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.

DO WE ACT UPON WHAT WE SEE? IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL CUES ON MOVIES ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE
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Population surveys have linked movie alcohol portrayals with alcohol consumption in youth. There is also experimental evidence that alcohol portrayal 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 with a higher pace when they are with someone who consumes alcohol. This might also apply to seeing actors drinking on screen. Here we present data from two experimental studies on movie alcohol portrayals conducted with Dutch students. In the first study, a two (sex) by two (movie: alcohol or no alcohol portrayals) between-subject design was used. A total of 122 same-sex dyads (ages 18-29 years) watched the 60-min movie clip, “What Happens in Vegas”, in a semi-naturalistic home setting. Their alcohol consumption while watching was examined. Results showed that assignment to movie alcohol portrayals increased alcohol consumption during the movie for men but not for women (p = .065, p = .010). While controlling for weekly consumption, the effects remained significant. Identification and weekly alcohol consumption did not moderate the relation between condition and alcohol consumption. The second study examined, in a subsample of the first study, whether participants imitated actors sipping alcohol on-screen. Only participants who consumed alcohol in the alcohol condition were included (79 students: 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 the actors’ sips than without such a cue (OR = 1.50, p < 0.001, 95% CI = 1.28-1.75).

Further, men were more likely to imitate actors’ sipping than females (HR = 1.97, p = 0.003, 95% CI = 1.36-3.09) 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 behaviour of young adult viewers, via the mechanism of imitation. Further research should determine if exposure to movie alcohol use affects drinking among underage drinkers and attitudes toward use among non-drinkers.