. Both these behaviours seemingly form an integral part of student lifestyle by representing activities that consume a significant amount of students' free time. Students seem to have developed a routine with regard to drinking in conjunction with their academic lifestyle, which may further contribute to the sense of normality associated with alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption might further be exacerbated by the freedom associated with student life. Freedom and academics can even be seen as juxtaposed within the university context, the one as the other's antagonist. The will and the space to socialise, to be merry and to drink with friends and the perceived social and academic norms that support such behaviour are in direct conflict with the need to fulfil academic responsibilities such as going to class, studying and performing academic work. This might make it difficult for some to find the right balance between social activities and academic responsibilities.

The sense of initial surprise that some interviewees expressed about students' academic behaviour in the presence of drinking behaviour points to a perception or a preconceived idea that students might find it difficult to maintain a **balance between their academic lives and their drinking habits**. This hints at another stereotype, namely that students generally do not take their academic work seriously. This perception may also be linked to the fact that academic behaviour is much less visible than drinking behaviour and that people are inclined to talk more (favourably) about drinking than about academic related activities. Upon arrival at university, students observe what they think to be masses of heavy drinkers. To them this would stand in direct conflict to academic behaviour, which in general is not highly visible, socially desirable or memorable. However, if the idea of heavy drinking is perpetuated along with the additional perception that students also manage to attend to their academic responsibilities, the perception may be formed that heavy drinking and academic behaviour can and do co-exist without any problems.

One has to assume that students are not ignorant or blind beings; they must surely observe other students' academic behaviour. The question is whether one of the two behaviours is differentially reinforced by peers. This will influence which behaviour is initially imitated and whether students are able to find the adequate personal balance that will allow them to be successful socially and academically. If the social environment on campus generates the perception that drinking behaviour is differentially reinforced over and above academic behaviour, the scale may tip in favour of drinking behaviour for some. This may then negatively affect their academic behaviour.

5.3   PERCEIVED NORMALITY OF PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

5.3.1   PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR IN RELATION TO THE PERCEIVED NORM

In comparison to the results of research elsewhere, the drinking behaviour of sampled students at Stellenbosch University showed similarity and difference. The proportion of survey respondents that could be classified as binge drinkers was paralleled by findings of a large-scale study of 130

higher education institutions (N = 14 521) in the United States (Wechsler *et al.*, 1998: 60). Results from this study showed that two in five students are binge drinkers, similar to the current findings at Stellenbosch University. However, of these binge drinkers, respondents in my research consisted of more occasional binge drinkers and fewer frequent binge drinkers than the American results. There was furthermore a similarity between findings in terms of the proportion of students that abstain or could be classified as non-binge drinkers.

With regard to how student drinking behaviour compared to the descriptive norm (their perceptions of the drinking behaviour of close friends, co-residents and students in general), the most basic finding that can be extrapolated from the survey results is that, similar to other research findings, **student perceptions of the peer drinking norm are related to their own drinking behaviour**. In particular, the more students drink, the more likely they are to perceive a heavier peer drinking norm (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 579; Carey *et al.*, 2006: 7). Furthermore, I found a stronger relationship between own drinking and the perception of close friends' drinking than the perceived drinking of co-residents and typical students, with the magnitude of the latter being similar in size.

Considering the relationship between personal approval of drinking and the injunctive norm, findings were similar to that of the descriptive norm. I found that greater personal approval of drinking is associated with a greater perceived approval by close friends and, to a lesser extent, by co-residents, but not by students in general. Nevertheless, the absence of the latter relationship is consistent with other research that found smaller associations with more distant reference groups. Furthermore, as in the case of the descriptive norm, the greater the perceived approval by friends, the greater the personal consumption. However, there was no relation with the perceived approval by co-residents and a weak negative relation with the perceived approval of students in general.

This difference between the perception of the behaviour of close friends and more distant reference groups can be ascribed to the tendency to perceive **greater consistency between own behaviour and the normative behaviour of proximal others** than that of more socially distant reference groups. In other research, Carey *et al.* (2006: 15) found stronger positive associations between students' own drinking and the perceived drinking of friends than the perceived drinking of general students on campus. Concerning the injunctive norm then, there is no correlation with students in general, because this group's approval of drinking is seen as inconsistent with personal approval. Other researchers (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 579; Carey *et al.*, 2006: 15) only found a weak relationship between personal approval and the perceived approval by students in general and support the stronger association with the perceived approval by friends. Differences between own drinking behaviour and the perceived approval by students in general (the injunctive norm) translated into a negative relationship, because many respondents think other students feel contrary to how they feel. This influence of proximal distance and the perception of dissimilarity seem to be more pronounced for the injunctive norm than for the descriptive norm. Prior research (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 579) also found no relationship between personal drinking and the perceived approval of more distant reference groups such as 'typical students'.

With regard to the association between students' **personal academic behaviour and the perceived academic behaviour of peers**, relationships were rather weak in comparison to the descriptive and the injunctive norm of drinking, even for close friends. Firstly, with regard to students' perceptions of how their personal academic *performance* compares to the academic performance of peers, the expectation that greater personal performance would be associated

with a perceived *better* performance by peers was only realised for close friends. In contrast, for students in their course and students in general, greater personal academic performance was associated with the perception of *worse* performance for both these reference groups; however, these associations were especially weak.

Secondly, greater personal academic *effort* was associated with greater perceived academic effort for both close friends and students in one's course. However, no relationship was found between personal effort and the perceived effort of students in general. Perceived academic effort also 'functioned' more like the descriptive drinking norm than academic performance did, as the strength of the association between own behaviour and others' perceived behaviour tended to steadily decrease as proximal distance of reference groups increased.

The general weaker association between personal and the perceived academic performance may be ascribed to the less visible nature of this indicator compared to academic effort. This will lead to an enhanced effect of pluralistic ignorance with regard to academic performance. Furthermore, the existence of a positive association between personal and the perceived effort of students in one's course and not the perceived performance can possibly be explained by the observable nature of this reference group and their academic effort. Although research on the role of perceptions of the academic norm in personal academic behaviour is scarce, one study conducted in India yielded similar results. It found that academic achievers were more likely to have more favourable perceptions of the academic atmosphere than underachievers (Mayya & Roff, 2004: 280).

Considering the above discussion, one can conclude that there is a relationship between students' personal behaviour and the perceived behaviour of peers, and that this relationship varies according to reference group. Of all the reference groups, the greatest consistency is perceived with the behaviour of close friends, whereas consistency with more distant reference groups is more erratic. However, in most instances, results seem to suggest that students view the behaviour or approval of more socially distant individuals as less consistent with their own or, in some instances, as contrary to their own. These results seem rather obvious: greater similarity with a more proximal reference group is to be expected, because students have been found to associate on the grounds of similar drinking behaviour (Leibsohn, 1994: 177) and would tend to be more sure about their friends' behaviour, which is higher in perceptual salience, than the behaviour of more distant others. For instance, one would expect personal drinking to be associated with perceptions of others' drinking because heavier drinkers tend to be surrounded by more people who drink.

The association between personal behaviour and the behaviour of others is therefore explained by the **differential association with peers with similar behaviours** (Akers *et al.,* 1979: 638) or, as explained earlier, the association with peers that reflect the idea of the student life an individual wants to live. The lower consistency between personal behaviour and the perceived academic behaviour of close friends compared to the perceived drinking and approval of drinking by close friends points to possible criteria that students employ to initially differentially associate with peers. Similar academic behaviour may possibly not be as important a criterion as similar drinking behaviour due to the social nature of drinking. It may potentially be more important to have similar friends on a social level than on an academic level.

Even if the premise that initial peer association occurs on the grounds of similarity is void due to whatever reason, the association between personal behaviour and perceived peer behaviour can

be explained by the **imitation of peer behaviour** that follows differential association, as proposed by social learning theory (Akers *et al.*, 1979: 638). Furthermore, one's immediate peer group will undoubtedly bias one's perceptions of more distant social groups, leading in some instances to the association between personal behaviour and the perceived behaviour of more distant reference groups. However, as social norms theory suggests, perceptions will have behavioural consequences. Therefore, the association between personal behaviour and perceptions of peer behaviour could alternatively be interpreted as one causing an increase in the other. However, for this to be the case and to have negative social consequences, students need to perceive a difference between themselves and others and, more specifically, that other students' behaviour and approval are more permissive than their own. Therefore, considering the perceived differences between personal behaviour and the behaviour of other students was necessary to provide further insight into the relationship between perception and behaviour.

5.3.2   PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE FROM THE NORM

In the first instance, the analysis provided evidence of extensive **misperceptions of the drinking norm**, similar to the findings of other researchers (e.g. Carey *et al.*, 2006; Kypri & Langley, 2003). Across various measures of quantity and frequency of drinking, the majority of respondents consistently perceived the drinking behaviour of various peer reference groups as more permissive than their own. More specifically, for each day of a typical week, respondents perceived their friends, co-residents and students in general as drinking more than they do. This illustrates the consistency and depth of perceived self-other differences for peer behaviour on a day-to-day basis. Further analysis showed that the total perceived weekly drinking of all reference groups was statistically significantly more than personal drinking, indicating that students perceived their own drinking as significantly more conservative than the norm, similar to other research utilising a similar measure (Lewis & Neighbors, 2004: 336). The perception of self-other differences was so profound that male students even thought the drinking norm for female students exceeded their own drinking. A study in the United States incorporating 130 higher education institutions (N = 76 145) investigated the number of alcoholic drinks consumed the last time students 'partied'/socialised. It found that almost three in four students overestimated the drinking norm at their college/university (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 473). The results of the latter study were reiterated by findings from another large-scale study conducted in Canada (Perkins, 2007: 2650).

Similar to the descriptive norm, my results revealed that in general students perceived **vast differences between their own approval of drinking and the perceived approval of others**. The majority think other students approve more of drinking than they personally do. Consistent with other research (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 245, Study 1), Stellenbosch students on average thought that they were more conservative than their peers. In their meta-analytic integration of 23 studies, Borsari and Carey (2003) found that 91% of hypothesis tests determined that survey respondents perceived other students as drinking more or holding more permissive attitudes towards alcohol consumption than they themselves had.

Consistent with drinking and approval of drinking, there were also **significant self-other differences in terms of academic behaviour**. In general, students at Stellenbosch University perceived the general academic norm as worse than their own academic behaviour. The qualitative results of this study confirmed the survey findings in this regard. Similarly, other research looking at academic success found that, compared to themselves, students perceived their peers as less academically motivated (Abhold, Hall & Serini, 1999, as cited in Berkowitz, 2004:

28). The current results more particularly showed that students perceived their close friends, students in their course and students in general as working less and performing worse than they personally do.

Furthermore, consistent with other research (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 580; Carey *et al.*, 2006: 6; Perkins, 1997: 189), my research shows that **the more socially distant the reference group, the more permissive the perception of the norm**. Therefore, although students in general perceive all peer reference groups as consuming more alcohol than they do, approving more of drinking than they do, and academically working less and performing worse than they do, they also perceive more similarity between their own behaviour/approval and that of closer reference groups. This difference in perceptions of similarity also explains the lower correlations between own behaviour and the perceived behaviour of more distant reference groups described in the previous section (see 5.3.1). Consistent with other research, across the descriptive and injunctive norm, students seem to perceive their friends' behaviour and attitude as more similar to their own, as shown by the stronger correlations and the smaller mean difference, than that of more distant reference groups (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 245, Study 2). For academic behaviour, the same trend was found: students observe larger self-other differences with more distant reference groups, such as students in their course, and even more so with students in general.

Perkins (1997: 186-191) suggests that these perceived self-other differences are partly caused by **errors in attribution**, and the **visibility and overrepresentation of drinking behaviour in students' public conversation**. Errors in attribution largely pertain to the *actor-observer effect*, i.e. when differing causes of behaviour are allocated to own behaviour and the behaviour of others (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 102). When students reflect about the causes of their own behaviour, they tend to attribute the causes more to external situations or the social environment. This is known as *fundamental attribution error* (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97). However, when assigning causes to others' behaviour, they tend to attribute the causes more to those individuals' personal disposition or attitude rather than to situational causes. This is explained by the limited knowledge individuals have of other students, for two reasons. Firstly, the only knowledge individuals have available to attribute causes to student behaviour is the discrete observations of students public behaviour. Secondly, individuals do not have direct access to information about the dispositions of other students; access is indirect, possibly only through the observation of public behaviour. Students may therefore think that the random occurrences of drunkenness they witness are the general behaviour of students and may attribute the causes of that behaviour to the personal attitudes of their peers because they have neither knowledge that could explain these actions, nor knowledge about the continuous behaviour of peers.

In contrast, for their own behaviour, individuals have more intimate knowledge of the **causes of their own behaviour**. Consequently, as results showed, students tend to perceive themselves as more conservative than other students. They therefore assign a larger dispositional cause to other students' behaviour than to their own behaviour. However, because perceptions of dispositions will partly be based on the perceived behaviour of others, the exaggerated perception of peer behaviour also explains the more permissive perception of other students' dispositions. Qualitative interviews confirmed the overrepresentation of talk about drinking behaviour in public conversation, which further contributes to the cognitive visibility of drinking and the exaggerated and false perceptions of others' behaviour.

Hence, attribution theory also explains why students have more exaggerated perceptions of more distant reference groups than they have of their close friends. When students reflect about their

friends, they are referring to their perceptions of people they actually know and interact with, so their perceptions are based on more continuous observations and knowledge. However, when reflecting about general students, for example, they rely on a perception based on a subjective idea of an abstract construct, i.e. the student population as a whole. They do not know every individual in this population and therefore cannot have an accurate perception of all students' behaviour or attitudes because they simply do not have access to this information. In accordance, research by Holtz and Miller (1985: 890) showed that students tend to be less certain about the behaviour of an out-group than an in-group. Nevertheless, the perceptions of 'an amalgamation of others' will still partly be based on personal observation, because students only have their personal experiences and thus subjective views to rely on in attributing causes to others' behaviour (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 580). Observations of discrete experiences affirm their broader expectations of the general campus environment. Therefore, the actor-observer effect and fundamental attribution error will be more enhanced for distant others, meaning students will be more inclined to attribute the observed behaviour of general students to dispositional causes than doing so for the behaviour of their close friends.

For academic behaviour, the same social processes come into play as with drinking behaviour except, as expected, peer academic behaviour is underestimated. However, as with drinking, the perceived academic behaviour of peers can still be seen as more permissive, because it is associated with worse performance and less effort. Here the possible low social desirability of academic behaviour, its low visibility and underrepresentation in (desirable) conversation might have the inverse effect than for drinking behaviour, leading to the underestimation of the academic norm. Of course, students do observe peer academic behaviour, because it forms an integral part of the university experience, but it is not as memorable as the perceived drinking-related behaviour of students and is therefore not talked about that much or as positively. This effect will again be amplified for more socially distant reference groups due to the lack of knowledge of their actual behaviour and the consequent generalisation of discrete observations.

Additionally, I postulate **a relation between the underestimation of academic behaviour and the overestimation of drinking behaviour and vice versa**. For students, both these activities potentially consume a significant amount of their free time. However, the perceptual salience of drinking behaviour in social life and the consequent overestimation of the norm might contribute to the underestimation of the academic norm, as students erroneously perceive the majority of other students as heavy drinkers. As a consequence, academic responsibilities may be perceived as taking a backseat to social drinking behaviour. Alternatively, the perception of the dispositional cause of the drinking behaviour of other students may be augmented by the presence of academic behaviour: even though it might be expected to inhibit drinking, heavy drinking by the majority (or the perception thereof) still occurs (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97).

