

**The Pennsylvania State University  
Prevention Research Center – Turrisi Lab  
SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

**KIMBERLY A. MALLET, Ph.D.**

- 1) **Mallett, K.A., Turrisi, R., Larimer, M.E., & Mastroleo, N.R. (2009). Have I had one drink too many? Assessing gender differences in misperceptions of intoxication among college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, In press.**

- A substantial percentage of college students (20%) believe they are sober when they are actually legally intoxicated.
- Females who report drinking more alcohol at parties are at a higher risk of underestimating intoxication if they consumed 4-5 drinks. This finding is somewhat alarming given the significant risks for women of engaging in heavy drinking and risky behaviors such as drinking games and pre-gaming.
- Based on previous work, we know individuals who make more underestimation errors are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as heavy episodic drinking (Turrisi and Wiersma, 1999), driving after drinking (Turrisi and Jaccard, 1991), and experience other types of consequences (Mallett et al., 2006).
- Interventions such as social norms marketing campaigns that advertise “most students drink 4 or fewer drinks when they party” might be sending the message that 4 drinks is a safe upper limit. While a large number of students would not be intoxicated after consuming 4 drinks (assuming they are spread out over time), a substantial portion of female students would be intoxicated (based on weight and gender). In these instances the information delivered in a social norms marketing campaign may in fact be harmful to individuals unable to remain below a safe BAC after consuming 4 drinks.

- 2) **Mallett, K. A., Bachrach, R., & Turrisi, R. (2009). Examining the unique influence of interpersonal and intrapersonal drinking perception on alcohol consumption and negative consequences in college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 70, 178-185.**

- The study found when several types of norms (typical college student drinking and closest friend’s drinking) and internal factors (drinking drinking intentions and attitudes) were examined together, norms based on typical college student drinking did not have a significant impact on how much a student decides to drink.
- Interventions aimed at college students (e.g., BASICS or social-norms campaigns) often ask participants how much they think the “typical college student on their

## SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

campus drinks on a weekly basis” and then participants’ answers are compared with the actual campus drinking norms. Correcting participants’ misperceptions about other students’ drinking is thought to result in a reduction in participants’ alcohol consumption. However, the present study found participants’ perceptions of “typical” college students’ drinking rates were not significantly related to drinking outcomes when compared to their perceptions of closest friend’s drinking and internal factors.

- Individuals who have favorable attitudes toward drinking intend to drink to the point of intoxication, and estimate they can drink large amounts of alcohol before becoming drunk may socialize with individuals who engage in similar drinking patterns and share the same drinking values. Studies have shown that direct influences of peers (e.g., modeling, drink offers) are powerful predictors of drinking and related problems (Wood et al., 2001) and may counteract normative based interventions that reference the “typical college student.” These individuals may be the most difficult to change regarding their drinking, yet they are in the most need of an efficacious intervention.
- 3) **Mallett, K, Bachrach, R., & Turrisi, R. (2008). Are all negative consequences truly negative? Assessing variations among college students’ perceptions of alcohol related consequences. *Addictive Behaviors*, 33, 1375-1381.**
- The study evaluated how students actually perceive alcohol related consequences they personally experienced and found students perceived several consequences as neutral and positive experiences.
  - