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Author:

Mary H. Lai
 Pennsylvania State University
 113 South Henderson
 University Park, Pennsylvania United States 16802
 Primary Author, Presenting Author

H. Harrington Cleveland
 Pennsylvania State University
 113 South Henderson
 University Park, Pennsylvania United States 16802
 Co-author

Jacquelyn Wiersma
 Pennsylvania State University
 204 E. Calder Way
 State College, Pennsylvania United States 16801
 Co-author

Mayra Bamaca
 Pennsylvania State University
 204 E. Calder Way
 State College, Pennsylvania United States 16801
 Co-author

Title: Effect of school context on minority adolescent drinking behaviors

Text:

Elevated drinking levels among White adolescents, compared to other groups, has obvious negative implications for health and other outcomes. Adolescents who drink more are at higher risk for poor academic achievement, as well as delinquency, and depression. However, less is known about the impact of White drinking on the drinking behaviors of others, as well as whether exposure to high levels of White adolescent drinking has as negative effect on minority adolescents within the same school.

To examine this research question, this study used data from the in-school survey of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to address 3 aims: 1) Are minority adolescents' drinking and getting drunk associated with aggregate White drinking levels within their schools? 2) Are associations between minority adolescents' individual drinking and aggregate White drinking different across minority groups? 3) Do the associations between White drinking and individual minority drinking vary by severity of White drinking behaviors?

The analysis dataset was limited to a sample of 29, 147 Black, Hispanic, or Asian adolescents from 132 schools. Preliminary analyses used hierarchical linear regressions.

Findings #1: Three models predicting minority drinking each found significant main effects for aggregate-level White drinking.

Findings #2: Analyses examining differences across minority groups found main effects for being Black or Asian, indicating lower drinking for these groups relative to Hispanics. Moreover, these minorities were less affected by higher levels of White drinking within their schools.

Findings #3: Results across 3 models predicting drinking from school-level aggregates of a) any drinking, b) regular drinking, and c) heavy drinking found aggregations of more severe White drinking behaviors more predictive of individual-level minority drinking.

Additional analyses will consider the mediation of these effects by school heterogeneity and cross-ethnic friendships, as well as by gender and immigrant status. Final analyses will use a multi-level format to accommodate data clustering. Given the growing diversity of our school populations, it is important to understand how minority group status may influence individual adolescents' vulnerability to majority group behaviors. However, school interventions targeting adolescent drinking assume school drinking behaviors and norms affect everyone in a similar fashion. In contrast to this assumption, our study suggested that members of different minority groups are differentially affected by the drinking behaviors of their White school mates. Prevention/intervention efforts should pay attention to these dynamics in order to decrease drinking among minority adolescents.

Theme Groups: 1 Key social relationships