During interviews, the issue of **achieving a balance between drinking behaviour and academic behaviour** also surfaced. This perceived balance of peer behaviour gravitates towards social drinking behaviour, with a perceived necessity for performing academic work directly before tests, exams and assignment deadlines. Although this perceived norm might be seen in a positive light because students make time for both social and academic activities, it can also be interpreted as a detrimental norm to subscribe to because it caters for students' social drinking habits by legitimising the need to study and work only when it is really necessary. This may provide normative support for not focusing continuously on the academic aspects of campus life, such as going to class or reviewing work, but merely working hard on some occasions. This scenario places more pressure on students and has the added disadvantage that they may possibly underestimate

the task at hand and therefore the time needed to adequately prepare. In turn, this may translate into poor performance in tests or the late submission of assignments for some.

Although it is apparent from the above discussion that students perceive other students' behaviour as more permissive than their own when asked to respond by selecting a singular category in the questionnaire, the qualitative interviews revealed that participants **perceive the student population as stratified**, as consisting of cohorts with differing drinking habits, levels of alcohol consumption and academic behaviour. Among students, there is variation in the perceived size of these strata. The perception of the student population as stratified in terms of level of alcohol consumption might therefore mitigate the social influence of the erroneously perceived drinking norm. According to Prentice and Miller (1993: 243-244), the power of a norm to influence attitude or behaviour largely depends on its perceived universality. 'As consensus (or the appearance of consensus) breaks down, the norm loses its influence' (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244). Their research accordingly showed that the average students is not as comfortable with drinking habits on campus as is universally perceived (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 245, Study 1). Consistent with this, my results showed that on average students thought the majority of the student population drank heavily, pointing to a degree of universality in their perceptions of a permissive drinking norm.

While it is clear that students are aware of the different subpopulations on campus, they **do not assign enough weight to the moderate drinkers**. When asked to provide an indication of either their friendship group or typical students' drinking behaviour, they tended to select a more permissive behaviour and attitude than their own. As explained earlier, this might be because of the low visibility of lighter consumers. The interviewees were aware of a group of heavy drinkers on campus and mentioned highly visible behaviour associated with drinking. Participants also indicated that they thought the actions witnessed by their peers had an influence on their peers' perceptions of the student population. As proposed by proponents of the social norms theory (Perkins, 1997: 190), these observations exacerbate students' perceptions of the drinking norm, or rather, due to the evidence of a stratified perception of the student population, their perception of the size of the heavier drinking group.

Proof of a general perception of a more permissive social norm than existed in reality, prompted an investigation into the relationship between these perceived differences and students' own behaviour. Such an analysis might posit possible explanations for the perception of self-other differences, because theory on misperceptions suggests that own behaviour plays a role in how we perceive ourselves in relation to our social environment (Berkowitz, 2004: 7-8).

5.3.3   PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR IN RELATION TO THE PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE FROM THE NORM

Analysis revealed a significant relationship between students' own alcohol consumption and how students see themselves in relation to the drinking norm. More specifically, the more students drink, the more likely they are to view their own behaviour as normative and/or that they drink more than the norm. Stated differently, **the less students drink, the larger the tendency to perceive a norm that is more permissive than their own behaviour**. Evidence of an association between personal drinking and perceived difference from the norm was also found in research on binge drinking in the United States. Findings showed that students are more likely to report that half or more of their friends are binge drinkers as their own binge frequency increases (Wechsler & Kuo, 2000: 60). Additionally, results again revealed a significant reference group interaction. For

example, students that drink less will be more likely to think they deviate from the drinking norm on campus than from their friendship group's norm. These results regarding the relationship between own drinking and difference from the descriptive norm were similar for the injunctive norm (students perception of the approval of drinking by other students). The lower students' alcohol consumption, the greater the possibility that they perceive their own approval of drinking as deviating from the norm, or rather, as more conservative than the norm. The strength of this relationship also increases as the proximal distance of reference groups increases, indicating that students that drink lighter are more likely to see themselves as more conservative than the norm when considering reference groups that are more socially distant.

In their study of self-other differences, the findings of Carey *et al.* (2007: 390) were consistent with the results of this study. They found that 'lower levels of drinking [are] associated with larger discrepancies between personal alcohol use and the perceived drinking of others'. Moreover, similar to my research, the relationship between own drinking and the self-other differences for students in general were stronger than the relationship with close friends. They also found that at higher levels of drinking, students tended to perceive a smaller difference between their own behaviour and the norm, or thought they drank more than the norm. Therefore, for both studies, heavier drinkers tended to report the highest perceptions of the norm, although some of them perceived that they drank more than the norm, albeit an exaggerated personal version of the norm. In accordance, the heavier-drinking students' perceptions of self-other differences differ from the lighter to moderate-drinking students who generally have the perception that students in general drink more than they do (Carey et al, 2007: 7).

From the comparison between students' own drinking and their idea of the appropriate drinking for a university student, it seemed evident that even though lighter drinkers, including abstainers, saw their consumption as at odds with the remainder of the student population, the majority indicated that **heavier drinking than their own drinking was appropriate for university students**. It is apparent that drinking behaviour on campus has become so normalised that lighter drinkers accept heavier drinking as the appropriate, or at least, justified behaviour, even though they perceive their own behaviour as deviating from this norm. However, lighter drinkers do not necessarily feel alienated due to their nonconformity to the norm. Rather, they appear too comfortable with their own consumption level, partly due to being part of a peer cluster that has similar behaviour to their own.

Additionally, the investigation into the relationship between how normative students view their own drinking behaviour and the **negative consequences due to others' drinking** revealed mixed results in terms of reference groups and type of negative consequences. The relationships between, on the one hand, self-other differences for the various reference groups and, on the other hand, negative consequences due to others' drinking are explained by the different levels of involvement of students with these reference groups. Students do perceive negative consequences arising from close friends' drinking, but not as strongly as from co-residents' drinking. This is to be expected, as my findings show that students are more likely to see their own drinking behaviour as similar to that of their friends, therefore they are more likely to overlook indiscretions from friends, behave as their friends do or to drink with or as much as their friends do. In comparison, for co-residents, whom they tend to perceive as drinking more than themselves and their friends, the relationship is stronger. Due to these perceived dissimilar drinking practices they experience the actions of co-residents as more disturbing and therefore more memorable than those of their friends. In addition, co-residents are perceived as negatively influencing both 'private life' and 'general and social life' as these individuals are involved in both these areas of

students' everyday lives. However, for students in general, no relationship exists with personal negative consequences due to others' drinking, because students in general do not occupy the personal space of students and therefore they cannot affect aspects of this space in the same way that friends and co-residents can. However, individual students interact with other students in the general social environment on and off campus and therefore perceive negative consequences arising from students in general in those areas of their lives.

For self-other differences concerning academic behaviour, it was of importance to investigate how these differences relate to both personal academic behaviour and personal drinking behaviour. With regard to the academic norm, results showed that **the harder students work and the better they perform, the more likely they are to perceive their own behaviour as deviating from the academic norm**. More specifically, those that work harder and perform better are more likely to think that the academic norm is less rigorous than their own behaviour. The strength of this relationship was considerably stronger than the relationship between personal drinking behaviour and perceived self-other differences of the descriptive drinking norm. This indicates that the perceived deviation from the norm by own behaviour is more pronounced for academic behaviour than for drinking behaviour, i.e. students that work harder and perform better are more likely to think their academic behaviour deviates from the academic norm than students that drink less are likely to think they deviate from the drinking norm.

When comparing self-other differences concerning academic behaviour with personal drinking behaviour, I found that **students that drink less are more likely to see their own academic performance and effort as greater than the nor**m. This relationship was weak and only true for students in their course and students in general and not for close friends. The lighter drinkers therefore tended to think they differ from the perceived 'typical student' in two respects, namely they drink less and work harder/perform better. A consequence of the perception of false normative support for heavy-drinking behaviour may be further exacerbated by this perception of false normative support for less rigorous academic behaviour. Results therefore suggest that the perceptions for these two norms may be interrelated, i.e. the more you drink and the less you study, the more normative you perceive your own behaviour to be.

The finding that students that drink less tend to perceive a norm that is more permissive than their own behaviour might again seem obvious. However, one has to consider that the majority of students misperceive the norm. In actuality, the norm is more conservative than they perceive and therefore they **compare themselves to an erroneous normative standard**. This brings a very important point to the fore: individuals define themselves in relation to their perceptions of others, and where they mentally position themselves when doing so is erroneous. This error in perception when locating one's own behaviour in relation to others can take on three forms, namely false uniqueness, pluralistic ignorance and false consensus.

Firstly, many students see themselves as lighter drinkers only because they compare themselves to an erroneous heavy-drinking norm. The proportion of abstainers to moderate drinkers is marginalised and so the illusion is created that these individuals are more unique in their behaviour than in reality. How they are viewed by others and how they view themselves and their degree of deviance from the norm is false. This misperception is referred to as *false uniqueness*, by which individuals erroneously see their personal behaviour as uncommon (Berkowitz, 2004: 8). Similarly, students that see their own attitude as more conservative and their academic behaviour as more rigorous than those of others, are again falsely defining themselves in relation to the

perceived erroneous norm. As results have shown, their behaviour is actually more normative than they think.

Secondly, related to the misperception of false uniqueness, is the tendency of students to see other students' behaviour and attitude as more permissive than their own, a misperception referred to as ***pluralistic ignorance*** (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244). The results show that this misperception inflates in students' minds the proportion of heavy drinkers. However, in reality, the proportion of students that abstain and drink lightly to moderately is larger than the proportion of students that drink heavily. Abstainers and lighter to moderate drinkers tend to perceive themselves as deviating from the norm, which might therefore motivate them to increase their drinking or, alternatively, invoke feelings of alienation. However, students tend to associate with people similar to themselves, so although they might be alienated from the general campus norm, feelings of alienation might be minimal within their peer cluster. Some students may initially feel alienated from the perceived heavy-drinking masses, especially if heavy drinking conflicts with their personal moral values, but after continuous exposure some may adjust their attitude and others even their behaviour as they come to accept it as the norm.

Lastly, in contrast with false uniqueness and pluralistic ignorance, erroneously thinking one's own behaviour is more normative than it is in reality, is known as ***false consensus***. Results show that students proclaiming more permissive attitudes and behaviours tend to view themselves as similar to their false perception of a permissive norm and therefore view their personal behaviour as more common than is the case in reality. For instance, heavier drinkers tend to view their personal drinking behaviour as more similar to their own erroneous perception of a heavy-drinking norm than lighter consumers and non-consumers will do. They interpret their own behaviour as usual, which serves as a justification for that behaviour. Unlike other students, they feel no pressure or expectation from their peers to change their behaviour or attitude.

In conclusion, where students mentally locate themselves in relation to their social environment is based on misperceptions concerning other students' drinking and academic behaviour. But these misperceptions extend much further than only misperceiving the quantity of drinks consumed by peers, their approval of drinking or their academic behaviour; they form an ingrained part of everyday interaction for students and, according to social norms theory, may therefore influence their behaviour.

5.4   SITUATING PERCEIVED NORMS IN A STUDENT'S LIFE

Up to this point, I have discussed the relative influence of singular social constructs upon each other. Thus far, the relationships between these constructs have shown how perceptions of the norm may possibly influence behaviour and how students with varying behaviours view themselves in relation to the norm. However, everyday social life is complex. A range of factors may influence how we act and interact within it and, in accordance, how our perceptions play a role in our behaviour. According to Bourdieu (Maton, 2008: 51), an individual's *habitus* is concurrently structured by experiences as well by current contextual factors. Therefore, in the regression model included in my study, student drinking is examined by studying the influence of perceptions of the drinking norm in the presence of other cognitive factors as well as contextual, socio-demographic and life-experience factors. Only when the influence of other predictors were accounted for, did it become clear how the perceived norm functions in the cultural context of students' lives.

5.4.1   PERSONAL DISPOSITION AND THE DESCRIPTIVE NORM

One factor that cannot be ignored when considering alcohol consumption is **an individual's personal disposition towards drinking**. How much students approve or disapprove of drinking will most probably have a substantial influence on their personal consumption. Moreover, attitude towards drinking may affect students' perception of the drinking norm and may also partly be a result of the perceived norm. Thus an important question in the research was whether the perceived drinking norm is associated with drinking behaviour even when controlling for personal attitude or, as phrased by Perkins and Wechsler, 'do students consume alcohol in a fashion that, to some degree, reflects their perceptions of the normative standards even independently of their personal drinking codes?' (1996: 963). I therefore wanted to understand whether students' perceptions of the norm contributed to their drinking behaviour over and above what could be explained by their personal attitude. One would expect personal approval to be the strongest predictor or explain most of the variation in drinking if individuals purely acted based on their personal dispositions.

In a multiple regression analysis that included gender, the descriptive norm (not for friends) and the injunctive norm for various reference groups, Neighbors and his colleagues (2008: 580) found that approval of drinking was the strongest predictor of personal consumption, closely followed by the perceived campus drinking norm. Furthermore, in a large sample of 140 higher education institutions in the United States, one study found personal attitude to be the strongest predictor of alcohol abuse (based on the negative consequences of drinking), even in the presence of socio-demographic factors and the perceived campus norm, the latter again being the second strongest predictor (Perkins & Wechsler, 1996: 966).

To the contrary, I found that **approval of drinking was the second strongest predictor of drinking behaviour** and thus does not explain the largest proportion of unique variation in drinking at Stellenbosch University. Instead, students' perception of the descriptive norm of friends explained a significantly larger proportion of variance. Therefore, even when own attitude towards drinking is considered, student perception of the drinking norm of friends is more strongly associated with personal alcohol use. This discrepancy between findings from research elsewhere and from this study is essentially explained by the fact that other studies (e.g. Neighbors *et al.*, 2008; Perkins, 2007; Perkins *et al.*, 2005; Perkins *et al.*, 1996) often only account for the perceived drinking of so-called typical students and fail to consider closer reference groups such as close friends or students in one's residence.

From the current research, it is evident that the **more proximal a peer reference group, the more salient its role in personal alcohol use** and, as will later be explained, the formation of perceptions of the drinking norm. However, as the results showed, '[w]hile proximal referent groups, such as close friends, demonstrate a stronger association between perceived drinking and one's own drinking behaviour, more distal groups such as typical college students also account for unique variance in drinking' (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 576). Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Neighbors *et al.* (2008) and Perkins *et al.* (1996), when the descriptive drinking norm of close friends was excluded from the regression model, personal attitude indeed became the strongest predictor, followed by the perceived drinking norm of students in general. Thus, there is the possibility that perceptions of the larger campus norm may still influence personal drinking even in the presence of a more proximal reference group and personal disposition. A multivariate analysis

by Perkins and colleagues revealed that even when controlling for socio-demographic factors[37] and the actual norm[38] for each specific campus, the perceived campus drinking norm was by far the strongest predictor of drinking behaviour, followed by gender, and then the actual norm for each campus (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 474). However, results from my study suggest that the contribution of the perceived campus drinking norm to personal drinking behaviour may be small in comparison with the influence of the perceived normative behaviour of close friends and personal attitude.

