



Getting Wasted: Why College Students Drink Too Much and Party So Hard

Thomas Vander Ven

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Most American college campuses are home to a vibrant drinking scene where students frequently get wasted, train-wrecked, obliterated, hammered, destroyed, and decimated. The terms that university students most commonly use to describe severe alcohol intoxication share a common theme: destruction, and even after repeated embarrassing, physically unpleasant, and even violent drinking episodes, students continue to go out drinking together. In *Getting Wasted*, Thomas Vander Ven provides a unique answer to the perennial question of why college students drink.

Vander Ven argues that college students rely on “drunk support:” contrary to most accounts of alcohol abuse as being a solitary problem of one person drinking to excess, the college drinking scene is very much a social one where students support one another through nights of drinking games, rituals and rites of passage. Drawing on over 400 student accounts, 25 intensive interviews, and one hundred hours of field research, Vander Ven sheds light on the extremely social nature of college drinking. Giving voice to college drinkers as they speak in graphic and revealing terms about the complexity of the drinking scene, Vander Ven argues that college students continue to drink heavily, even after experiencing repeated bad experiences, because of the social support that they give to one another and due to the creative ways in which they reframe and recast violent, embarrassing, and regretful drunken behaviors. Provocatively, *Getting Wasted* shows that college itself, closed and seemingly secure, encourages these drinking patterns and is one more example of the dark side of campus life.

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