

Booze brand references in pop music could drive teens to binge drink

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Researchers have suggested that binge drinking by teenagers and young adults is strongly associated with liking, owning, and correctly identifying music that references alcohol by brand name.

Senior author James D. Sargent, MD, co-director of the Control Research Program at Norris Cotton Cancer Center and professor of pediatrics in the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, said brand references may serve as advertising, even if they are not paid for by the industry.

Of the 2,541 participants who completed the survey, 1,488, or 59 percent, reported having had a complete alcoholic drink, defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor. Of those, 18 percent reported bingeing - or drinking heavily over a short period of time - at least monthly and 37 percent reported having had problems, such as injuries, due to alcohol.

Survey participants who could correctly recall alcohol brands in songs had more than twice the odds of having had a complete alcoholic drink, compared to those who could not recall the alcohol brand, even after adjusting for factors including age, socioeconomic status, and alcohol use by a parent or friend. The participants who could identify the alcohol brands in songs also had greater odds of binge alcohol use.

"A surprising result of our analysis was that the association between recalling alcohol brands in popular music and alcohol drinking in adolescents was as strong as the influence of parental and peer drinking, and an adolescent's tendency toward sensation-seeking," said lead author Brian A. Primack, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine and pediatrics and director of the Program for Research on Media and Health, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "This may illustrate the value that this age group places in the perceived opinions and actions of music stars."

The results have been published online in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.