An essential question in my research is **whether the perceived desirability of peer behaviour would trump or influence personal dispositions**. The body of research and literature I reviewed supports this notion as do the results of my study. If the cultural context is seen as supporting certain behaviour, this will lead to individuals defining as desirable the membership to certain groups that approve of that behaviour. According to other research, 'perceptions of the norm become relatively more important in explaining alcohol abuse among students with more liberal predispositions' (Perkins *et al.*, 1996: 968). Furthermore, in unfamiliar situations, such as students' initial arrival on campus, individuals are more likely to turn to the observation of public behaviour to gain access to a definition of the situation (Prentice & Miller, 1996: 244). My research, and other research, have shown that students are often wrong in their perceptions of peer behaviour and tend to overestimate the approval of drinking and actual drinking behaviour. They may thus associate with groups they would otherwise not have done. Once these individuals are seen as their in-group, members have a mutual expectation of one another to continuously reaffirm mutual attitude and similarity, as well as the definition of the situation (Scott, 2008: 113-114), through behaviour.

5.4.2 PERSONAL DISPOSITION AND THE INJUNCTIVE NORM

Results regarding the relative influence on student drinking of the injunctive norm of reference groups that vary in social proximity were more varied than for the descriptive norm. In the first instance, greater perceived approval by friends and parents were significantly associated with heavier drinking when examined *alone*. For parents, approval by the father figure had a stronger association with heavier drinking than the approval of the mother did. However, consistent with prior research (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 579), the association with drinking was not significant when the injunctive norm of parents was examined in the context of other predictors. However, in contrast to other multivariate research, including descriptive and injunctive norm variables for different reference groups (Neighbors *et al.,* 2008: 579), my results show that approval by friends was associated with a decrease in drinking when controlling for other variables. Further investigation revealed that **personal approval and the perceived drinking of friends are mediators between the perception of friends' approval and personal drinking**. This indicates that the perceived approval of friends possibly only affects personal drinking through the effect it has on the perception of friends' drinking and personal approval of drinking. The existence of such a mediating effect has previously been theorised by Perkins (1997: 193).

While the perceived approval by friends is associated with a decrease in personal drinking in the *final* regression model, the *initial* analysis already showed that the perceived approval of students

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[37] Gender, race, age, year in school, fraternity/sorority membership, student status (full-time, part-time), hours per week working for pay and volunteering, and school region.

[38] The actual norm was represented by the median for the question pertaining to the "number of alcoholic drinks consumed last time students at one's school 'partied'/socialised" (Perkins *et al.*, 2005: 474) for each specific campus.

in general is associated with a slight decrease in personal drinking. In line with other research, this negative relationship persisted in the presence of other predictors in the *final* model (Neighbors *et al.*, 2008: 579). The lack of the association between personal drinking and approval of drinking by students in general can possibly be explained by the large difference between personal and perceived approval, because students tend to think that they are personally much more conservative than Stellenbosch students in general.

The difference in the perceptions of more distal, unimportant reference groups was consistent with findings by Holtz and Miller, who conducted a classical study on how the differences in perceptions of the opinion of others vary by viewing these others as part of one's in-group or part of an irrelevant out-group. They found that perceptions of the in-group induce a larger sense of similarity than the out-group does and additionally, that survey respondents were more certain about their opinions of their in-group (1985: 890).

The **need to assume similarity between oneself and significant others** is partly explained by social comparison theory, which postulates that individuals' certainty about their own attitude increases by the degree they see their beliefs as shared by others (Festinger, 1954). This essentially means that individuals will seek reassurance for their own attitude (and behaviour) by associating with groups that they perceive as holding similar beliefs as their own. Moreover, the need to avoid difference and obtain agreement between themselves and other in-group members is most salient in conditions where membership of the group is defined as desirable (Festinger, 1954).

Social comparison theory therefore explains the testimonials of interviewees about peers directly trying to influence one another to drink, be it through invitations to go out with them, buying them a drink, or even questioning their reasons for not drinking in social circumstances. According to Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, '[w]hen people meet in social situations, they cooperate like teams of actors to "keep the show running" and uphold a certain definition of reality' and furthermore, 'individuals are concerned to present particular characters or versions of themselves to the audiences they meet' (Scott, 2008: 113-114). Therefore, by not drinking alcohol, an individual is indirectly challenging alcohol consumers' own attitude and the mutual definition of the social situation. Conversely then, if an individual overestimates the reassurance for a behaviour from an important reference group with whom association is desirable, whether he or she already has an attitude in coherence with that behaviour or not, they will be more likely to engage in that behaviour and possibly adopt a similar attitude to in-group members. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, these initial perceptions of social definitions regarding what behaviour is desirable will determine which peer cluster students associate with.

As Bourdieu indicates, social interaction is competitive and for students to improve their position in the social field of the university they must accumulate capital (Thomson, 2008: 69). The **social capital** students 'choose' to accumulate will depend on their perceptions of the desirability of certain behaviour within the current social field they occupy. Acting in certain ways, in line with what is socially desirable, expresses support for a certain type of social capital, which in turn leads to the accumulation of social capital for that student. Hence, the link between the individual and the accumulation of social capital is dependent on their perception of social norms.

5.4.3 THE DESCRIPTIVE NORM AND THE INJUNCTIVE NORM

A key question raised by the results of this study is **why the descriptive norm of the drinking of friends would be a better predictor of personal consumption than the injunctive norm of friends** in the final model. This finding may partly be ascribed to the fact that perceptions of the descriptive norm are based on personal observation, whereas others' attitudes are not directly observable and can therefore usually only be deduced from the observed behaviour of others. However, the unobservable nature of the injunctive norm lends itself to the occurrence of pluralistic ignorance, which is the perception of difference between one's own attitude and that of others', even though actual personal and peer behaviour are similar (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 244). As the results showed, pluralistic ignorance extends further than the mere misinterpretation of others' attitudes to the perception of difference between own behaviour and the observed behaviour of others. Consequently, the more specific question with regard to pluralistic ignorance concerns students' own behaviour in relation to personal attitude, and the perception of others' behaviour in relation to their own attitude, i.e. the **behaviour-attitude discrepancy**.

In line with theoretical expectations, my results showed that an individual student would tend to observe the behaviour and attitude of peers as more liberal than his or her own. Furthermore, the difference between the perceived behaviour of others and the perceived attitude towards that behaviour attributed to peers would be significantly greater than the difference between the student's own behaviour and his or her own attitude towards that behaviour. Students therefore attribute greater differences between other students' public behaviour and their attitude than they do between their own public behaviour and attitude. Furthermore, the more socially distant the reference group, the greater the magnitude of the perceived behaviour-attitude discrepancy.

The perceived difference may partly be ascribed to **errors in attribution**. Fundamental attribution error refers to the tendency to see others' behaviour as originating from their disposition, even though situational causes are apparent or, alternatively, to observe situational causes but to not attribute sufficient weight to them in comparison with personal dispositions (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97). Students tend to assume that the perceived greater alcohol consumption of peers is due to their more liberal disposition, rather than the social environment. Students discount the possibility that external discrete situations are the cause of the observed excessive drinking of peers because another (more) probable cause also exists, namely personal disposition (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97). With reference to themselves, their own consumption is firstly seen as less than their peers' consumption and in accordance, their behaviour-attitude discrepancy is secondly seen as smaller than that of peers. This shows that students tend to associate greater alcohol consumption by others with even greater approval of consumption by them, whereas their own lower consumption is associated with an even more conservative attitude. Attribution theory would subscribe this difference in the magnitude of behaviour-attitude discrepancies to the tendency of individuals, when observing others, to ascribe behaviour more to dispositions than to situational causes. In contrast, the explanation of own behaviour tends to have a smaller dispositional cause and a larger situational cause (Perkins, 1997: 187).

5.4.4 EXPERIENCES BEFORE ENTERING THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Thus far, in this section I have discussed the reciprocal influences of the descriptive norm, the injunctive norm and personal disposition on personal drinking behaviour. However, these possible influences on behaviour cannot be viewed as merely static or continuous, i.e. as playing a role at one specific time in a student's career or as always playing the same role. Furthermore, students'

alcohol consumption and perceptions are not static, but will fluctuate and evolve during their time at university. As mentioned before, a potentially important period for the acquisition of social norms is when students initially arrive at university. Yet, students do not arrive 'culture free', but bring with them their past experiences and in all probability well-established identities. In accordance, this section concerns itself with a third most important factor that came to the fore during the regression analysis, namely **students' drinking behaviour prior to university**.

As Bourdieu theorises (Maton, 2008: 51), an individual's behaviour at any given time is structured by various sources, all of which continuously contribute to the **structure of their habitus**, the essence of their identity. Students' habitus is concurrently structured by their current experiences at university as well as their experiences before enrolling at university. As an individual therefore moves through time and different fields, their habitus is constantly being structured by their current circumstances. However, their habitus already has structure due to previous circumstances they have experienced. Subsequently, at any given time that a person finds him- or herself within a certain social space, they bring with them their previous experiences. These experiences influence their current choices and perceptions within that social field. At the same time, that social field is again influencing them, which will in future again influence their perceptions and choices.

In my study, important signifiers of previous experiences are drinking behaviour during high school as well as perceptions of student behaviour prior to enrolment at university. According to Bourdieu, these factors and other previous life experiences would have given an individual's habitus a certain structure, which will influence his or her perceptions and choices at university (1977: 72). Specifically, there is the possibility that both perceptions before becoming a student and/or drinking behaviour before enrolment would influence students' conception of their life at university, the friends they choose and, ultimately, the perceptions they entertain of the behaviour of their student peers. Students may therefore come to university with a predisposition to structuring their social field in a certain way through the choices they make according to their habitus. When arriving at university, students probably already have a certain attitude towards drinking and subscribe to a certain level of drinking. In accordance with this, the consideration of average alcohol consumption during the last year of high school was of critical importance in contemplating the influence of the perceived drinking norm of close friends on personal alcohol consumption in relation to students' personal disposition.

High-school alcohol use was identified as the third strongest predictor of current alcohol consumption. It also signifies prior consumption and initial approval of alcohol consumption, which will undoubtedly influence differential peer associations (Leibsohn, 1994: 177) and, furthermore, models for imitation and differential reinforcement of consequent behaviour. Stated in simpler terms, as the qualitative and quantitative results reflect, previous behaviour will influence the friends students choose, which will subsequently influence their behaviour. This view is supported by my survey findings that suggest greater consistency between own behaviour and the perceived behaviour of friends compared to more distant reference groups.

The **perception of friends' drinking also acts as a mediator between personal drinking and the perceived campus drinking norm**. The influence the campus drinking norm has on personal drinking will therefore largely be through, and dependent on, an individual's perception of their friends' drinking. The perception of friends' drinking may again largely be reliant on the friends students associate with, a choice possibly and partly made on the grounds of perceived similarities also regarding approval of drinking and drinking behaviour even before students enrol at

Stellenbosch University. Consequently, if students mainly associate with peer clusters on the grounds of attitude and behaviour formed prior to university enrolment, and the perceptions of the drinking norm are partially dependent on the peer cluster with which students associate, then the perceptions of the drinking norm can be viewed as resulting partly from previous experiences prior to enrolment that shaped students' approval of drinking and drinking behaviour.

First-year students are initially faced by an 'established' campus culture. They encounter a vast collection of people and circumstances, which the majority of students may not know nor yet understand. More specifically, they move from one support system (e.g. family, established school friends) to another (university/college residence, new friends), which may cause a degree of social anxiety at first, accompanied by a need to fit in. Importantly, the socialising process of social norming is in progress through their engagement with the university context. As the previous sections reflected, a very important aspect in relation to this new cultural context is the associated social norms, which for some will be new, exciting and appealing, and for others in conflict with previous values. Individuals' perceptions of student behaviour, as well as their own behaviour and approval before becoming students themselves, are important for the creation of dispositions, the building blocks of Bourdieu's habitus (Maton, 2008: 51). However, although differential association with similar peers and the consequent imitation and internalisation of norms partly explain the association between the perceptions of peer behaviour and personal behaviour, it does not explain why students would perceive the behaviour/approval of peers as more permissive than their own.

The question consequently arises whether overestimated permissive perceptions of the university social environment have the **ability to bring about change in students' drinking behaviour after their arrival at university**, even though it seems as if perceptions are partly based on, and a consequence of, previous experiences before enrolment. In the absence of longitudinal research, one can only speculate to what *degree* prior behaviour would play a role in friend selection, perceptions of the social norm and future behaviour. Research in the university context has nevertheless produced evidence that '[high school] alcohol . . . use may be [an] important determining factor in the choice of new college (university) friends' (Leibsohn, 1994: 177) and that the perception of exaggerated self-other differences in terms of drinking is a precursor for behavioural change (Carey *et al.*, 2007: 393; Prentice & Miller, 1993: 248, Study 3). One small-scale study found significant differences between male and female students in terms of behavioural change and the internalisation of the norm. The 'results for men are consistent with theorising about conformity pressures in social groups; the results for women . . . suggest increasing alienation over the course of the semester' (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 249, Study 3).

Results from my study nevertheless identify the role of previous behaviour as quite important, when one considers that the regression model controls for the influence of the descriptive and the injunctive drinking norm of friends and students in general, as well as personal attitude. Even when the influences of these factors on drinking behaviour are accounted for, previous drinking prior to enrolment still accounts for unique variation in personal drinking. Bringing these two ideas together then, one can conclude that even though previous heavy-drinking behaviour and a more permissive attitude most probably influence a student's behaviour at university, perception of a conservative peer norm rather than a heavy drinking norm, may influence the degree to which students act on their attitudes and in accordance with their previous behaviour. Other research also suggests that personal attitudinal influences on behaviour are most prominent in situations also characterised by supportive peer norms (Perkins *et al.*, 1996: 962).

5.5   SITUATING PERCEIVED NORMS IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

As the definition by Kroeber and Kluckhohn *(1952,* as quoted in Tseng, 2001: 23) states, 'the essential core of a culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values'. When any one person thinks of student culture, they undoubtedly associate it with social life and the alcohol consumption that so often coincide with that. Accompanying this idea is the concept of the rite of passage, the idea that **drinking is something that is symbolically and idealistically associated with the concept of being a student**. From this symbolic nature of drinking, it logically follows that individuals gain meaning from engaging in this action, that they fulfil their rite as students. As proposed by Goga, the student drinking culture functions as a ritual in Bourdieu's (1991: 120) use of the term (2010: 46). It assigns an essence to student social identity that directs their behaviour towards a certain ideal. As Bourdieu states:

> [t]o institute, [or] to assign an essence . . . is to impose a right to be that is an obligation of being so (or to be so). It is to signify to someone what he is and how he should conduct himself as a consequence. . . . To institute, to give a social definition, and identity, is . . . to impose boundaries.
>
> (1991: 120)

Furthermore, through acting in accordance with these boundaries, students express and affirm their authenticity as a 'student', which has the acquisition of symbolic meaning as a consequence. Through this **ritualistic nature of student culture**, its symbolic power is made apparent. Student drinking therefore not only serves a pragmatic function to relieve stress or facilitate peer-group acceptance, but rather, it has a certain cultural value for individuals as it enables them to become authentic students (Goga, 2010: 46). However, this symbolic value of culture is only realised in the shared characteristic of culture, i.e. that those around us also acquire meaning from the symbolic behaviour.

