

# Library Watch on colleges

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## **A randomized study of four cards designed to prevent problems during college students' 21st birthday celebrations.**

Smith BH; Bogle KE; Talbott L; Gant R; Castillo H. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 67(4): 607-615, 2006. (16 refs.)

Objective: The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of sending cards designed to prevent alcohol-related problems during 21st birthday celebrations. Method: College students were randomly assigned to receive cards with one of the following messages: (1) a neutral birthday greeting; (2) harm reduction information; (3) messages designed by the Be Responsible About Drinking (B.R.A.D.) Foundation, including harm reduction information and a description of the tragic death of Brad McCue during his 21st birthday celebration; (4) social norming messages designed to correct misperceptions of drinking; or (5) the combination of messages from Cards 2 and 4. A total of 994 students completed a post-21st birthday phone survey. Effects were evaluated in two cohorts with 444 and 550 students, respectively. Results: There were no significant effects of the cards on drinking or alcohol-related problems. Conclusions: These null findings, plus some unexpected trends in our data, highlight the importance of carefully evaluating mailed interventions before deploying them on a large scale. Copyright 2006, Alcohol Research Documentation, Inc.

## **College student drinking and meaning in the pursuit of life goals.**

Palfai TP; Weafer J. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 20(2): 131-134, 2006. (22 refs.)

The current study was designed to examine the association between risky alcohol use and life goals among college students. Introductory psychology students completed a questionnaire that included measures of typical life goals and alcohol use behavior. Students listed their 5 most typical life goals and rated them each on a series of dimensions from which 2 factors were derived (i.e., Goal Meaning, Goal Efficacy). Hierarchical regression analyses showed that the lower levels of goal meaning were associated with more heavy episodic use of alcohol and alcohol-related negative consequences. Results are

consistent with motivational models of drinking that depict alcohol use as a function of satisfaction from other life goals. Findings support the importance of understanding college student drinking within the broader context of life goal appraisal. Copyright 2006, American Psychological Association.

## **College student drinking, attitudes toward risks, and drinking consequences.**

Benton SL; Benton SA; Downey RG. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 67(4): 543-551, 2006. (37 refs.)

Objective: This study examined whether college students' attitudes toward risks explain significant variance in drinking consequences beyond gender, alcohol use, and self-protective strategies. Method: A derivation sample (N = 276; 52% women) and a replication sample (N = 216; 52% women) of undergraduate students completed the Campus Alcohol Survey (CAS) and the Attitudes Toward Risks Scale (ATRS). Results: Scores on the ATRS correlated positively with students' self-reported typical number of drinks and negative drinking consequences ( $p < .001$ ). Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that ATRS scores explained significant variance in negative drinking consequences beyond college students' gender, typical number of drinks, and use of protective strategies ( $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, a significant Drinks x ATRS interaction revealed that heavy-drinking students who scored high on the ATRS experienced the most harm from drinking ( $P < .01$ ). Students with high-risk attitudes showed a stronger link between typical number of drinks and negative drinking consequences. Conclusions: Even when controlling for students' gender, alcohol use, and protective strategies, college students' attitudes toward risks explain significant variance in drinking consequences. Copyright 2006, Alcohol Research Documentation, Inc.

## **Drinking games in female college students: More than just a game?**

Zamboanga BL; Leitkowski LK; Rodriguez L; Cascio KA. *Addictive Behaviors* 31(8): 1485-1489, 2006. (6 refs.)

The present study examined the characteristics of drinking games (DG). Study participants were 164

female college students (Mean age = 20; 18–23 years) who completed self-report measures of drinking game participation and alcohol-related behaviors. Results showed variations in popularity, type of alcohol consumed, and intoxication levels across drinking games. Findings also revealed that drinking game involvement (frequency of participation, amount consumed, perceived intoxication, and type of alcoholic beverage consumed) were associated with hazardous alcohol use. Prevention efforts and future research implications are discussed. Copyright 2006, Elsevier Science.

