

# “You’re Not Cute When You’re About To Puke”: A Content Analysis of Print Alcohol Counter-Advertisements Created by Adolescents

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## Introduction

- Alcohol advertising is pervasive. Alcohol companies spent more than \$8.2 billion placing 2,664,919 alcohol product advertisements on U.S. television from 2001-2009.<sup>1</sup>
- Exposure to alcohol advertising increases the likelihood of adolescent alcohol use initiation and/or consumption.<sup>2,3</sup>
- One promising approach (media literacy) may help counter potential effects of alcohol advertising on adolescents.
- Media literacy advocates a critical analysis of various kinds of mass media messages, an identification of the functions of the media, and an engagement that encourages students to critically and consciously examine media messages.<sup>4</sup>
- The **Youth Message Development (YMD)** curriculum incorporates media literacy principles to reduce underage drinking in high school students.

## YMD Curriculum

- Goal:** Students apply critical analysis and media message construction skills to actively create their own alcohol counter-advertisements.
- YMD curriculum designed to highlight the role of media messages and refine counter-arguing skills through a BRIEF intervention:
  - Target audience* and *understanding persuasive techniques* (with a focus on four techniques – endorsement, sex, humor, and having fun/being one of the gang)
  - Analysis of claims* made in alcohol advertising (including slogans, counter-arguing, and consequences), and
  - Production components* in alcohol advertising (i.e. the use of people, setting, font, and visuals)
  - *Planning and creating a poster* utilizing persuasion and production strategies learned

## Aims of the Study

- To evaluate how well the students incorporated information learned through the YMD curriculum in creating their own print alcohol counter-advertisements (the last activity)
- To examine differences in application of YMD curriculum content to print alcohol counter-advertisements created by high school adolescents and college students

## Method

Sample –  $N = 72$  print alcohol counter-advertisements  
- 49 created by small groups of high school students from across Pennsylvania  
- 23 created by small groups of college students in New Jersey

### Qualitative Content Analysis

- A combination of deductive and inductive coding
- 1<sup>st</sup>, deductive coding - operationalized based on *YMD* curriculum content - **ad claims** (presence/absence of slogans, counter-arguments or consequences), **persuasion strategies** (presence/absence of endorsement, glamour/sex appeal, having fun/being one of the group, humor/unexpected idea), and **production components** (people, setting, font, and visuals)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>, inductive coding – using open and axial coding to identify specific consequences or counter-arguments utilized in posters

## Results

### Ad Claims:

- Overall, both high school students and college students used slogans in their posters in order to highlight the main point or message of the ad
- The posters displayed negative consequences of alcohol use the most, followed by displays of both negative and positive consequences, with positive consequences of not using alcohol depicted the least

### Persuasion Strategies:

- Identifiable persuasion strategies used in only 37% and 30% of the posters created by high school and college students
- Having fun/being one of the gang most frequently used persuasion strategy

### Production Components:

- All posters incorporated a range of production components such as setting, image size, and object placement
- A clear setting was evident in 39 high school and 16 college posters, and included party, beach, accident site, bathroom, sporting event, prison, graveyard, and hospital
- Use of color was evident in all of the posters, and most of the posters utilized more than 6 colors
- A majority of posters utilized 2 or more different font sizes to highlight their message

Table. Prevalence and Difference Between Content Categories in Counter-Alcohol Posters Created by High School and College Students