The above notion also answers the question of why, if the majority of students think they differ from the drinking norm in terms of their own behaviour and their approval of drinking behaviour, they do not question it or act differently. The answer is related to four of the universal features of culture that Anderson and Taylor (2004: 58-61) identify, namely that **culture is fundamentally shared, learnt, symbolic and taken for granted**. My research illustrates the extent of the perceived shared nature of student drinking culture and furthermore, it shows how this shared nature can be misperceived or misrepresented, overemphasising social drinking as a characteristic of the essentialist student. The overemphasised shared nature of student drinking culture produces a strong norm, exaggerating the need to support this ideology. Results illustrate that the heavier students drink, the more likely they are to regard their own behaviour as appropriate. This shows that heavier consumers of alcohol consider their behaviour to be more appropriate within the cultural context of university, i.e. they are more prone to think that they conform to the ideological essentialism of the authentic student. Through this perception, their social identity is more in harmony with the cultural context than the identity of lighter consumers is. Through their behaviour, they express their sense of belonging to the culture, that they share the cultural markers of being a student and, by doing so, they legitimise their own social identity, as identity is only formed in relation to others (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008: 699). This perception of a common, shared identity creates the idea of regularity with regard to the cultural context of the university; a regularity that is accompanied by expectations of conformity as mutual reassurance of group identity.

However, the results of this study also show that the behaviour associated with conformity with that norm does not necessarily have to be expressed in behaviour itself, but rather, in individuals' conception of **the appropriate behaviour for the essential student**. This is shown by the tendency of lighter consumers to think heavier drinking than their own is the appropriate consumption for a university student. They will express this in their public behaviour (i.e. conversation) by not showing disregard for the behavioural norm that supports this idea, and by engaging in conversation about such behaviour. Hence, to a degree, they share the heavier drinkers' perception of a prototypical student. Through this, they form part of and share that particular aspect of student culture and claim the symbolic meaning associated with that social identity. There is thus evidence of significant internalisation of the norm associated with the rite of passage of student alcohol consumption for individuals with varying drinking habits.

If the majority of students perceive heavy drinking as the typical (or even ideal) cultural behaviour, as the norm, then how much and how frequently students drink will be perceived as a defining characteristic of their social reputation in the drinking culture and, more particularly, their visibility. Socialising, and the drinking with which it is often associated, is 'fun' for most involved. This does not only make it desirable, but carries the added advantage of being highly visible. Undoubtedly, the higher level of fluidity and connectivity associated with popular social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and MXit increases the possibility of publicly representing oneself as a prototypical member of the student drinking culture. These media represent mechanisms that play a significant role in perpetuating the misperceptions associated with drinking culture.

According to attribution theory, individuals observing such behaviour will assume universality from a limited number of observations and misperceive such public behaviour as the behaviour of the majority of students (Perkins, 1997: 188). Therefore, although this prototypical student may only be portrayed by a minority, the visible nature of the associated behaviour and the perception of this behaviour by the majority as representative of student culture are enough to create the perception that the majority of students acts according to this essentialist notion and that they approve of such behaviour. There is therefore perceived cultural support for heavy drinking, but not actual majority support. According to social learning theory, if this is the case or, more specifically, if positive or neutral definitions of behaviour outweigh the negative definitions, there will be a stronger tendency that that behaviour will be favoured (Akers *et al.*, 1979: 639).

Another reason why the essentialist cultural support for the drinking student is not questioned is ascribed to the conception that culture is taken for granted, meaning that norms are seldom questioned. **Student drinking culture has the effect of normalising drinking.** Again, the tendency of norms to be accepted is shown by students' reluctance to express publicly their dissatisfaction with 'cultured behaviour' or symbols associated with that culture (Prentice & Miller, 1993: 251, Study 4). My results showed that even before arrival at university, students are socialised into believing that drinking is normal for students. In accordance then, the notion that culture is taken for granted is strongly associated with another feature of culture, that it is learnt through the process of continuous socialisation. Socialisation therefore provides students with the guidelines and the tools to extract symbolic meaning from student life by allowing them access to a shared culture. These characteristics of student culture – that it is shared and taken for granted – means that subscribing to its essence almost guarantees social acceptance without question as all students are obliged to maintain a common definition of the situation.

From the above it follows that there are standards of behaviour; behaviours that are more prototypical of a 'student' than others are, behaviours that are more 'cultured'. My results seem

to point to the notion that students see drinking as a desirable cultural signifier, because it is seen to be the behaviour of the majority. In accordance, less rigorous academic behaviour is also seen as more cultured. These signifiers are both associated with the idea of **freedom** associated with student life. Spending less time on essential activities like academic work shows a subscription to this idealistic normative concept. A clear and visual signifier of this is spending time on drinking behaviour in the presence of other responsibilities, especially academic behaviour. In this sense, *augmentation* possibly occurs in the case of student drinking: students may think frequent drinking is important to their peers because it takes place in the presence of another factor that should inhibit such behaviour, namely academic responsibilities (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97).

In terms of drinking culture then, can students with different levels of drinking actually be viewed as belonging to **subcultures** of the larger student culture? As has been discussed, evidence proposes that there is a definite dominant culture on campus based on the misinterpretation of the degree of support for heavy drinking. Accordingly, as theory suggests, a dominant culture does not need to be supported by the majority of individuals but only by a group that has the power to define what is cultured within a certain social context (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 70). Regarding campus culture, this power lies with the excessive drinkers, as they have the means to produce misperception, which can partly be ascribed to the visibility of their public behaviour. Furthermore, their culture is supported by general society, because it is perceived as stereotypical and even ideal cultural behaviour for students. Alternatively, subcultures are often characterised by different sets of norms and ways of life, but still share some similarity with the dominant culture. Students that proclaim lighter drinking practices therefore share certain notions of student culture with heavier drinkers, such as ideas about the appropriateness of drinking for university students. Nevertheless, their actual behaviour is regulated by a different set of norms, which is less intensive with regard to actual drinking and rather favours other uses of free time. Yet, the lighter-consuming student group cannot be seen as a counterculture, because their cultural practices do not directly defy the norms of the dominant cultural group and in some instances their behaviour even perpetuates perceptions of the erroneous norm (e.g. through conversation).

5.6   REFLECTION ON FINDINGS AND SOCIAL NORMS THEORY

Social norms theory is central to the current research. Its **first premise is that the majority of students overestimate the level of drinking of their fellow students** and that in reality, the actual level of drinking on campus is less than the majority thinks it is. Findings from this research supported this notion and provided possible theoretical explanations for the occurrence of misperceptions. However, due to the importance of these perceived self-other differences for social norms theory and in accord, for this study, various alternative explanations can be posited for their occurrence.

Firstly, the self-reported inconsistency between students' own attitude and behaviour and that of their peers may simply be attributed to students' **intentional attempts to represent themselves as non-conformists**. They might think the researchers disapprove of the group norm and therefore intentionally represent themselves as more conservative. However, as Prentice and Miller (1993: 252) explain, the anonymous nature of almost all self-administered survey data collection provides respondents with little motivation to misrepresent their perceptions.

Another alternative reason that can be advocated for these differences is with regard to the **representativeness of the sample** in terms of the student population as a whole. This concern is more valid, because the relatively low response rate may lend itself to the possibility of a biased sample. For example, abstainers or extremely heavy drinkers may be more prone to participate in a study of this nature, as they are more likely to see it as platform for anonymously expressing their opinions in reaction to possible alienation they experience from the campus norm due to the effects of false uniqueness. However, the findings of my research correspond with findings of studies elsewhere, many of which were based on representative samples of large student populations.

From an **impression management** perspective, an explanation that might be posited for the difference between own attitude and behaviour and that which is attributed to peers, is that simply, there is no real difference; that students merely represent themselves as deviant but do not actually perceive a difference between own behaviour and the behaviour of others. According to Goffman (see Scott, 2008: 114-116), everyday social interaction is confounded by a dual layered lens through which it is forced to occur. The first lens is held up by the private individual; it is through this lens that the outside world is forced to observe us; it represents the social impression we portray through our actions, which are often mediated by the social situation. It may directly represent our private attitude or it might be our own hybrid variant of the social norm. The second lens is held up by observers and represents their perception. Hence, through their lens of perception, the observers observe us through our lens of impression; they do not have direct access to our private attitudes, just as we do not have direct access to their attitudes. Accordingly, observers will tend to perceive our impression as our private attitude, as our personal disposition and will neglect environmental variables (Baron *et al.*, 2006: 97). The point here is that if students perceive a heavy drinking norm, they will try to represent themselves as supporting that norm. Thus, misperception may not only be because of everyday errors in perception, but also because of the false impressions individuals often maintain of themselves.

The question consequently arises whether the amount students drink (the impression they maintain), is equal to what they deem as the appropriate amount to drink (their private attitude) and how much they actually drink. The issue can essentially be seen as **whether students internalise their drinking behaviour**. If students internalise a certain drinking behaviour, before university or during university and no discrepancy exists between their private attitude towards drinking and their actual drinking, then that represents one less area where misperception can occur from the point of view of the observer, because the impression that is given accurately reflects personal attitude and behaviour. In short then, social norms theory maintains that misperceiving the social drinking norm as more permissive than it actually is will lead to increased drinking. If students then actually drink more than they normally would and maintain impressions in support of the drinking norm, would this not with time lead to the internalisation of the new behaviour and so become part of the identity and attitude of the student? Accordingly then, what behaviours observers see may represent actual dispositions rather than environmental causes. However, according to Prentice and Miller, during the first few months at university:

> *. . . students are exposed to vivid and irrefutable evidence of the negative consequences of excessive alcohol consumption: They nurse sick roommates, overlook inappropriate behaviour and memory losses, and hear about serious injuries and even deaths that result from drinking. They may have negative experiences themselves and may notice its effects on their performance. This accumulating evidence of the ill effects of alcohol is likely to affect their private attitudes but not the social norm:*

Indeed, believing that others are still comfortable with alcohol, students will perpetuate the norm by
continuing to adopt a nonchalant demeanour that masks their growing concerns. (1993: 245)

The **second premise** of social norms theory is that **the perceived difference from the norm will have behavioural consequences**. Here, a point of critique concerns the **problem of causality**: do students first misperceive drinking behaviour, or do they drink and because of that, they overestimate others' drinking? Essentially the question is whether their own drinking causes aggravated misperceptions or whether this can be attributed to their drinking environment. Social norms theory presents quite a determinist perspective of students: (observe peer drinking behaviour as high) + (realise own drinking is lower) = (increased drinking behaviour). While most students may have a misperception in the sense that they think students in general drink heavily, not all of them will necessarily adjust their behaviour accordingly. The results of my study were based on a cross-sectional research design, which means the causal order of associations cannot be confirmed. This question can only truly be addressed within a longitudinal design. However, results did show that initial friend selection into a peer cluster with similar morals and behaviour may serve as a buffer between the individual and the perceived campus norm.

Social norms campaigns **attempt to correct misperceptions of the drinking norm** by advocating the accurate/actual campus norm. These campaigns do seem to be represented as a 'magic bullet' for addressing heavy drinking among students (Campo *et al*., 2003: 481). Would students actually change their behaviour due to the sudden realisation of their error of perception through social norms campaigns? Would seasoned hard drinkers actually change their habits and behaviours, or would such an intervention be more effective with first-year students, who have not been given the chance to develop habits at university? For many students, drinking represents an enjoyable activity while socialising with friends. In view of this, attempts to curb risky drinking might be more problematic, because students with well-established drinking habits may not be so easily influenced by interventions that advocate a less excessive drinking norm.

However, intervention campaigns conducted in the United States have had promising results *over the course of several years*. **Reductions in misperceptions of the perceived norm have over time led to significant decreases in heavy drinking in student populations** (e.g. De Jong *et al.*, 2006; Neighbors *et al.*, 2006). Social norms are not easily changed and exactly for this reason, the effectiveness of the social norms approach does not lie in the fact that it changes students' behaviour overnight, but rather that it gradually changes the definition of the social environment (the perceived social norm) by continuously confronting current and new students with the accurate social norm. Furthermore, the nature of the university social environment lends itself to gradual change, as it constantly renews as new students enrol and seniors graduate. The effectiveness of social norms marketing campaigns is therefore related to the fifth feature of culture, namely that it is able to vary across time (Anderson & Taylor, 2004: 61). Since culture is partially defined by its members, it will creatively adapt to changing conditions as they change and adapt.

In accordance with the above, a point of critique with regard to monitoring the effectiveness of social norms marketing campaigns and **reporting bias** is the possibility that during follow-up surveys to monitor change in behaviour after the implementation of these campaigns, students might provide the suggested answer that was portrayed by the marketing campaign (De Jong *et al.*, 2006: 878). However, if students provide this as an answer, then the possibility also exists that they saw the information provided by the marketing campaign as credible and believable, which in essence means norm correction has taken place.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The current research attempted to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the influence of peer behaviour, with reference to perceptions of the norm, on students' personal behaviour at university. The broad aim of this study was to locate student perceptions of the social norm in the broader cultural context of social life at university. More specifically, it showed that students' perception of their social environment with regard to drinking is intrinsically and complicatedly embedded in this cultural context. Perceived peer drinking – particularly that of close friends – and approval of drinking are some of the best predictors of personal consumption. The behaviour of one's peer cluster is often consistent with personal behaviour because friends are selected based on similar behaviour and attitude. Qualitative results suggest that perceptions of student drinking may be formed prior to enrolment at university and may consequently bias subsequent perceptions upon students' arrival. Results further show that students perceive vast differences between their own drinking behaviour/attitude and the social norm. These perceptions of difference from the norm predictably vary according to the student's own behaviour, lending support for the misperceptions of pluralistic ignorance, false uniqueness and false consensus.

Based on other research (Newcomb & Wilson, 1966; Festinger, 1954; Asch, 1951, 1952; Newcomb, 1943; Sherif, 1936, 1972), Perkins suggests that the acquirement and formation of reference group norms, the pressures associated with peer group conformity and the processes of social comparison and friendship association, all generally coincide to form a desire to assume and sustain peer cluster attitudes and behaviour (1996: 1). A large body of research suggests that perceiving a difference between own behaviour and the behavioural norm of peers, in the presence of various other social peer processes, will contribute to behavioural and attitude adjustment towards the norm. Therefore, if peer norms were inaccurately seen as more permissive than they actually are, this would influence student behaviour differently than accurately perceived norms would have done. However, the degree of behavioural adjustment will depend on various factors. In the current study, behaviour prior to university as well as attitude towards drinking are identified as significant factors in this regard.

Nevertheless, perceptions of the peer norm make the largest contribution to personal alcohol consumption. Hence, if a student believes heavy alcohol consumption is the norm and is therefore expected by the majority of his or her student peers, then, despite the inaccuracy of their perception, they are more likely to consume alcohol more heavily, even after taking into account their personal approval of drinking and previous drinking behaviour (Perkins & Wechsler, 1996: 969). Therefore, as Perkins and Wechsler suggest, 'perceiving a permissive environment encourages students to drink more heavily than they would otherwise based on personal attitudes' (1996: 961). Furthermore, results provide preliminary evidence that perceptions of the academic norm and the drinking norm may be complicatedly interrelated and that these normative perceptions have the potential to influence personal academic behaviour.

Evidently from the above, student drinking culture operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy, but only to a degree. The occurrence of misperceptions on university campuses is more complex than can be completely explained by this concept, due to the influence of previous experiences and the consequent peer cluster association. However, the inclusion of cognitive factors does significantly improve the ability to predict students' drinking behaviour.