### **Effects of showing risk in beer commercials to young drinkers.**

Zwarun L; Linz D; Metzger M; Kunkel D. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 50(1): 52-77, 2006. (72 refs.)

An experiment assessed the effects of exposing college students to beer commercials with images of activities that would be dangerous to undertake while drinking. Those exposed to the ads were more likely to believe in the social benefits of drinking than those not exposed, particularly among males. Those participants who reported seeing people engaged in risky activities as well as drinking beer had an increased tolerance for drunk driving. The findings suggest that the imagery in beer commercials can contribute to beliefs about alcohol that predict drinking and to an increased acceptance of dangerous drinking behavior. Copyright 2006, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

### **Evaluating the believability and effectiveness of the social norms message - "Most students drink 0 to 4 drinks when they party".**

Polonec LD; Major AM; Atwood LE. *Health Communication* 20(1): 23-34, 2006. (48 refs.)

In an effort to reduce dangerous drinking levels among college students, university health educators have initiated social norms campaigns based on the rationale that students will be more likely to reduce their own drinking behaviors if they think that most students on campus are not heavy or binge drinkers. Within the framework of social comparisons theory, this study reports the findings of a survey of 277 college students and explores the correlates of accuracy and bias in students' estimates of whether or not most other students think that binge drinking on campus is a problem and whether or not most other students believe the campaign message. The overwhelming majority (72.6%) of students did not believe the norms message that most students on campus drink "0 to 4" drinks when they party, and 52.7% reported drinking "5 or more" drinks in a

sitting. The social norms campaign was effective in motivating 61% of the respondents to think about binge drinking as a problem. For the most part, group or social network norms were more influential on students' own drinking behavior than were their estimates of the campus drinking norm. The findings also clarify that accuracy in estimating the campus social norm in and of itself does not necessarily lead to an increase or reduction in alcohol consumption. The social comparisons approach underscores the complex and social nature of human interaction and reinforces the need for the development of multiple approaches to alcohol education with messages that are designed to target the specific needs of students based on their orientations toward alcohol consumption. Copyright 2006, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

### **Feasibility of an email-based electronic screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) to college students in Sweden.**

Bendtsen P; Johansson K; Akerlind I. *Addictive Behaviors* 31(5): 777-787, 2006. (22 refs.)

An email-based electronic screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) with personalized normative feedback on alcohol habits was offered to all 3875 second term students at Linköping University, Sweden. The students received an email with a link to a computerized alcohol habit test and were offered personalized feedback directly on the computer screen. The students evaluated the test and were asked to state whether they were going to consider changing or actually change their alcohol habits. The response rate was 44%, with 742 female and 843 male students participating. The students displayed a strong gender difference in drinking pattern. A three-fold higher percentage of males than females were risky drinkers with regard to a high average weekly volume consumption. The gender differences were less pronounced regarding heavy episodic drinking that was reported by 51% of the females and 70.5% of the males. The email-based computerized non-native feedback was appreciated by the students and one-third of the females and one-fifth of the males believed that they would benefit from the normative feedback; 8% of the females and 3% of the males believed that they would actually change their habits after the feedback. Students with a risky drinking pattern, previous experiences of blackouts, being dissatisfied with their current drinking and students that had considered to change their habits before the e-SBI, yielded a stronger motivation to change their drinking after having performed the intervention compared to students without such characteristics. The e-SBI with non-native feedback was simple to administer and has

the potential to be used repeatedly and on a large scale with minimum effort in terms of cost and time. Copyright 2006, Elsevier Science Ltd.

**If you feed them, will they come? The use of social marketing to increase interest in attending a college alcohol program.**

Palmer RS; Kilmer JR; Larimer ME. *Journal of American College Health* 55(1): 47-52, 2006. (28 refs.)

