



Alcohol and Binge Drinking Behaviors Among College Students



Significance of Problem

- A serious public health concern among college students is misuse of alcohol
- Drinking on college campuses is a unique culture and changing this culture is a top priority (Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002)
- 39% of college students binge drink (SAMSHA, 2013), which is correlated with high-risk behaviors, such as unsafe sex, sexual assault, injuries, and even death (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2013)
 - Binge drinking = 5 or more drinks within a few hours for males and 4 or more drinks for females
 - Drink = bottle/can of beer, glass of wine, wine cooler, shot glass of liquor, or mixed drink (NIAAA, 2013)
- Students overestimate the amount of alcohol peers consume, normalizing drinking behaviors (Dumas, McKinley, & Book, 2008)

Purpose

The main objectives of this study were to:

- Evaluate evidence about drinking behaviors among college students
- Assess alcohol use behaviors among undergraduate students at a private, faith-based university
- Identify factors that are associated with drinking on the college campus
- Assess the effects of a mass media campaign focused on alcohol use

Summary of Evidence

- Upon entering college, students should be screened for alcohol use (Scott-Sheldon et. al., 2014)
- Mass media campaigns are an effective structural intervention for behaviors that are prevalent within a population (Cohen, Scribner, & Farley, 2000)
- Social norming corrects students' misperceptions of "normal" behaviors and is based on the notion that college students want to fit in with peers (Kearney, Manley, & Mendoza, 2013)
- Interventions should target high-risk events such as freshmen year, spring break, and 21st birthday (Scott-Sheldon et. al., 2014; Tanner-Smith & Lipsey, 2015)