As at university and college campuses elsewhere, misperceptions with regard to drinking behaviour also exist at Stellenbosch University. Elsewhere, predominantly at American higher

education institutions, steps have been taken to address these erroneous perceptions. However, in South Africa, this has not yet happened. The majority of these campaigns have seen significant reductions in misperceptions as well as in heavy-drinking behaviour among students. Merton suggests that the main effect of the self-fulfilling prophecy by which perceptions are translated into behaviour can only occur when there is an absence of control by institutions (1956: 436). Although it is not the purpose of a university to control student behaviour, it has a responsibility to create a healthy and optimal social environment to facilitate student learning and education in general. Currently, it seems that Stellenbosch University is making use mostly of physical constraints to try to influence drinking and minimise the consequences with which it is associated. However, as was shown through the course of this thesis, drinking behaviour is largely culturally driven and therefore the cultural context needs to be adjusted to reduce risky heavy drinking.

What the social norms approach effectively does is to place control of socialisation in the domain of university administrations, providing them with the tools to adjust the perception of the social norm on campus to one that is more accurate, associated with less negative consequences for oneself and others and therefore, a healthier academic climate. As Merton explains:

> *The application of the Thomas theorem also suggests how the tragic often vicious, circle of self-fulfilling prophecies can be broken. The initial definition of the situation which has set the circle in motion must be abandoned. Only when the original assumption is questioned and a new definition of the situation introduced, does the consequent flow of events give the lie to the assumption. Only then does the belief no longer father the reality.* (1956: 424)

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.8.1 METHODOLOGICAL

❖ *Integrate both qualitative and quantitative research*

When trying to understand complex social phenomena such as student drinking culture, a more sophisticated research approach is required than merely applying a quantitative methodology. Qualitative research is often neglected in studies on this topic. As illustrated in this study, qualitative research delivers invaluable insights into the complexities of student drinking culture.

❖ *Employ factor analysis/PCA to identify underlying components in multi-indicator variables*

The use of factor analysis/PCA in this research to identify possible subcomponents of concepts proved to be necessary. Due to the varied nature of social life, this statistical technique represents a way of more precisely investigating complex social occurrences by highlighting the underlying parts that constitute it. This is necessary because individual differences in behaviour may cause some factors to be relevant to some and not to others. Various studies make use of composite measures of behaviours but do not always make use of factor analysis/PCA to identify the possible underlying dimensions. Rather, these studies merely add or average all the various indicators, which neglects the potential for more in-depth understanding of underlying relationships.

❖ *Develop and test a standardised measure of drinking behaviour and of perception of drinking behaviour*

A standardised measure of drinking behaviour and of perception of drinking behaviour will facilitate the comparison between different populations. Various studies often employ

different indicators for the measurement of certain behaviours and therefore findings are not always directly comparable. Nevertheless, clear trends did seem to emerge with regard to the perception of self-other differences, in accordance with the direction of relationships found by research elsewhere. As was illustrated by Huang, De Jong, Schneider and Towvin (2006: 33), the use of a composite drinking scale is not only feasible but also captures a broader range of variation than more simplistic measures such as 'two-week binge frequency'.

❖ *Use multiple regression techniques to establish what influences student perceptions of self-other differences*

Although the main purpose of this study was to explore the existence of misperceptions, and how perceptions and other factors influence drinking behaviour, Borsari and Carey's (2003: 331) meta-analytic integration determined that norm type, gender, fraternity/sorority membership, reference group, question specificity and campus size all play a role in the magnitude of perceived self-other differences. A more comprehensive multiple regression analysis considering various variables will be informative with regard to sub-populations at higher risk of misperceiving the social norm as well as possibly identifying factors that influence the formation of self-other differences.

❖ *When examining perceptions of the norm include close friends as a reference group as well as other more distant reference groups*

This study showed the possible importance of these proximal peers in personal behaviour as well as how different reference groups may contribute to the overall perception of the campus environment. Future research should therefore not neglect the inclusion of this reference group and not only look at the campus norm.

❖ *Include abstainers and lighter drinkers in the sampling frame*

Unlike my research, many studies only consider the role of perceptions in the drinking behaviour of drinkers or heavy drinkers and fail to take into account that there are substantial proportions of lighter consumers and abstainers. These students nonetheless have an important role to play, as their lower or non-consumption might influence other students' perceptions of drinking and therefore impact on the perceived drinking norm on campus. Likewise, when calculating the campus-drinking norm by considering the average drinking of a sample, the exclusion of abstainers and lighter consumers will considerably increase the mean alcohol consumption quantity, giving the impression that the drinking norm is actually much higher than it is in reality.

5.8.2 FURTHER RESEARCH

❖ *Longitudinal research is necessary to investigate the role of perception of drinking behaviour in the transition from high school to university, as well as changes that occur during a student's university career.*

❖ *Future research should investigate more closely the role of peer clusters in the formation of perceptions and how this relates to previous and future behaviour.*

❖ *The relationships between the perceptions of the academic norm, the drinking norm, personal drinking and personal academic behaviour need to be more comprehensively explored as these might have important implications for intervention programmes for alcohol abuse and for possibly increasing students' compliance to an academic culture.*

As has been argued through the course of this thesis, social drinking and academic behaviour in the cultural context of university life are intrinsically linked and form integral parts of student culture. Thus, conducting a study on the cultural aspects of student drinking and excluding the interaction with academic life will ignore an important part of student culture, which will hamper a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of student drinking on student life.

❖ *Illicit drug use is often associated with student alcohol consumption and therefore future social norms research should include this factor.*

❖ *Research should aim to develop a more holistic understanding of how students perceive the drinking norm and should develop more sophisticated measures to capture the variation in perceptions.*

The case can be made that the alcohol consumption that the majority of students report as indicator of their behaviour should be seen as the norm. Given the variation in the level of student drinking, the use of a single value to represent the 'typical' or the norm is problematic. In the qualitative interviews, students indicated that there is much variation among them regarding drinking behaviour. This might be seen as indicative of the absence of a clear norm, i.e. the absence of one type of behaviour that the majority supports, as students' actual behaviour is distributed across a spectrum of possible behaviours. Is it then best practice to use a measure of central tendency as the norm? If there is no general behaviour, how can students accurately perceive the norm? Does it not then come down to an informed guess rather than a perception? In the qualitative interviews, it emerged that some students do think of the student population as consisting of different groupings of students with different behaviours and that not all students think that only one behaviour dominates the student population. The latter represents one of the limitations of using a quantitative methodology only: it creates the impression of consensus in results. Moreover, students are also forced to define and perceive their social environment in terms of these predefined categories and levels. Individuals differ – what might be perceived as heavy drinking by one student might be seen as normal by another. Therefore, an important question for social norms research is *how* students perceive their social environment, i.e. how do they perceive the student population? Do they see it as extremely differentiated, segmented or dominated by one type of drinker?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Researcher:	Mr JE Tolken
Research Project:	Student perceptions of the social norm: investigating the relationship between the actual and the perceived norm of student drinking culture at Stellenbosch University
Nature of the Research Project:	MA in Sociology, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, SU
Supervisor:	Mr J Vorster
Reference number:	211 / 2009
Date:	30 July 2009

The research proposal and associated documentation was circulated and considered by the members of the Ethics Committee (as prescribed by Council on 20 March 2009 and laid down in the SU policy framework) on 30 July 2009; the purpose being to ascertain whether there are any ethical risks associated with the proposed research project of which the researcher has to be aware of or, alternatively, whether the ethical risks are of such a nature that the research cannot continue.

DISCUSSION

The Ethics Committee received the following documentation:

- An application for ethical clearance on the prescribed form;
- A copy of the research proposal;
- An invitation letter (Afrikaans and English);
- A copy of a self-developed questionnaire;
- An informed consent form for participants in the survey;
- An interview schedule;
- An informed consent form for participants in the interviews and focus groups

The research aims to investigate the relation between the perceived norms and the actual student norm of drinking behaviour. Students will be asked via e-mail to complete a survey questionnaire (which will be anonymous), and they will be invited to participate in the interviews and focus groups which will take place after the survey. In this case, participants will not be anonymous, however, their responses and discussions during the interviews and focus groups will be handled confidentially.

FINDING

While the researcher has addressed most of the ethical issues in question, the following requires attention.

1.   The research cannot commence without the written permission of Prof Jan Botha, Senior Director Institutional Research and Planning. This must be obtained and a copy of the letter filed in the office of Ms Hunter-Hüsselman for record purposes.

2.   The Ethics application form should be signed by the researcher and the signed copy must be sent to Ms Hunter-Hüsselman.

3. It must be made clear (i.e. written in bold letters) in the invitation letter that when students choose to send an e-mail to the researcher to make themselves available for the interviews and focus groups, that their participation in this project is no longer anonymous. Although their responses to the interview questions and focus group discussions may be anonymous, their identity will be known to the researcher.

4. With regards to the lucky draw cash prize, it must be made clear whether anyone who participates in the research is eligible for the prize, or whether the prize is limited to those who volunteer for the interviews and focus groups. A statement in this regard should be clearly visible on the information page of the questionnaire.

Furthermore, if a prize is awarded it means that participation in this project is no longer anonymous. The researcher should clearly state this fact and give written assurance that this privileged information will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

5. The researcher is requested to omit any reference to the fact that the project is approved by the Ethics Committee in the information sheet and informed consent form. Such a statement may create the impression that subjects are coerced to participate in the research. However, a copy of the clearance letter can be made available on request if participants make enquiries about the ethical status of the research.

6. It should also be made clear, in writing that by clicking the link to the questionnaire is not only a functional action, but that it is actually a virtual signature that indicates voluntary consent to participate. It should therefore be stated implicitly that by clicking the link the individual provides informed consent. In the alternative, a tick box could be provided on the cover page of the questionnaire in which students indicate that they have read and understand the information about the research, that they understand when they will lose anonymity in the study while their responses will still be kept confidential, and they participate voluntarily in the study.

7. In the light of the problems that Stellenbosch University has previously experienced when research findings of this nature were made public, the researcher is requested to take extreme care when results are published or are made available in the public or media. An appointment with Prof Jan Botha is suggested to clarify any issues that Stellenbosch University may have in the reporting of the results – while at the same time taking extreme care that the academic integrity of the study should not be compromised in these negotiations.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended, in view of the information at the disposal of the Ethics Committee that the proposed research project continues provided that:

  a. The researcher remains within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made and guarantees given.

  b. The researcher notes that his research may have to be submitted again for ethical clearance if there is substantial departure from the existing proposal.

  c. The researcher remains within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.

  d. The researcher must submit the outstanding letter of consent from Prof Jan Botha to Ms Maryke Hunter-Husselman, Research Division, Stellenbosch University, before the research may commence.

  e. The researcher gives attention to the matters raised in the paragraphs above and effects the necessary amendments to his application for ethical clearance.

Johan Hattingh, Callie Theron, Elmarie Terblanche, Clint le Bruyns, Lourens du Plessis, Ian van der Waag
[For the Ethics Committee: 30 July 2009]

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPATION TEASER

For English, please scroll down

!!! NEEM DEEL, EN STAAN 'N KANS OM 'N KONTANTPRYS VAN 'N R1000 TE WEN !!!

Geagte student

Jy is geselekteer as **een van 3000 deelnemers** in 'n navorsingsprojek wat ondersoek instel na studente **alkoholgebruiknorme** in verhouding tot hul **persepsies** aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Aan die **begin van volgende week** (Maandag 28 September) gaan jy 'n e-pos uitnodiging ontvang om deel te neem aan die studie. In ruil vir jou deelname sal jy die kans staan om 'n **R1000** te wen in 'n gelukkige trekking!

Die sukses van die studie is hoofsaaklik afhanklik van studente se deelname wat sal verseker dat die opname se resultate die studente liggaam verteenwoordig. Deelname is heeltemal **vrywillig** en die vraelys word **anoniem** voltooi. Vir verdere inligting oor jou deelname en studie prosedures, kliek asseblief **hier** om die ingeligte toestemmings dokument te sien.

By voorbaat dankie vir jou deelname. As jy enige vrae het, voel vry om dit te verwys na:

Johnnie E. Tolken
Meestersstudent Sosiologie
Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie
Sel: 083 282 4867
E-pos: **14366045@sun.ac.za**

Jan Vorster
Studieleier
Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie
Tel: 021 808 2094
E-pos: **jhv3@sun.ac.za**

Dankie vir jou tyd.

!!! PARTICIPATE, AND STAND A CHANCE OF WINNING A CASH PRIZE OF A R1000 !!!

Dear Student

You have been selected as **one of 3000 participants** in a research project investigating **student drinking norms** and its relationship with **perceptions** at Stellenbosch University. An invitation to take part in the research will be sent to your e-mail address at the **beginning of next week** (Monday 28 September). In exchange for your participation, you will be entered into a lucky draw to stand a chance of winning **R1000** cash!

The success of the study is largely dependent on student participation, which will help ensure that the survey results represent the student body. Participation is **voluntary** and the questionnaire is completely **anonymous**. For more information about your participation in the survey and study procedures, please click **here** to review the informed consent document.

In advance, thank you for your participation. If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

Johnnie E. Tolken
Sociology Masters Student
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
Mobile: 083 282 4867
E-mail: **14366045@sun.ac.za**

Jan Vorster
Study Supervisor
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
Tel: 021 808 2094
E-mail: **jhv3@sun.ac.za**

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 3: INVITATION E-MAIL FOR SURVEY

For English, please scroll down

!!! NEEM DEEL, EN STAAN 'N KANS OM 'N KONTANTPRYS VAN 'N R1000 TE WEN !!!

KLIEK HIER om die opname te voltooi

Geagte Student

Jy is geselekteer as **een van die 3000 deelnemers** en in ruil vir jou deelname sal jy 'n kans staan om 'n **R1000** te wen in 'n gelukkige trekking! Jy kry ook die opsie om aan te dui of jy 'n elektroniese afskrif van die navorsingsverslag verlang. Die navorsingsprojek vorm deel van my M-studies aan die Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie oor studente **alkoholgebruiknorme** en **persepsies** by Universiteit Stellenbosch.

Die sukses van die ondersoek is hoofsaaklik afhanklik van studente se **vrywillige (en anonieme) deelname** en dus sal jou bydrae baie waardeer word. Bo en onder aan die boodskap is daar 'n skakel na 'n baie eenvoudige vraelys. Dit sal ongeveer 15 tot 25 minute van jou tyd in beslag neem om te voltooi. Jou deelname sal bydra tot 'n verbeterde verstaan van studente se alkoholgebruik by Universiteit Stellenbosch.

By voorbaat dankie vir jou deelname.

KLIEK HIER om die opname te voltooi.

As jy enige probleme ondervind of enige vrae het, voel vry om dit te verwys na:

Johnnie E. Tolken
Meestersstudent Sosiologie
Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie
Sel: 083 282 4867
E-pos: **14366045@sun.ac.za**

Jan Vorster
Studieleier
Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie
Tel: 021 808 2094
E-pos: **jhv3@sun.ac.za**

!!! PARTICIPATE, AND STAND A CHANCE OF WINNING A CASH PRIZE OF A R1000 !!!

CLICK HERE to complete the survey

Dear Student

You have been selected as **one of the 3000 participants** in the study and in exchange for your participation, you will be entered into a lucky draw to stand a chance of winning a **R1000**. You also have the option of indicating if you would like receive an electronic copy of the research report. The research project forms part of my Masters studies at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology aimed at investigating **student drinking norms** and its relationship with **perceptions** at Stellenbosch University.

The success of the study is largely dependent on students' **voluntary (and anonymous) participation** and therefore your contribution will be very much appreciated. At the top and bottom of this message, there is a link to a very straightforward questionnaire. It will take approximately 15 to 25 minutes of your time to complete. Your participation will contribute to the better understanding of student drinking behaviour at Stellenbosch University.