The authors used social marketing to design and test advertisement components aimed at increasing students' interest in attending an alcohol program focused on reaching students who drink heavily, although the authors offered no such program. Participants were undergraduate students in introductory psychology courses (N = 551). Questionnaires included measures assessing demographic information, alcohol use and negative consequences, and interest in attending an alcohol program in response to exposure to 1 of 12 systematically varied advertisements. The authors found that approximately 20% of participants across all ad types indicated some level of interest in attending the alcohol program. Students who use alcohol reported more interest in attending when an informational message was used. Of the participants offered food, 41.9% indicated the food offered in the advertisement impacted their interest in attending. Results suggest market segmentation plays a role in developing effective advertisements to recruit different groups of students based on their reported drinking behavior. Copyright 2006, Heldref Publications.

**Many college freshmen drink at levels far beyond the binge threshold.**

White AM; Kraus CL; Swartzwelder HS. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 30(6): 1006-1010, 2006. (18 refs.)

Binge drinking is a dichotomous variable that allows researchers to sort students into categories based upon a specific threshold of consumption, commonly 4 (females) or 5 (males) drinks. Crossing the binge threshold increases the risk of negative alcohol-related consequences. The use of such thresholds has played a vital role in the study of college drinking. While extremely valuable, the dichotomous nature of binge drinking variables removes information about how heavily students actually drink, leaving the characterization of college drinking incomplete. The present study examined patterns of alcohol use beyond the binge threshold. The data set consisted of self-reported 2-week drinking histories from 10,424 first-semester freshmen at 14 schools across the United States during the fall of 2003. The number of students who reached

the 4+/5+ binge-drinking threshold was calculated, as was the number who reached 2 times (8+/10+ drinks) or 3 times (12+/15+ drinks) the binge threshold. Logistic regression analyses were used to explore gender differences and to assess whether frequent binge drinkers (3+ binges per 2 weeks) were more likely than infrequent binge drinkers (1-2 binges per 2 weeks) to reach high peak levels of consumption. Roughly 1 of 5 males consumed 10+ drinks and 1 of 10 females consumed 8+ drinks, twice the binge threshold, at least once in the previous 2 weeks. Gender differences were observed at every drinking level and were particularly large at higher peak levels. Frequent binge drinkers were more likely than infrequent binge drinkers to consume 2 or 3 times the binge threshold. A surprisingly large percentage of students, particularly males, drink at peak levels well beyond the binge threshold. Such findings suggest that schools might make additional progress in the battle against alcohol misuse by focusing on extreme drinking practices in addition to binge drinking per se. Copyright 2006, Research Society on Alcoholism.

**Perceived alcohol use among friends and alcohol consumption among college athletes.**

Martens MP; Dams-O'Connor K; Duffy-Paiement C; Gibson JT. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 20(2): 178-184, 2006. (43 refs.)

Intercollegiate athletes have been identified as an at-risk group for heavy alcohol consumption (e.g., T. F. Nelson & H. Wechsler, 2001). The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between descriptive drinking norms among one's closest friends and personal alcohol consumption among athletes. Specifically, the authors sought to determine whether perceptions of alcohol consumption among one's closest friend who was an athlete (athlete norms) demonstrated a stronger relationship with personal alcohol use than normative perceptions among one's closest friend who was not an athlete (nonathlete norms). Data were collected on 165 athletes competing at the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I level. Results indicated that the athlete norms demonstrated a stronger main effect with personal alcohol use than the nonathlete norms, although both norms demonstrated strong effects. However, an interaction effect indicated that the athlete norms demonstrated a stronger relationship with personal consumption among men, whereas the nonathlete norms demonstrated a stronger relationship among women. Implications for alcohol prevention programs among college athletes are discussed. Copyright 2006, American Psychological Association.

### **Sport-type differences in alcohol use among intercollegiate athletes.**

Martens MP; Watson JC; Beck NC. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 18(2): 136-150, 2006. (42 refs.)

