

News Release

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Four Alcohol Brands Dominate Popular Music Mentions

Depictions of alcohol use in songs popular among youth overwhelmingly positive

Baltimore, MD - Four alcohol brands - Patron tequila, Hennessy cognac, Grey Goose vodka, and Jack Daniel's whiskey – accounted for more than half of alcohol brand mentions in the songs that mentioned alcohol use in *Billboard's* most popular song lists in 2009, 2010 and 2011, according to a new study from researchers at the Boston University School of Public Health and the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The study, published online by *Substance Use & Misuse* and the first to examine the context of specific brand mentions in depth, found that alcohol use was portrayed as overwhelmingly positive, with negative consequences rarely given.

Of the 720 songs examined, 167 (23.2%) mentioned alcohol and 46 (6.4%) mentioned specific alcohol brands. The leading four brands accounted for more than half (51.6%) of all alcohol brand mentions. Alcohol mentions were most common in urban songs (rap, hip-hop and R&B – 37.7% of songs mentioned alcohol), followed by country (21.8%) and pop (14.9%).

At least 14 long-term studies have found that exposure to alcohol marketing in the mass media increases the likelihood that young people will start drinking or, if already drinking, drink more. Adolescents in the U.S. spend approximately 2.5 hours per day listening to music.

"Given the heavy exposure of youth to popular music, these results suggest popular music may serve as a major source of promotion of alcohol use among youth," said study co-author David Jernigan, PhD, director of CAMY. "The findings lay a strong foundation for further research."

The researchers used *Billboard Magazine* annual listings of the most popular songs in 2009, 2010 and 2011 to identify 720 unique songs in four genres: urban, pop, country and rock. Three coders

analyzed the lyrics of each song to determine alcohol references, brand references and the context for each.

Researchers found alcohol references in 167 songs. References to tequila, cognac, vodka and champagne brands were more prevalent in urban music (R&B, hip hop and rap), while references to whiskey and beer brands were more common in country or pop music. There were no references to alcohol in the rock music examined.

“A small number of alcohol brands and beverages appear to make frequent appearances in popular music,” said Michael Siegel, MD, MPH, professor of Community Health Sciences at the Boston University of Public Health. “If these exposures are found to influence youth drinking behavior, then further public health efforts must be focused on youth exposure to alcohol portrayals in popular music.”

Alcohol is responsible for at least 4,700 deaths per year among young people under the age of 21 in the U.S. More than 70 percent of high school students have consumed alcohol, and about 22 percent engage in heavy episodic drinking.

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This research was supported by grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America’s youth. The Center was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center moved to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2008 and is currently funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit www.camy.org.