In advance, thank you for your participation.

CLICK HERE to complete the survey

If you encounter any problems or have any questions, feel free to contact:

Johnnie E. Tolken
Sociology Masters Student
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
Mobile: 083 282 4867
E-mail: **14366045@sun.ac.za**

Jan Vorster
Study Supervisor
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
Tel: 021 808 2094
E-mail: **jhv3@sun.ac.za**

Thank you for your time.

CLICK HERE to complete the survey

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEY

STUDY OF STUDENT DRINKING NORMS AND PERCEPTIONS • STUDIE OOR STUDENTE DRINK NORME EN PERSEPSIES

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Student Perceptions of the Social Norm: Investigating the Relationship between the Actual and the Perceived Norm of Student Drinking Culture at Stellenbosch University

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Johnnie Tolken, from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to the completion of a Master's thesis in Sociology. You were selected as a possible participant in this study as you are currently enrolled as a full-time student at Stellenbosch University for the year of 2009. Participants were randomly selected.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Student drinking behaviour has been identified as a serious problem for university and college campuses across the world. Among other social factors within the university context, student-drinking culture plays a prominent role in campus culture. Alcohol consumption takes a central position in the social lives of some students. Accordingly, student alcohol abuse has been extensively researched, especially in the United States of America. However, in the South African context, this issue has not enjoyed as much attention. Tertiary education is highly valued within the societal milieu of South Africa, and student-drinking culture as possibly influencing its obtainment, does warrant attention from research community. The current research aims to contribute to a better understanding of general student drinking behaviour at Stellenbosch University.

The social norms approach has had immense success in explaining the variance in student drinking behaviour. Given the importance of perceptions with regard to drinking norms on college and university campuses in other countries, and the relative importance attributed to this variable in explaining student drinking behaviour, this study aims to investigate the phenomenon at a South African university. The current research is an expansion of a study that I undertook at Stellenbosch University during my Honours year. The study showed that factors associated with peers and the social milieu were predictors of student drinking behaviour. The current study will examine more in-depth the influence of peer drinking perceptions and peer behaviour on personal drinking behaviour. Additionally, the influence of perceptions of peer academic behaviour on personal academic behaviour and drinking behaviour will be explored. Among other social factors, the perception of peer drinking behaviour may be linked to the perception of peer academic behaviour, as drinking behaviour is often stereotypically placed in opposition to academic behaviour.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to please do the following:

o Read through the informed consent form, as to understand all procedures and rights
o Click on the link provided and you will be directed to the survey questionnaire
o Complete the questionnaire by following directions provided
o Answer all questions and complete all items as far as seen fit by you
o Submit the questionnaire
  • The questionnaire is available on the University's intranet, so there is no need to activate inetkey

- The questionnaire takes between fifteen and twenty-five minutes to complete
- To click on a link at the end of the questionnaire, which will forward you to a separate form where you can provide your contact information if you wish to be entered into a lucky draw, or receive a copy of the research report or if you would like to be involved in further research in the study (in-depth interviews/focus groups)

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the completion of the survey. The survey is completely anonymous. Questionnaires, answers and data cannot be linked to participants in any way. In the event that anonymity is compromised and you exchange your personal contact information with the researcher or your identity becomes known to the researcher by you choosing to take part in interviews, focus groups, the lucky draw or to receive a copy of the research report, the information will be treated as strictly confidential. This information will only be available to the researcher, and will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

If you wish, you will be entered into a lucky draw with the chance to win a cash prize of a R1000. After completing the survey, you will be given the option to be entered into a lucky draw. If you choose to do so, you will complete a separate form containing your name, telephone number and e-mail address. This form will therefore not be linked or traceable to the completed questionnaire or the dataset. All the received contact information will then be entered into a statistical program (SPSS). A winner will be selected by drawing a random sample of one.

The study will enhance the sociological understanding of alcohol consumption in the context of the Stellenbosch University and how this is possibly linked to student perceptions of the academic and drinking norm. The report will be available to students, university staff and any other interested party as a copy of the research report will be placed in the JS Gericke Library.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Survey, focus group or in-depth interview participants will not receive payment for their participation but rather, all participants will have the choice of being entered into a lucky draw and consequently stand an equal chance of possibly winning a cash prize of a R1000. The winner will be selected by drawing a random sample of one in SPSS, a program for statistical analysis. The winner will be contacted during the month of November.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained through the questionnaire is anonymous. Therefore, there is no threat to the confidentiality of respondents. Once the questionnaire has been completed, the data is automatically fed into an electronic database. The data are not in any way linkable to a specific participant. The database is located on a secure server, managed by the IT department for the purpose of electronic surveys. The data will only be available to the researcher.

In the event that anonymity is compromised and you exchange your personal contact information with the researcher or your identity becomes known to the researcher by you choosing to take part in interviews, focus groups, the lucky draw or to receive a copy of the research report, the information will be treated as strictly confidential. This information will only be available to the researcher, and will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

The acquired data will be used as part of a research project, in completion of a thesis for Sociology Masters 2009. Certain individuals at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology who are responsible for grading the paper will have access to the research report, after which it will be available at the JS Gericke Library to students, university staff and any other interested party. The data within the thesis will refer to all cases within the study in general; individual cases will not be singled out, and will not be able to be identified. Data will be used in statistical analysis to identify relationships between variables.

If the paper is published, confidentiality will still maintained through the complete anonymity of participants.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to take part in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you find any items in the questionnaire, interviews or focus groups unacceptable, you may terminate your participation at anytime.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Johnnie Tolken (researcher) and/or Jan Vorster (Supervisor).

Johnnie Tolken
Tel: 0832824867
E-mail: 14366045@sun.ac.za
14 Squirrel Close
Stellenbosch

Jan Vorster
Tel: 021 808 2094
E-mail: jhv3@sun.ac.za
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
University of Stellenbosch
Arts Building
Fourth Floor, Room 416

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Maryke Hunter-Hüsselman (mh3@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4623) at the Unit for Research Development.

APPENDIX 5: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDY OF STUDENT DRINKING NORMS AND PERCEPTIONS • STUDIE OOR STUDENTE DRINK NORME EN PERSEPSIES

PROGRESS BAR

*1. **Please select the language within which you would like to complete the survey:**
Selekteer asseblief die taal waarin jy die opname wil voltooi:

⊙ Afrikaans

◯ English

| << Back / Terug | Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit | Volgende / Next >> |

PROGRESS BAR

STUDIE INFORMASIE

Die vraelys word **anoniem** voltooi en deelname is heeltemal **vrywillig**. Dit beteken die voltooide vraelys en data kan geensins aan jou naam, jou rekenaar of jou e-pos adres gekoppel word nie. Aan die einde van die vraelys sal jy verwys word na 'n aparte form waar jy die kans sal kry om aan te dui of jy wil deel wees van die gelukkige trekking of verdere navorsing, en of jy moontlik 'n elektroniese afskrif van die navorsingverslag verlang. Jy is welkom om op enige stadium jou deelname te onttrek. Gevolglik sal jou eerlikheid in die voltooiing van die vraelys baie waardeur word.

Kliek asseblief op die "volgende" knoppie aan die onderkant van die webblad om met die opname te begin.

LET WEL: As jy nog verdere inligting oor jou deelname aan die opname en oor studie prosedures verlang, of die ingeligte toestemmings dokument wil deurlees, kliek asseblief **hier**. Deur op die onderstaande "volgende" knoppie te kliek, verskaf jy 'n virtuele handtekening wat aandui dat jy die ingeligte toestemmings dokument gelees het en verstaan en dat jy vrywilliglik besluit het om deel te neem aan die opname.

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
Q1: 'Please select the language...rin jy die opname wil voltooi:' *Is Equal To* 'Afrikaans'

STUDY INFORMATION

The questionnaire is completely **anonymous** and participation is **voluntary**. This means, there will be no way of linking your name, your computer or your e-mail address with the completed questionnaire, the survey or any other data. At the end of the questionnaire you will be forwarded to a separate form where you will be asked to indicate whether you would like to be part of the lucky draw or further research, and whether you want to receive a copy of the electronic research report. You have the right to end your participation at any time if you would choose to do so. Accordingly, your honesty in the completion of the questionnaire will be much appreciated.

Please click on the "next" button on the bottom of this webpage to start the survey.

PLEASE NOTE: If you require even more information about your participation in the survey and the study procedures, or if you want to review the informed consent document please click **here**. By clicking on the "next" button below, you are providing a virtual signature indicating that you have read and understand the informed consent document and you have voluntarily decided to take part in the survey.

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
Q1: 'Please select the language...rin jy die opname wil voltooi:' *Is Equal To* 'English'

| << Back / Terug | Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit | Volgende / Next >> |

INSTRUCTIONS

- **Please complete the items below by choosing the relevant option for the associated category.**
- **In most cases, only one option has to be chosen unless otherwise advised.**
- **Please read carefully and complete all items.**
- **All answers are anonymous, even to the researcher.**
- **Your honesty will be appreciated.**
- **You can 'save and exit' and continue at a later stage if you are unable to finish in one session.**

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*2. Please indicate your gender:

⦿ Male   ◯ Female

| << Back / Terug | Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit | Volgende / Next >> |

PROGRESS BAR

*_PLEASE NOTE_*: **a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).**

SECTION ONE: PERSONAL DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

3. In your lifetime, have you ever consumed <u>at least one whole alcoholic drink</u>? (other than just a few sips)

▢ Yes

▢ No, have never drank alcohol / only had a few sips

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PROGRESS BAR

PLEASE NOTE: **a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).**

4. At about what age (in years) did you consume <u>at least one</u> whole alcoholic drink for the f<u>irst time</u>?**
Just give your best estimate

5. In your lifetime, have you ever drank <u>five or more</u> alcoholic drinks at one occasion?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. In your lifetime, have you ever drank <u>four or more</u> alcoholic drinks at one occasion?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

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PROGRESS BAR

__PLEASE NOTE__: a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).

__7.__ Approximately how old were you (in years) when you drank __five or more alcoholic drinks__ (at one occasion) for the __first time__?

Just give your best estimation

__8.__ Approximately how old were you (in years) when you drank __four or more alcoholic drinks__ (at one occasion) for the __first time__?

Just give your best

__9.__ During your __last year of high school__, what was the __average__ number of alcoholic drinks you __usually__ drank, per drinking occasion, while with friends?

Just give your best estimate

Select: ▼

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PROGRESS BAR

*_PLEASE NOTE_*: a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).

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10. In your opinion, what is the appropriate number of alcoholic drinks for a university student to usually consume, per drinking occasion, while with friends?
Indicate how you personally feel about this

Select: ▼

<< Back / Terug	Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit	Volgende / Next >>

PROGRESS BAR

11. How many <u>days</u> in a <u>typical week</u> do you think it is <u>appropriate</u> for a university student to consume 'answer to Q10' or more?
A week ranges from Monday to Sunday. Indicate how you personally feel about this.

☐ No days (students should not usually drink)

☐ One day

☐ Two days

☐ Three days

☐ Four days

☐ Five days

☐ Six days

☐ Seven days

*12. Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption <u>best</u> represents <u>your own</u> personal attitude?

☐ Drinking is never a good thing to do

☐ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

☐ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

*13. How do you personally feel (or would you feel) about :

	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
Drinking every weekend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking before driving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking enough to pass out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

| << Back / Terug | Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit | Volgende / Next >> |

PROGRESS BAR

PLEASE NOTE:

- **The following questions are applicable to your experiences <u>at Stellenbosch University</u> during the year of 2009**
- ***A drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks)**

*****14. During the current year (2009), what was the <u>average</u> number of alcoholic drinks* you <u>usually</u> had, per drinking occasion, while <u>with friends</u>?**
Just give your best estimate

| Select: ▼ |

| << Back / Terug | Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit | Volgende / Next >> |

PROGRESS BAR

PLEASE NOTE: a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).

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15. Within the current year (2009) about how often (on average) have you had 'answer to Q14' or more per drinking occasion?
Just give your best estimate

☐ Once or twice this year

☐ 3 to 6 times this year

☐ 7 to 11 times this year

☐ Once a month

☐ Twice a month

☐ Once a week

☐ 2 to 3 times a week

☐ 4 to 5 times a week

☐ Every day

16. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have 'answer to Q14' or more?
Please exclude the week of the study break / holiday. However, consider the same time period as the question instructs by including days from before the study break / holiday. Just give your best estimate.

☐ 0 days

☐ 1-2 days

☐ 3-5 days

☐ 6-9 days

☐ 10-19 days

☐ 20-29 days

☐ All 30 days

17. Considering a <u>typical week</u>, how many days would you <u>usually</u> have 'answer to Q14' or more?

A week is from Monday to Sunday

◻ No days (don't usually drink)

◻ One day

◻ Two days

◻ Three days

◻ Four days

◻ Five days

◻ Six days

◻ Seven days

18. Considering a <u>typical week</u>, how much would you say is the <u>average number of alcoholic drinks</u> you consume for every day of the week?

Just give your best estimate

	*number of drinks
Monday	Select: ▼
Tuesday	Select: ▼
Wednesday	Select: ▼
Thursday	Select: ▼
Friday	Select: ▼
Saturday	Select: ▼
Sunday	Select: ▼

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*_PLEASE NOTE_: a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).

---

19. Think back over the <u>past two weeks</u>. How many times have you had <u>five or more drinks</u> per occasion?
Just give your best estimate.

- None
- Once
- Twice
- 3 to 5 times
- 6 to 9 times
- 10 or more times

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
'Q2: Please indicate your gender: ' *Is Equal To* 'Male' **AND**
'Q5: In your lifetime, have you...oholic drinks* at one occasion?' *Is Equal To* 'Yes'

20. Think back over the <u>past two weeks</u>. How many times have you had <u>four or more drinks</u> per occasion?
Just give your best estimate.

- None
- Once
- Twice
- 3 to 5 times
- 6 to 9 times
- 10 or more times

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
'Q2: Please indicate your gender: ' *Is Equal To* 'Female' **AND**
'Q6: In your lifetime, have you...oholic drinks* at one occasion?' *Is Equal To* 'Yes'

*21. Please indicate how often you have experienced the following <u>DUE TO YOUR DRINKING</u> during the <u>current year</u> (part one)?
Just give your best estimate

Had a hangover	Select: ▾
Performed poorly on a test or important project	Select: ▾
Been in trouble with police, residence, or other university authorities	Select: ▾
Damaged property, pulled fire alarm, etc.	Select: ▾
Got into an argument or fight	Select: ▾
Got sick or vomited	Select: ▾
Driven a car while under the influence or with someone that was under the influence	Select: ▾
Missed a class / did not meet an assignment deadline	Select: ▾
Thought I might have a drinking problem	Select: ▾

*22. Please indicate how often you have experienced the following <u>DUE TO YOUR DRINKING</u> during the <u>current year</u> (part two)?
Just give your best estimate

Had memory loss: forgot where you were or what you did	Select: ▾
Did something you later regretted	Select: ▾
Have been taken advantage of sexually	Select: ▾
Engaged in unplanned sexual activity	Select: ▾
Did not use protection when you had (unplanned) sex	Select: ▾
Passed out	Select: ▾
Used marijuana or other drugs while drinking or drunk	Select: ▾
Fallen behind in course work	Select: ▾

*23. On <u>average</u>, how much money do you typically spend <u>on alcohol,</u> per drinking occasion, while with friends?
Just give your best estimate

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SECTION TWO: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

*24. **Current age (in years):**

25. **What is your current height (in centimetres)?**
Leave out centimetre symbol. Just give your best estimate. Leave blank if you don't know.