Prior research has found that (a) intercollegiate athletes are especially "at-risk for excessive alcohol consumption (e.g., Nelson & Wechsler, 2001), and (b) sport-type differences exist among college athletes in terms of yearly drinking prevalence rates (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2001). No studies, however, have examined sport-type differences on more specific measures of alcohol consumption (e.g., drinks per week), or examined potential mediators of the relationship between sport type and alcohol consumption. In the present study, data were analyzed on 298 intercollegiate athletes from two different universities. Results indicated significant sport type differences on alcohol consumption variables, with athletes from the sports of swimming and diving reporting the highest levels of alcohol consumption. Results provided partial support for the role of positively reinforcing drinking motives in mediating the sport type-alcohol consumption relationship. Findings are discussed in light of prior research in the area of college student-athlete alcohol consumption. Copyright 2006, Taylor & Francis Ltd.

### **A group motivational interviewing intervention reduces drinking and alcohol-related consequences in adjudicated college students.**

LaBrie JW; Lamb TF; Pedersen ER; Quinlan T. *Journal of College Student Development* 47(3): 267-280, 2006. (34 refs.)

This study examines the effectiveness of a single-session group motivational enhancement intervention with college students adjudicated for violation of alcohol policy. The intervention consisted of a Timeline Followback assessment of drinking, social norms re-education, decisional balance for behavior change, relapse prevention, expectancy challenge, and the generation of behavioral goals. All participants evidenced significant reductions in drinking from baseline through one and three month follow-up. Male participants and frequent binge drinkers showed the largest and most sustained reductions in drinking behavior. The results of this study provide tentative evidence for the effectiveness of group motivational enhancement interventions with adjudicated students. Copyright 2006, Johns Hopkins University Press.

### **Single question about drunkenness to detect college students at risk for injury.**

O'Brien MC; McCoy TP; Champion H; Mitra A; Robbins A; Teuschler H et al. *Academic Emergency Medicine* 13(6): 629-636, 2006. (81 refs.)

Objectives: To examine the frequency of injuries reported by college students who replied affirmatively to the question, "In a typical week, how many days do you get drunk?" Methods: In Fall 2003, a Web-based survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 3,909 college students from ten North Carolina (NC) universities. Students answered questions regarding alcohol use and its consequences. Data were analyzed using multiple logistic regression, controlling for within-school clustering of drinking behaviors and adjusting for other significant covariates. Adjusted odds ratios (AORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated for significant predictors ( $p < 0.05$ ). Results: Two thousand four hundred eighty-eight students reported that they are current drinkers; 1,353 (54.4%) reported getting drunk at least once in a typical week. Compared with students who did not report getting drunk at least once a week, these students had higher odds of being hurt or injured at least once as a result of their own drinking (AOR = 4.97; 95% CI = 3.47 to 7.09), experiencing a fall from a height that required medical treatment (AOR = 2.16; 95% CI = 1.36 to 3.43), and being taken advantage of sexually as a result of another's drinking (AOR = 2.59; 95% CI = 1.72 to 3.89). Students who reported getting drunk at least one day in a typical week also were more likely to cause an injury requiring medical treatment to someone else. They had higher odds of causing injury in an automobile crash (AOR = 1.84; 95% CI = 1.01 to 3.40), of causing a burn that required medical treatment (AOR = 2.85; 95% CI = 1.51 to 5.39), and of causing a fall from a height that required medical treatment (AOR = 2.02; 95% CI = 1.01 to 4.04). Getting drunk was a better indicator of "self-experienced injury" and of "injury caused to someone else" than was binge drinking, for all outcomes ( $p < 0.05$ ). Conclusions: The single question, "In a typical week, how many days do you get drunk?" identifies college students who are at higher than normal risk of injury as a result of their own drinking and the drinking of others. Future research should assess this question's effectiveness as a screening tool in campus health centers and in emergency departments. Copyright 2006, Society for Academic Emergency Medicine.