Exposure to Alcohol Content in the Entertainment Media

Comparing Media and Family Predictors of Alcohol Use: A Cohort Study of US Adolescents
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Objective: To compare media/marketing exposures and family factors in predicting adolescent alcohol use.

Design: Cohort study.

Setting: Confidential telephone survey of adolescents in their homes.

Participants: Representative sample of 6522 U.S. adolescents, aged 10-14 years, and surveyed four times over 2 years.

Main outcome measure: Time to alcohol onset and progression to binge drinking were assessed with two survival models. Predictors were movie alcohol exposure (MAE), ownership of alcohol branded merchandise (ABM), and characteristics of the family (parent alcohol use, home availability of alcohol, parenting). Covariates included sociodemographics, peer drinking, and personality factors.

Results: Over the study period the prevalence of adolescent ever-use and binge drinking increased from 11% to 25% and from 4 to 13% respectively. At baseline, the median estimated MAE from a population of 532 movies was 4.5 hours, and 11% owned ABM at time 2. Parent alcohol use (≥ weekly) was reported by 23%, and 29% could obtain alcohol from home. Peer drinking, MAE, ABM, age, and rebelliousness were associated with both alcohol onset and progression to binge drinking. The adjusted hazard ratios for alcohol onset and binge drinking transition for high vs. low MAE exposure were 2.13 (95% confidence interval 1.76, 2.57) and 1.63 (1.20, 2.21) respectively, and MAE accounted for 28% and 20% of these transitions respectively. Characteristics of the family were associated only with alcohol onset.

Conclusions: Limiting media and marketing alcohol exposure could prevent both alcohol onset and binge drinking, whereas family focused interventions would have larger impact on alcohol onset only.

Movie Alcohol Exposure and Adolescent Alcohol Use in a Multiethnic Sample in Hawaii
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Purpose: Studies on movie alcohol exposure have been conducted primarily with Caucasian samples. This study tested the effect of movie alcohol exposure (MAE) in a multiracial population, examining pathways for movie exposure to 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 (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 alcohol 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 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 < .0001) from MAE to expectancies, prototypes, and peer affiliations. Standardized paths to adolescent use were .35 (p < .0001) for expectancies, .06 (p < .10) for prototypes, and .44 (p < .0001) for peer affiliations; in addition there was a direct effect from MAE to adolescent alcohol use (beta = .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.