26. **What is your current weight (in kilograms)?**
Leave out kilogram symbol. Just give your best estimate. Leave blank if you don't know.

*27. **What is your home language?**
The language you mainly speak at home

☐ Afrikaans ☐ Sesotho

☐ English ☐ Setswana

☐ IsiNdebele ☐ SiSwati

☐ IsiXhosa ☐ Tshivenda

☐ IsiZulu ☐ Xitsonga

☐ Sepedi ☐ Other (please specify):

*28. **Population group:**

☐ Black ☐ Indian

☐ Coloured ☐ Asian

☐ White ☐ Other, please specify:

*29. **Is your current residence as a student:**

☐ On-campus (in Stellenbosch)

☐ Off-campus (neighbourhoods in and around Stellenbosch)

☐ Outside Stellenbosch (on a farm, or in another town)

*30. What is your current living arrangements as a student?
Where you have stayed for the majority of the past year

☐ University Residence (koshuis)

☐ University Student housing

☐ Private accommodation (flat or house)

☐ Other, please specify: [   ]

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31. With whom do you live in the 'answer to Q30'?

	Select all relevant options
Alone	☐
With roommate(s)	☐
With flatmate(s) [39]	☐
With parent(s) [40]	☐
With other family [41]	☐
With spouse / children [42]	☐
Other, please specify:	
[ ]	☐

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[39] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:

Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Residence (koshuis)

[40] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:

Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Residence (koshuis)
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Student housing

[41] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:

Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Residence (koshuis)
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Student housing

[42] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:

Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Residence (koshuis)
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student? *Is Not Equal To* University Student housing

*32. **In what university residence (koshuis) do you live?**

- ☐ Dagbreek
- ☐ Eendrag
- ☐ Helderberg
- ☐ Helshoogte
- ☐ Huis Marais
- ☐ Huis Visser
- ☐ Majuba
- ☐ Simonsberg
- ☐ Wilgenhof
- ☐ Goldfields
- ☐ Metanoia
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?' *Is Equal To* 'University Residence (koshuis)'
AND
Q2: Please indicate your gender: ' *Is Equal To* 'Male'

*33. **In what university residence (koshuis) do you live?**

- ☐ Erica
- ☐ Harmonie
- ☐ Heemstede
- ☐ Huis Ten Bosch
- ☐ Irene
- ☐ Lydia
- ☐ Minerva
- ☐ Monica
- ☐ Nemesia
- ☐ Nerina
- ☐ Serruria
- ☐ Sonop
- ☐ Goldfields
- ☐ Metanoia
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
Q30: 'What is your current living arrangements as a student?' *Is Equal To* 'University Residence (koshuis)'
AND
Q2: 'Please indicate your gender: ' *Is Equal To* 'Female'

*34. **What was your average academic performance in your final year of high school?**
Give your answer in average percentage, but please leave out the % symbol

_____

*35. **How many years, including this one, have you studied at <u>Stellenbosch University</u>?**
Your historical year of study at Stellenbosch University

_____

*36. Are you currently busy with your undergraduate or postgraduate studies?

◯ Undergraduate

◯ Postgraduate

*37. In what faculty is your current academic degree registered?

◯ Faculty of AgriSciences   ◯ Faculty of Science

◯ Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences ◯ Faculty of Education

◯ Faculty of Health Sciences   ◯ Faculty of Law

◯ Faculty of Engineering   ◯ Theology

◯ Faculty of Military Sciences   ◯ Other, please specify: [＿＿＿＿＿]

◯ Faculty of Art and Social Sciences

*38. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

◯ Single (not in a relationship)

◯ Casually dating (not in a serious relationship)

◯ In a serious relationship with one person

◯ Engaged

◯ Married

◯ Other, please specify: [＿＿＿＿＿]

*39. In the past 30 days, have you attended church or any other religious gathering?

◯ Yes

◯ No, but I am religious

◯ Not religious or Agnostic / Atheist

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*40. **What is your religious affiliation?**

⬚ Christian

⬚ Islam

⬚ Jewish

⬚ Hindu

⬚ Buddhist

⬚ Other, please specify: ▢

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
Q39: 'In the past 30 days, have...any other religious gathering?' *Is Not Equal To* 'Not religious or Agnostic / Atheist'

*41. **Are you currently employed?**

⬚ Yes (full time)

⬚ Yes (part time)

⬚ No

*42. **On average, how much money do you <u>typically</u> have available every <u>month</u> to spend on leisure activities, social activities or personal interests?**
Leave out the Rand symbol. Just give your best estimate.

▢

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*43. Have any of your family members ever had alcohol problems?
Mark all that apply

☐ None

☐ Mother / Stepmother

☐ Father / Stepfather

☐ Brother(s) / Sister(s)

☐ Grandparent(s)

☐ Aunt(s) / Uncle(s)

☐ Spouse / Children

☐ Other family

*44. Which of the following statements do you feel best represents your <u>father's / stepfather's / male guardian's</u> attitude towards alcohol consumption?

○ Not applicable / No father / No contant with father figure

○ Drinking is never a good thing to do

○ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

○ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

○ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

○ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

*45. Which of the following statements do you feel best represents your <u>mother's / stepmother's / female guardian's</u> attitude towards alcohol consumption?

○ Not applicable / No mother / No contact with mother figure

○ Drinking is never a good thing to do

○ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

○ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

○ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

○ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

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*46. How do you think your father (or father figure) feels, or would feel about you...

		Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
a	Drinking every weekend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b	Drinking daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c	Drinking before driving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d	Drinking enough to pass out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
'Q44: Which of the following st... towards alcohol consumption? ' *Is Not Equal To* 'Not applicable / No father / No contact with father figure'

47. How do you think your mother (or mother figure) feels, or would feel about you...

		Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
a	Drinking every weekend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b	Drinking daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c	Drinking before driving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d	Drinking enough to pass out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
'Q45: Which of the following st... towards alcohol consumption? ' *Is Not Equal To* 'Not applicable / No mother / No contact with mother figure'

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SECTION THREE: OTHER STUDENTS DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

Please Note:

- **The following questions are directed at what <u>you think</u> (what your opinion is)**
- ***A drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks)**

---

*48. Overall, what <u>percentage</u> of Stellenbosch University students <u>do you think</u> do not drink alcohol at all?
Just give your best estimate in percentage, but leave out the % symbol.

[   ]

49. How many alcoholic drinks <u>do you think</u> the following students <u>typically</u> consume per drinking occasion while <u>with friends</u>?
Just give your best estimate for each category

		*Number of drinks they <u>typically</u> consume:
a	Your close friends	Select: ▼
b	Stellenbosch students in general	Select: ▼
c	Men in general	Select: ▼
d	Women in general	Select: ▼
e	Students in your residence (answer to Q30 & Q32 or Q33)[43]	Select: ▼

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[43]**Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Residence (koshuis)
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Student housing

*<u>Please Note</u>: **a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).**

*50. **How many days in a <u>typical week</u> do <u>you think</u>...**

		*number of days							
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a	..your close friends drink 'answer to Q49a' or more [44]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b	..Stellenbosch students in general drink 'answer to Q49b' or more [45]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c	..men in general drink 'answer to Q49c'or more [46]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d	..women in general drink 'answer to Q49d'or more [47]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e	..students in your residence drink 'answer to Q49e'or more [48]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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[44] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49a: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Your close friends -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[45] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49b: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Stellenbosch students in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink
[46] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49c: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Men in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[47] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49d: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Women in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[48] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Residence (koshuis) **AND**
Q49e: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Students in your residence -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Student housing **AND**
Q49e: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Students in your residence -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink

<u>Please Note:</u> for the following question, please exclude the week of the study break / holiday. However, consider the same time period as the question instructs by including days from before the study break / holiday.

*51. During the <u>past 30 days</u> on how many days <u>do you think</u>...

	*number of days
...your friends drank 'answer to Q49a' or more [49]	Select: ▼
...Stellenbosch students in general drank 'answer to Q49b ' or more [50]	Select: ▼
...men in general drank 'answer to Q49c ' or more [51]	Select: ▼
...women in general drank 'answer to Q49d" or more [52]	Select: ▼
...students in your residence drank 'answer to Q49e' or more [53]	Select: ▼

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[49] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49a: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Your close friends -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[50] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49b: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Stellenbosch students in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink
[51] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49c: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Men in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[52] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q49d: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Women in general -- Number of drinks they typically consume: *Is Not Equal To* Don't usually drink
[53] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Residence (koshuis) **AND**
Q49e: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Students in your residence -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Student housing **AND**
Q49e: How many alcoholic drinks* do ...g occasion while with friends? -- Students in your residence -- Number of drinks they typically consume:_*Is Not Equal To*_Don't usually drink

PROGRESS BAR

*__Please Note__: a drink is a 360 ml bottle or can of beer, a 120 ml glass of wine, a 360 ml cider/wine cooler, a 25 ml shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink (e.g. a double brandy and coke = 2 shots = 2 drinks).**

__52.__ In __your opinion__, what is the __average__ number of alcoholic drinks __you think__ the following students consume for every day of a __typical week__?**
Just give your best estimate for each category

	*Mon	*Tues	*Wed	*Thu	*Fri	*Sat	*Sun
Your close friends	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:
Stellenbosch students in general	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:
Men in general	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:
Women in general	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:
Students in your residence (answer to Q30 & Q32 or Q33) [54]	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:	Select:

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[54] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Residence (koshuis) **OR**
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Student housing

53. If 'heavy' drinking is seen as having <u>five or more</u> alcoholic drinks in a row for men and <u>four or more</u> alcoholic drinks* in a row for women, overall, what <u>percentage</u> of Stellenbosch University students do you think drank 'heavily' (at at least one occasion) in the <u>past two weeks</u>?

Just give your best estimate in percentage, but please leave out the % symbol.

[   ]

*54. Overall, how many times do you think the following students drank 'heavily' in the past <u>two weeks</u>?

Drinking 'heavily' is seen as having <u>five or more</u> alcoholic drinks in a row for men and <u>four or more</u> alcoholic drinks in a row for women. Just give your best estimate for each category.

	*Number of times
Your close friends	Select: ▼
Stellenbosch students in general	Select: ▼
Males in general	Select: ▼
Females in general	Select: ▼
Students in your residence (answer to Q30 & Q32 or Q33) [55]	Select: ▼

*55. How often does other students' DRINKING interfere with your life in the following ways?

	Never	**Almost never**	**Often**	**Very often**
Interrupts your studying	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Interrupts your sleep	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Makes you feel unsafe	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Messes up your physical living space (cleanliness, neatness, organization, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Prevents you from enjoying events (concerts, sports, social activities, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Interferes in other way(s)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

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[55] **Conditions:** This item will be displayed when:
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Residence (koshuis)
OR
Q30: What is your current living arrangements as a student?_*Is Equal To*_University Student housing

PROGRESS BAR

SECTION FOUR: PERSONAL ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR

Please Note: The 'previous' or 'last semester' refers to the first two academic terms of the current year.

*56. **How regularly did you attend <u>classes</u> during <u>last semester</u>?**

▢ All / Almost all classes

▢ Most classes

▢ Some classes

▢ No / Almost no classes

*57. **In your opinion, how much did <u>class attendance</u> contribute to your general academic performance in the <u>previous semester</u>?**

▢ Large contribution

▢ Medium contribution

▢ Small contribution

▢ No contribution

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*58. In the <u>previous semester</u>, how hard did you generally work on <u>course work</u> (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?

○ Maximum effort

○ Medium effort

○ Minimum effort

○ Almost no effort

*59. If you think about your <u>class- / predicate- / progress marks</u> (average for all modules) for last semester, would you say your marks are generally:
Just give your best estimate

○ Much better than class average

○ Better than class average

○ More or less class average

○ Worse than class average

○ Much Worse than class average

○ Not applicable, received no marks

*60. In general, how hard did you study for <u>exams</u> in the previous semester?

○ Very hard

○ Hard

○ Not hard

○ Not hard at all

○ Not applicable, did not write exams

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*61. How would you describe the overall <u>performance marks</u> (average for all modules) you received after the previous semester?**

'Performance marks' refer to your end of the semester (after exams) average. Just give your best estimate.

◯ Much better than class average

◯ Better than class average

◯ More or less class average

◯ Worse than class average

◯ Much Worse than class average

Conditions: This item will be displayed when:
'Q60: In general, how hard did ...exams in the previous semester?' *Is Not Equal To* 'Not applicable, did not write exams'

*62. What was the <u>average</u> overall percentage you <u>strived</u> to achieve last semester?**

The academic mark you wanted to achieve

◯ 70% or more

◯ 60% to 69%

◯ 50% to 59%

◯ As long as I pass

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*63. In terms of the marks you <u>strived</u> for last semester (answer to Q62), how would you describe your <u>actual academic performance</u>?

○ Much better

○ Better

○ Reached my goal

○ Worse

○ Much worse

*64. Eventually, what was the <u>average</u> academic performance (average of all modules) you <u>actually</u> achieved in the previous semester?
Just give your best estimate in average percentage, but please leave out the % symbol.

[   ]

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SECTION FIVE: OTHER STUDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS DRINKING

*65. **Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption do you feel best represents the most common attitude among your close friends?**

☐ Drinking is never a good thing to do

☐ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

☐ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

*66. **How do you think your close friends feel (or would you feel) about :**

	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
Drinking every weekend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking before driving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking enough to pass out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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*67. **Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption do you feel best represents the <u>most common</u> attitude among <u>students in your residence</u> (answer to Q30 & Q32 or Q33)**

◌ Drinking is never a good thing to do

◌ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

◌ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

◌ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

◌ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

*68. **How do you think <u>students in your residence</u> feel (or would you feel) about :**

	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
Drinking every weekend	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Drinking daily	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Drinking before driving	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Drinking enough to pass out	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌

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*69. **Which of the following statements about alcohol consumption do you feel best represents the <u>most common</u> attitude among Stellenbosch <u>students in general</u>?**

☐ Drinking is never a good thing to do

☐ Drinking is all right but a person should not get drunk

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay as long as it DOES NOT interfere with academics or other responsibilities

☐ Occasionally getting drunk is okay even if it DOES interfere with academics or responsibilities

☐ Frequently getting drunk is okay if that's what the individual wants to do

*70. **How do you think Stellenbosch <u>students in general</u> feel (or would you feel) about :**

	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Slightly disapprove	Neutral / No opinion	Slightly approve	Approve	Strongly approve
Drinking every weekend	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking before driving	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drinking enough to pass out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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SECTION SIX: OTHER STUDENTS ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR

*71. In your opinion, how regularly did the following students generally attend classes last semester?

	All / Almost all classes	Most classes	Some classes	No / Almost no classes
Students in your course	◌	◌	◌	◌
Your close friends	◌	◌	◌	◌
Stellenbosch students in general	◌	◌	◌	◌

*72. How much do you think the class attendance of the following students contributed to their general academic performance last semester?

	Large contribution	Medium contribution	Small contribution	No contribution
Students in your course	◌	◌	◌	◌
Your close friends	◌	◌	◌	◌
Stellenbosch students in general	⦿	◌	◌	◌

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*73. In <u>your opinion</u>, how much effort do the following students <u>typically</u> put into general <u>course work</u> (tests, projects, essays, assignments, tutorials)?
Just give your best estimate

	Maximum effort	Medium effort	Minimum effort	Almost no effort
Students in your course	◌	◌	◌	◌
Your close friends	◌	◌	◌	◌
Stellenbosch students in general	◌	◌	◌	◌

*74. How well <u>do you think</u> the following students performed in their <u>class- / predicate- / progress marks</u> during last semester?
Just give your best estimate

	Much better than class average	Better than class average	More or less class average	Worse than class average	Much Worse than class average
Students in your course	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Your close friends	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌
Stellenbosch students in general	◌	◌	◌	◌	◌

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*75. How hard do <u>you think</u> the following students generally study for <u>exams</u>?

