DO WE ACT UPON WHAT WE SEE? IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL CUES ON MOVIES ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

R. Koordeman, D.J. Anschutz, R.B. van Baaren, E. Kuntsche, R.C.M.E. Engels
Behavioural Science Institute, Radboud University Nijmegen, Montessorilaan 3, 6500 HE, The Netherlands

Population surveys have linked movie alcohol portrayals with alcohol consumption in youth. There is also experimental evidence that alcohol portrayals in movies immediately influence viewers’ drinking of alcohol while watching movies. One process that might account for these immediate effects is imitation, as empirical studies have shown that individuals consume more alcohol and binge more frequently when they watch movies where alcohol is featured. This process might also be relevant for the observed alcohol consumption of young people while watching movies.

Results: Results showed that assignment to movie alcohol portrayals increased alcohol consumption during the movie for men but not for women (β = -0.65, p < .01). While controlling for weekly consumption, the effects remained significant. Identification and weekly alcohol consumption did not moderate the relationship between condition and alcohol consumption. The second study examined, in a subsample of the first study, whether participants imitated actors’ drinking on-screen. Only participants who consumed alcohol in the alcohol condition were included (70 subjects; 61 males, mean age = 20.8). We assessed at what time during the movie the actors and participants took a sip to match the sipping of the actors and participants. Participants were more likely to sip in accordance with actors’ sipping than females (HR = 1.97, p < 0.001; 95% CI = 1.36-2.80) and participants tended to respond to actors’ sipping at the beginning of the movie rather than at the end (HR = 0.80, p = 0.037; 95% CI = 0.63-0.98). Exposure to actors sipping alcohol in a movie appears to have an immediate impact on the drinking behavior of young adult viewers, via the mechanism of imitation. Further research should determine if exposure to movie alcohol use affects drinking among underdrinker drinkers and attitudes toward use among non-drinkers.

MOVIE ALCOHOL EXPOSURE AND ADOLESCENT ALCOHOL USE IN A MULTIETHNIC SAMPLE IN HAWAII

Thomas A. Wills, James D. Sargent, Frederick X. Gibbons, Megan Forbes, Mercedes Tappe, Sonya Dal Cin, Rebecca Knight
University of Hawaii Hawaii Cancer Center, Norris Cotton Cancer Center, Dartmouth College, University of Michigan

Purpose: Studies on movies have been conducted primarily with Caucasian samples. This study tested the effect of movie alcohol exposure (MAE) on adolescent alcohol use suggested from previous US studies.

Methods: Research staff administered surveys to middle-school students in Honolulu, Hawaii. The sample of 836 participants (Ps), 51% female, M age 12.9 years, was 38% Asian-American, 3% Black, 5% Hispanic, 8% Filipino, 17% Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander, and 29% White. The P was presented with 50 movie titles (drawn from a population of 500) and asked whether he/she had viewed the movie (Yes/No). Each movie was independently coded for seconds of alcohol use onscreen. The survey included covariates (e.g., parental support, monitoring, sensation seeking), mediators (alcohol expectancies, prototypes of peer users, and affiliation with peer users), and criterion measures (overall frequency of alcohol use and past-month heavy drinking).

Results: The average P had seen 17 of the 50 movies in the list of 50 presented. In the movies he/she had viewed, the average participant saw 41 minutes of alcohol use onscreen. The zero-order correlation of MAE with adolescent use was .30 for overall use and .19 for heavy drinking. These effects were significant with control for all covariates. A structural modeling analysis was performed with MAE exogenous (including its correlations with the covariates), the three mediators endogenous (with covariances of their residual terms), and a latent construct for adolescent alcohol use as the criterion. There were significant paths (all p < .001) from MAE to expectancies, prototypes, and peer affiliations. Standardized paths to adolescent use were .35 (p < .001) for expectancies, .06 (p < .10) for prototypes, and .44 (p < .001) for peer affiliations; in addition there was a direct effect from MAE to adolescent alcohol use (β = .08, p < .01). Conclusion: An effect of MAE on adolescent alcohol use was found in a diverse sample quite different from previous studies. This was mediated partly through an MAE effect on alcohol-related cognitions (more favorable expectancies and perceptions of users) and partly through a social mechanism (more affiliation with peer users). The direct effect may represent an implicit influence of movies that is not well assessed by explicit measures. We discuss implications for including media in primary prevention programs.