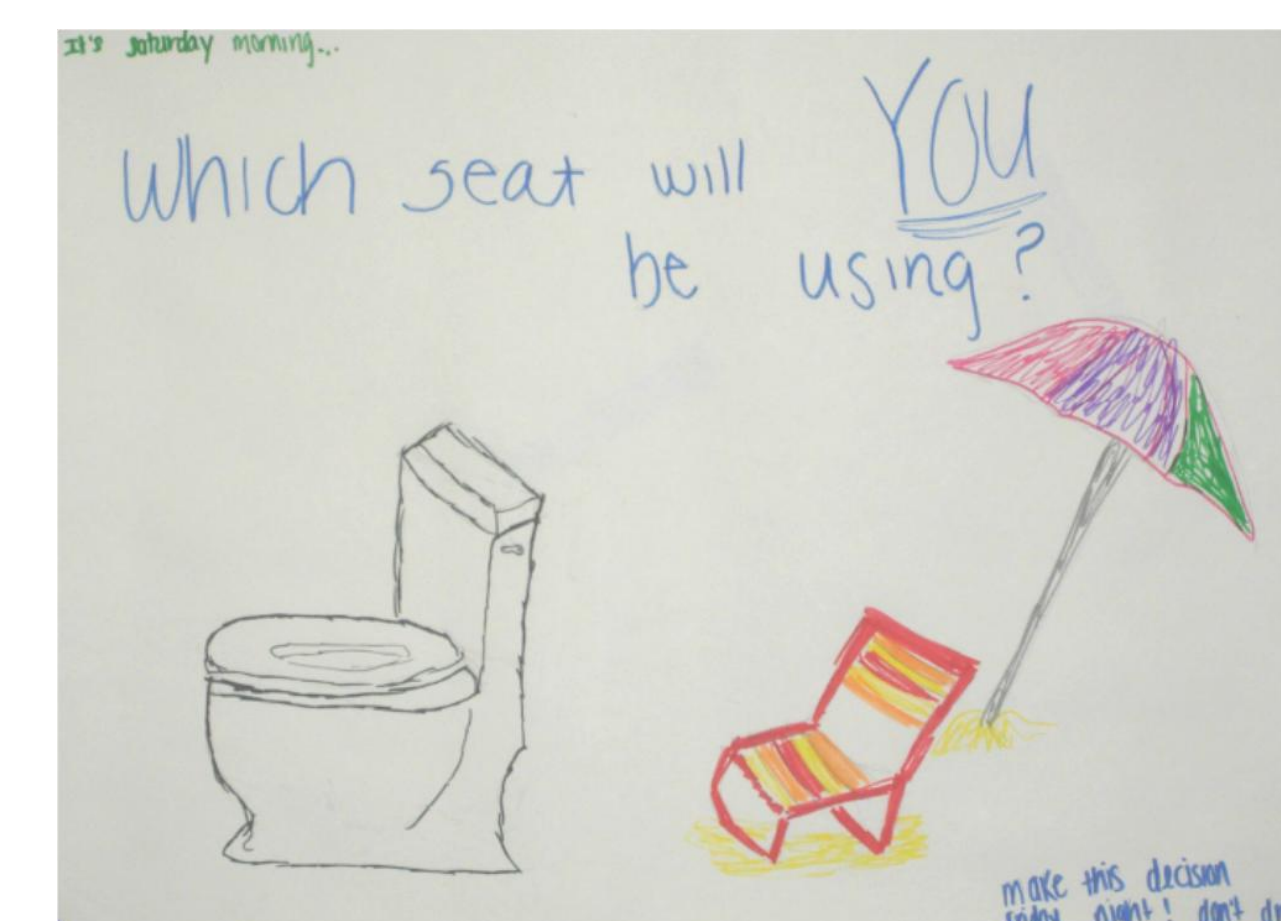
	High school	College	$\chi^2$
1. Slogans	49 (100%)	23 (100%)	-
2. Consequences	49 (100%)	23 (100%)	-
a. Negative conseq.	33 (67.35%)	14 (60.87%)	.80
Alcohol-related ill.	20 (60.61%)	6 (42.86%)	1.47
Drunk driving	7 (21.21%)	4 (28.57%)	-
Sexual encounter	2 (6.06%)	6 (42.86%)	-
Emotional conseq.	10 (30.30%)	7 (50%)	.87
Death	11 (33.33%)	2 (14.29%)	-
Physical conseq.	13 (39.39%)	1 (7.14%)	-
b. Positive conseq.	3 (6.12%)	3 (13.04%)	-
c. Negative-positive comparison	13 (26.53%)	6 (26.09%)	.01
3. Before-after depict.	10 (20.41%)	0 (0%)	-

Differences between high school and college student posters not statistically significant for any of the content categories

## Future Directions

- Examine how other adolescents perceive adolescent-created alcohol counter-advertisements and assess the effectiveness of such counter-advertisements
- Explore adolescent engagement in message creation leading to self-persuasion and increased resistance to other alcohol-related influences (and therefore decreased alcohol use)
- Media literacy provides a useful venue for engaging youth in critical examination of persuasive alcohol advertising and in creation of alcohol counter-advertisements

## Example Posters



## Discussion

- Long-term effects (such as death) may not resonate as well with adolescents compared to more immediate and short-term outcomes of alcohol use (such as vomiting, hangover)
- College students identified some different outcomes including unwanted sexual encounters
- Negative consequences dominated, with positive consequences of not using alcohol underutilized
- Image-related slogans used more frequently than stand-alone slogans

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth (2010). Youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television, 2001-2009. Available at [http://www.cammy.org/bin/u/r/CAMYReport2001\\_2009.pdf](http://www.cammy.org/bin/u/r/CAMYReport2001_2009.pdf). Accessed January 17, 2012.
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