	Very hard	Hard	Fairly hard	Not very hard	Not applicable
Students in your course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your close friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stellenbosch students in general	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

*76. How well <u>do you think</u> the following students did in their <u>overall performance marks</u> in the previous semester?

'Performance marks' refers to students' end of the semester (after exams) average. Just give your best estimate.

	Much better than class average	Better than class average	More or less class average	Worse than class average	Much Worse than class average	Not applicable
Students in your course	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your close friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stellenbosch students in general	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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*77. On average, how well <u>do you think</u> the following students <u>strived</u> to perform academically last semester?

How well they wanted to perform

	70% or more	60% to 69%	50% to 59%	As long as they pass
Students in your course	▢	▢	▢	▢
Your close friends	▢	▢	▢	▢
Stellenbosch students in general	▢	▢	▢	▢

*78. In terms of the marks they <u>strived</u> for last semester, how well <u>do you think</u> the following students <u>actually</u> performed?

	Much better	Better	Reached their goal	Worse	Much Worse
Students in your course	▢	▢	▢	▢	▢
Your close friends	▢	▢	▢	▢	▢
Stellenbosch students in general	▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

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*79. **Campus situation on alcohol use:**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Does Stellenbosch University have a alcohol policy?	☐	☐	☐
If so, is it enforced?	☐	☐	☐
Does Stellenbosch University have a student alcohol use prevention program?	☐	☐	☐
Do you believe Stellenbosch University is concerned about alcohol use among students?	☐	☐	☐

[Save and Exit / Stoor en Exit]　[Finish / Voltooi]

Thank you for your participation in the survey

If you would like to be part of the lucky draw to stand a chance of winning R1000, or if you would like to take part in further research about student drinking behaviour, or receive an electronic copy of the research report, please

Click Here

Dankie vir jou deelname in die opname

As jy wil deelneem aan die gelukkige trekking om 'n kans te staan om R1000 te wen, of as jy wil deel wees van verdere navorsing oor studente drink gewoontes, of 'n elektroniese afskrif van die navorsings verslag verlang, asseblief

Kliek Hier

APPENDIX 6: FURTHER RESEARCH/LUCKY DRAW ENTRY FORM

STUDY OF STUDENT DRINKING NORMS AND PERCEPTIONS • STUDIE OOR STUDENTE DRINK NORME EN PERSEPSIES

Please Note:

1. This form is separate from the student drinking survey you just completed. Your survey responses have already been saved.
2. If you make yourself available for the in-depth interviews, focus groups, lucky draw or to receive a copy of the research report your participation in this project will no longer be anonymous.
3. Still, none of the personal contact information entered here can be linked to your response in the alcohol survey in any way, as this is a separate questionnaire.
4. Furthermore, although your responses to the interview questions and the focus group discussions will be anonymous, your identity will be known to the researcher.
5. However, only the lead researcher will have access to this information.
6. All personal contact information will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

*Would like to take part in further research (<u>in-depth interviews and/or focus groups</u>) about <u>student drinking behaviour</u>?

☐ Yes

☐ No

*Would like to be part of the lucky draw to stand a chance of winning a R1000?
Please Note: All participants in the survey, focus groups and in-depth interviews are eligible to win the prize. The winner will be contacted during the month of November.
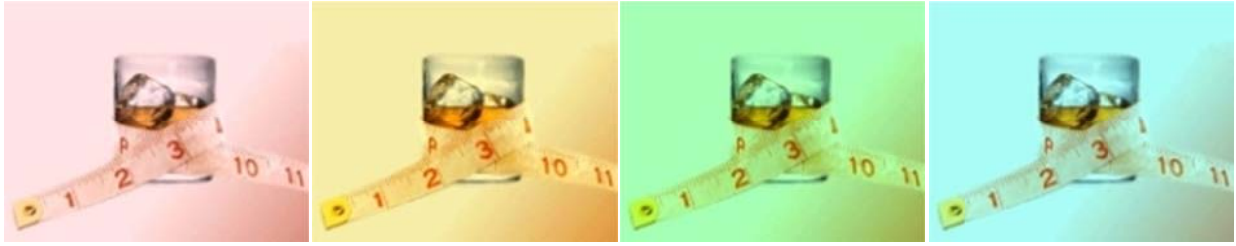
☐ Yes

☐ No

*Would like to **receive** an electronic copy of the research report?
The report will be available early next year (2010).

☐ Yes

☐ No

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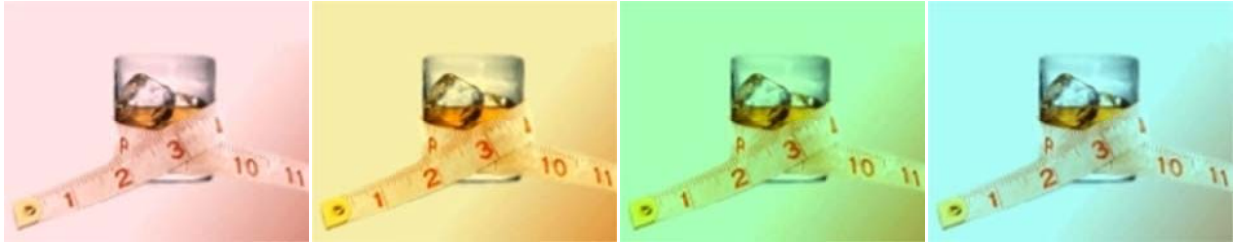Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology | | Departement Sosiologie en Sosiale Antropologie

Please enter you contact details below:

Name:
(optional)

Telephone Number:
(optional)

***Student e-mail Address:**

Finish / Voltooi

Thank you again for your participation.

Weereens dankie vir jou deelname.

APPENDIX 7: INVITATION E-MAIL FOR INTERVIEWS

From: Tolken, Johnnie Eigelaar <14366045@sun.ac.za>
Sent: 12 October 2009 05:57 PM
To:
Subject: Further Research - Study of Student Drinking Behaviour and Perception

Good afternoon

First of all, thank you for your participation in the survey, I really appreciate it. You also indicated that you would like to be part of further research with regards to student drinking behaviour and perceptions at Stellenbosch University. From the students that indicated they were interested, I randomly selected 20 students to take part in interviews, of which you are one. The aim of the interviews are open discussion, guided by a few questions. So if you are still interested, I would like to discuss a time and a place where we can meet. As a meeting venue, I can reserve room 406 in the Social Sciences and Arts Building but the time is completely up to you. Also, any day before the 26th of October would be fine.

Thanks again and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards
Johnnie

Johnnie E. Tolken | Sociology Masters 2009
Post-Graduate Assistant | Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
Stellenbosch University | ☎ 0832824867 | ✉ 14366045@sun.ac.za

APPENDIX 8: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

<u>**Student Perceptions of the Social Norm: Investigating the Relationship between the Actual and the Perceived Norm of Student Drinking Culture at Stellenbosch University**</u>

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Johnnie Tolken, from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to the completion of a thesis in Sociology Masters. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Stellenbosch for the year of 2009.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Student drinking behaviour has been identified as a serious problem for university and college campuses across the world. Among other social factors within the university context, student-drinking culture plays a prominent role in campus culture. Alcohol consumption takes a central position in the social lives of some students. Accordingly, student alcohol abuse has been extensively researched, especially in the United States of America. However, in the South African context, this issue has not enjoyed as much attention. Tertiary education is highly valued within the societal milieu of South Africa, and student-drinking culture as possibly influencing its obtainment, does warrant attention from research community. The current research aims to contribute to a better understanding of general student drinking behaviour at Stellenbosch University.

The social norms approach has had immense success in explaining the variance in student drinking behaviour. Given the importance of perceptions with regard to drinking norms on college and university campuses in other countries, and the relative importance attributed to this variable in explaining student drinking behaviour, this study aims to investigate the phenomenon at a South African university. The current research is an expansion of a study that I undertook at Stellenbosch University during my Honours year. The study showed that factors associated with peers and the social milieu were predictors of student drinking behaviour. The current study will examine more in-depth the influence of peer drinking perceptions and peer behaviour on personal drinking behaviour. Additionally, the influence of perceptions of peer academic behaviour on personal academic behaviour and drinking behaviour will be explored. Among other social factors, the perception of peer drinking behaviour may be linked to the perception of peer academic behaviour, as drinking behaviour is often stereotypically placed in opposition to academic behaviour.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteered to participate in this study, we ask you to do the following things:

o Read through the informed consent form, as too understand all procedures and rights.
o Sign the consent from, acknowledging you understand all terms and conditions.
o Partake in an interview/focus group within which certain questions will be asked and discussion will take place (interviews/focus groups will be recorded for later analysis of general themes and topics).
o Answer all questions as seen fit by you.
    o Interviews may take between 30 minutes to an hour.
    o Focus groups will take no longer than an hour.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. Participation is voluntary. Recordings, data or statements will not be able to be linked to participants in any way. Contact information will be treated as strictly confidential and, and will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way. Therefore, it is only available to the researcher.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

All interview participants took part in the survey and will therefore be entered into a lucky draw for the chance to win a cash prize. Participants may also request a copy of the final research report.

The study will enhance the sociological understanding of alcohol consumption in the context of Stellenbosch University and how this is possibly linked to student perceptions of the academic and drinking norm. The report will be available to students, university staff and any other interested party as a copy of the research report will be placed in the JS Gericke Library.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Survey, focus group or in-depth interview participants will not receive payment for their participation but rather, all participants will have the choice of being entered into a lucky draw and consequently stand an equal chance of possibly winning a cash prize of a R1000. The winner will be selected by drawing a random sample of one in SPSS, a program for statistical analysis. The winner will be contacted during the month of November.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained through the questionnaire is anonymous. Therefore, there is no threat to the confidentiality of respondents. Once the questionnaire has been completed, the data is automatically fed into an electronic database. The data are not in any way linkable to a specific participant. The database is located on a secure server, managed by the IT department for the purpose of electronic surveys. The data will only be available to the researcher.

In the event that anonymity is compromised and you exchange your personal contact information with the researcher or your identity becomes known to the researcher by you choosing to take part in interviews, focus groups, the lucky draw or to receive a copy of the research report, the information will be treated as strictly confidential. This information will only be available to the researcher, and will not be divulged to anyone or be misused in any way.

The acquired data/transcriptions will be used as part of a research project, in completion of a thesis for Sociology Masters 2009. Certain individuals at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology who are responsible for grading the paper will have access to the research report, after which it will be available at the JS Gericke Library to students, university staff and any other interested party. The data within the thesis will refer to all cases within the study in general; individual cases will not be singled out, and will not be able to be identified. Data will be used in statistical analysis to identify relationships between variables.

If the paper is published, confidentiality will still maintained through the complete anonymity of participants.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to take part in the study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you find any questions unacceptable, you may terminate your participation at any time, or merely skip the question.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact: Johnnie Tolken (Researcher) or/and Jan Vorster (Supervisor).

Johnnie Tolken
Tel: 0832824867
14 Squirrel Close
Klein Welgevonden
Stellenbosch

Jan Vorster
Tel: 021 808 2094
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
University of Stellenbosch
Arts Building
Fourth Floor, Room 416

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Maryke Hunter-Hüsselman (mh3@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4623) at the Unit for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Johnnie Tolken in Afrikaans/English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given/offered a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/English and no translator was used.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Let us start off with a general question, how do you feel about student drinking behaviour in general?
2. What type of drinking behaviour do you think the majority of students at Stellenbosch University have? (Heavy, moderate, light)
3. Think back to before you came to Stellenbosch University, what was your perception of students drinking and its role in campus social life?
4. Subsequently, when you came to Stellenbosch University, were you in anyway surprised about students drinking habits?
   - ❖ How would you describe your initial impression?
5. Did you feel any pressure from the university social environment to drink / go out / party?
   - ❖ IF YES, what do you think was the cause of that feeling?
     i. Was it more the general atmosphere?
     ii. Or more your friends?
   - ❖ And now, do you still feel like the social atmosphere promotes alcohol use?
6. What do you feel influences your drinking habits / how much you drink?
   - ❖ How big a role do your friends play in your drinking habits?
7. In general, what would stop you from going out and/or drinking?
8. How would you define heavy drinking for yourself?
9. How would you describe your general drinking pattern for this year?
   - ❖ Abstinence?
   - ❖ Light drinking?
   - ❖ Moderate drinking?
   - ❖ Heavy drinking?
10. What was your perception of others drinking during Jool? Do you think more students drink more frequently and heavier?
11. How has your drinking changed since your first year at Stellenbosch University? (If first year, since enrolling at SU)
12. How do you feel about your own drinking?
    - ❖ Does it bother you in anyway?
13. How do you feel about your friends drinking?
    - ❖ Does that bother you in anyway?
14. What is your attitude towards student dinking in general? Do you approve or disapprove?
15. How do you think other students at Stellenbosch University feels about drinking?
    - ❖ Your friends
    - ❖ Students in general
16. If heavy / risky drinking is defined as five or more drinks per drinking occasion for men and four or more drinks for women, what proportion of students at Stellenbosch University do you think drinks heavily?
17. What proportion of students do you think does not drink at all, or abstain?
    - ❖ An drink light to moderately.

18. So on a good Wednesday or Friday night, what percentage of students in general do you think, are out drinking/partying?
19. In your opinion, what is the general consensus on campus among students about how much and how frequent students drink alcohol?
20. What would you say if I told you that the majority of students (62%) at Stellenbosch University either abstains or drinks light too moderately?
    - ❖ Why would you say that?
21. Do you think students in general would believe that?
    - ❖ If not, why do you think students in general think students in typically drink so heavily?
22. Do you think other students know that there are actually a lot students that don't drink at all?
23. What do you think is the perception of students drinking from the point of few of the general public?
    - ❖ Do you think that perception exists for other campuses as well, or do you think it's worse for Stellenbosch University?
24. How often do you hear other people talk about going out the previous night, getting drunk, or just partying?
    - ❖ Guys or girls more?
    - ❖ How often do you talk about it?
25. Does it bother you in any way when people talk about getting drunk or wasted and doing irresponsible things?
    - ❖ If yes, do you ever say anything?
    - ❖ If no, why not?
    - ❖ Do you think it bothers people that do not drink, or are more conservative?
26. How hard do you think other students work at their academic courses in comparison to you? And in general how hard do you think students work?
27. Would you say your drinking behaviour influences your academic life at all?
    - ❖ If yes, why?
    - ❖ If no, why not?
28. Do you think drinking influences your friends' academic lives?
    - ❖ And students in your course?
29. Do you think the majority of students maintains a balance between their academic lifestyle and social lifestyle throughout the year, or not really?
30. Are you aware of any alcohol policies that Stellenbosch University has?
31. Are you aware of an alcohol prevention programme at Stellenbosch University?
32. Do you believe the University is concerned about the prevention of alcohol use problems?
33. Do you think any type of prevention of intervention campaign will be effective?
34. What did you think about that roomer that was going around that they wanted to make it mandatory for all bars/clubs to close at 12h00.
35. What do you think would students have done if this happened?
    - ❖ And in terms of their drinking habits?