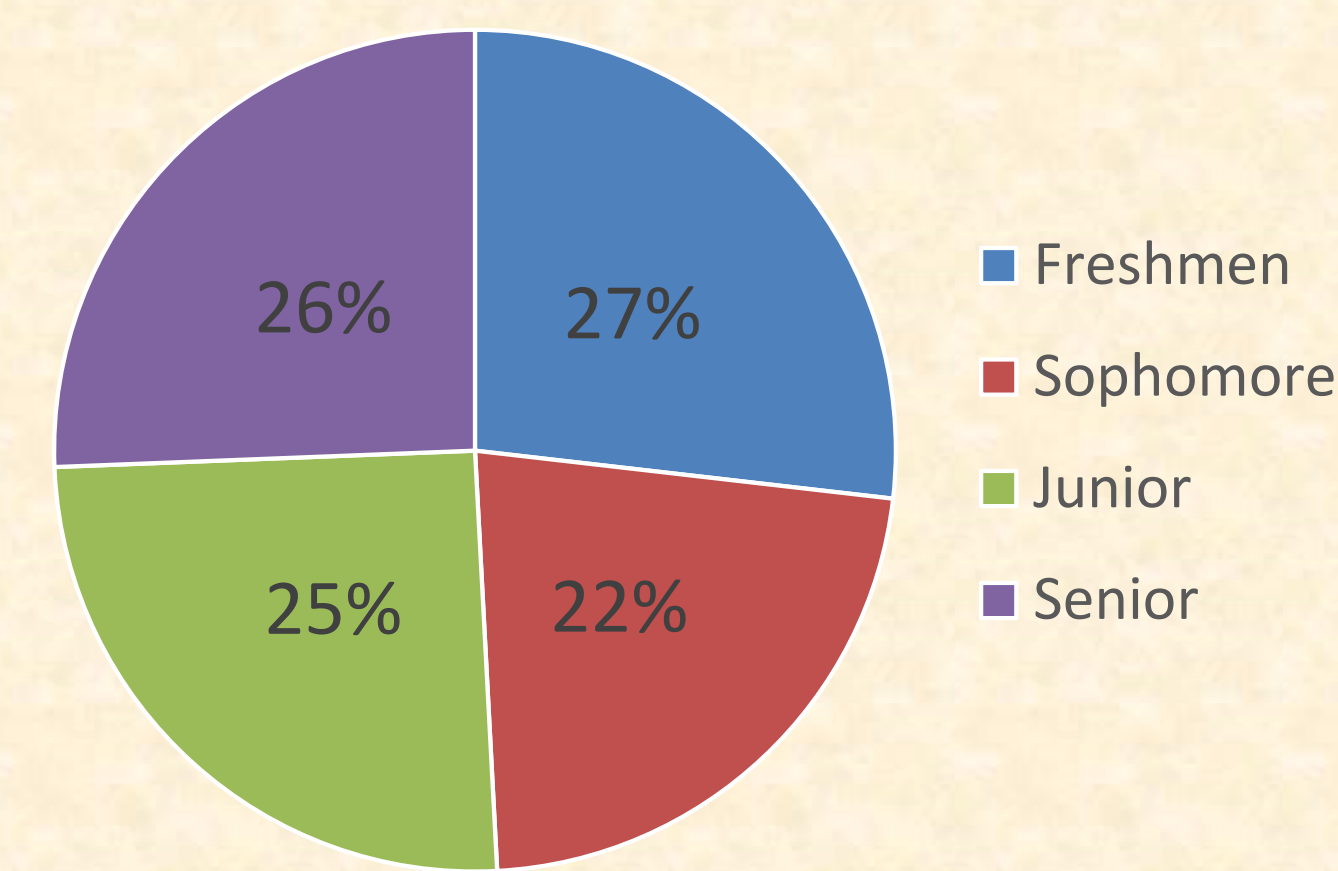
Methods

- Approval:** University IRB
- Setting:** Private, faith-based, Midwestern university
- Design:** Cross-sectional, pre/post-mass media campaign
- Sample:** Undergraduate students
Spring 2016 $N = 2,979$
- Survey:** SurveyMonkey® using an investigator developed survey with items from the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey (Core Institute of Student Health Programs, 1994)
- Analysis:** Data analyzed using descriptive statistics
- Strategy:** Mass media campaign

BSN Students: Jessica Mueller, Taylor Thompson, Haley DeYoung, Megan Eggert, Jennifer Mitchell, Kelly Wilkins, Ahmad Muhammad, and Hussein Shahine
Theresa A. Kessler, PhD, RN, ACNS-BC
Christine P. Kurtz, DNP, RN, PMHCNS-BC
College of Nursing & Health Professions

Sample Characteristics (n = 1,011)

Female: 63%
Greek-affiliation: 35%
Student athlete: 12%
Drink alcohol: 72%
Avg. drinks/week: 4.5



Key Findings

Drinking

- 87% of Greek-affiliated students drink compared to 64% of non-Greek ($\chi^2 = 56.180, p < .001$) (pre-intervention: 84%, 57%, $p < .001$)
- 85% of athletes drink compared to 70% of non-athletes ($\chi^2 = 11.173, p = .001$) (pre-intervention: 75%, 63%, $p = .01$)

Binge drinking

- 39% of drinkers engaged in binge drinking during the past 30 days (pre-intervention: 72%)
- 48% of males binge drink compared to 38% of females ($\chi^2 = 13.415, p = .001$) (pre-intervention: 77%, 58%, $p = .001$)
- 59% of Greek-affiliated students binge drink compared to 32% of non-Greek ($\chi^2 = 68.037, p = .001$) (pre-intervention: 75%, 60%, $p = .106$)
- 54% of athletes binge drink compared to 39% of non-athletes ($\chi^2 = 9.055, p = .003$) (pre-intervention: 72%, 64%, $p = .625$)

Top reasons for drinking

77.8% "to have fun"
64.8% "to feel good and relax"
34.9% "makes it easier to socialize"
34.0% "to get drunk"

Top reasons for not drinking

63.0% "be in control of self"
45.8% "don't want to get in trouble"
44.7% "it is illegal"
44.7% "negative effects on health"

Mass Media Campaign

- Electronic and printed posters displayed in academic and residential buildings
- Halloween yard display and spring break union building display about binge drinking
- Social media messaging on Instagram, Twitter, & Facebook

Mass Media Campaign Findings

- Students noticed alcohol-related information/facts around campus most often in these formats
 - Posters (81.9%)
 - Displays (47.0%)
 - Social media (24.9%)
- Effects of the mass media campaign
 - "had no effect" (69.9%)
 - "I learned something" (23.9%)
 - "I thought about it differently" (10.6%)
- 68.6% of students were aware of the Indiana Lifeline Law
 - Learned about it from posters (24.6%)
 - Viewed on social media (9.8%)
- Students defined binge drinking
 - Correctly (33.2%)
 - "Drinking until you blackout" (24.7%)
 - "6-10 drinks" (15.0%)

Conclusions

- Athlete, Greek-affiliated, and male students drink significantly more and engage in binge drinking more often
- Binge drinking on this campus is a significant problem; while causation cannot be determined, the percent of students who binged decreased significantly from pre to post-intervention
- Posters were an effective structural mass media campaign strategy
- Students were knowledgeable about the Lifeline Law, but most were unable to define binge drinking
- Majority of students who drink did so to facilitate socialization; responsibility was a common theme for not drinking

Recommendations

- Future campaigns should target binge drinking related to Greek-affiliation, spring break, Halloween, and end of school year as high-risk situations
- Continue collaboration with the Office of Alcohol and Drug Education to build on current strategies