

PSYCHOLOGY

Drinking at College

Students whose parents drink are much more apt to be users than those whose families abstain. Beer is preferred by men, wine by women.

► IF PAPA and Mamma drink, then it is nine chances out of ten that son in college also drinks. And four out of five college men who drink begin their drinking before they enter college.

These are conclusions of a five-year study of college drinking conducted by the Yale University's Laboratory of Applied Physiology in 27 colleges and universities.

Here are some of the other facts and findings of the Yale sampling, conducted by Robert Straus and Selden D. Bacon, with 17,000 students answering questions:

Of the American women students who drink, 65% started drinking before entering college.

Only half of the men whose parents both abstain drink.

When both parents are users, 83% of the women drink on occasion.

When both parents abstain, only 19% of the women students drink.

When family income is under \$2,500, two-thirds of the men and only 30% of the women students drink.

Where the family income is \$10,000 or over, 86% of the men and 79% of the women drink.

Seven out of ten of the men reported the beverage they most frequently use is beer. Only 47% of these men expressed a preference for beer. Approximately 42% preferred hard liquor, but only 21% could afford hard liquor as their most frequent beverage.

Among the women, 41% reported most frequently using beer, although only 17% prefer it. The women prefer wine.

"The customs and attitudes of young persons with regard to drinking," Mr. Straus disclosed, "are already pretty well determined before they come to college—by the practice, attitudes and customs of their families, their social groups and their communities."

Many of the simplest facts about college drinking have not been known, the survey showed.

"In the absence of facts, there has been much conjecture and misinformation and often many sincere persons have acquired quite a distorted impression of the nature of drinking behavior and the problems of alcohol in American colleges," it was declared.

"It is hoped that this study will provide a body of knowledge to replace present wild speculation. The study should prove useful to educators, college mental hygiene and health authorities, and other agencies interested in the problems of alcohol consumption.

"The study also will help create a better understanding of student behavior on the part of persons affected by such activities, such as residents of the college town, alumni and parents.

"The study should help achieve a better understanding of the assimilation of ideas and behavior patterns in youth, the emotional impact of drinking and related behavior on adolescence, and the effects of positive and negative sanctions on drinking.

"The study will contribute to the health, emotional well-being and adjustment of college youths themselves, by providing them with insights into the pressures and motivations associated with drinking customs."

Science News Letter, July 26, 1952

INVENTION

Talking Dictionary For Correct Pronunciation

► A TALKING dictionary has been invented by Chester M. MacChesney and Ella B. Wenger, Chicago, and assigned to Ellamac, Inc., also of Chicago. It is designed to give accurate renditions of the pronunciations of words in the hope of avoiding regional differences and dialects. It received patent number 2,603,006.

The dictionary is in card file form, three words appearing on each card. In addition to the definition, a strip of magnetic tape is pasted on the card for each word. The card is placed in a player and the correct pronunciation comes out of the loudspeaker.

Science News Letter, July 26, 1952

PUBLIC HEALTH

Confuse Monoxide With Food Poisoning

► WHEN THE whole family comes down with nausea and vomiting, it is likely to be put down to "something they ate," or food poisoning. But some of these cases may be due to poisoning with carbon monoxide gas.

This colorless, odorless gas gives no warning of its presence and is a sure killer if the dose is high enough. But in lesser concentrations it may only cause sickness.

Quite a few outbreaks of disease reported to the New York City Department of Health as food poisoning have, on investigation, been found due to carbon monoxide poisoning, Dr. Harold T. Fuerst, epidemiologist of the department, reports. Nausea and vomiting are symptoms of both, hence the confusion, he points out. He gives the following points of difference:

Diarrhea is the rule in food poisoning and rare in gas poisoning. The reverse is true of headache. Weakness and vascular (blood vessel) collapse occur early in gas poisoning; they occur late in food poisoning as a result of severe vomiting, diarrhea and the consequent dehydration.

The patient with food poisoning is apt to be pale, whereas the patient with carbon monoxide poisoning is likely to have cyanosis or a peculiar cherry red color.

The epidemiologic picture is different in the two diseases. In the case of food poisoning, a group of people who have partaken of a common meal become ill within a limited range of hours from the time the meal was eaten. In carbon monoxide poisoning the people involved became ill almost simultaneously, and there may have been no common meal.

An experienced epidemiologist will suspect gas poisoning if he finds the ill patients in crowded quarters, with all windows closed. A little investigation will often disclose an open, unlighted gas burner, or a defective gas heater or gas refrigerator or a leaking gas pipe. The accidents occur chiefly at night when the patients are asleep and not alert to minor symptoms.

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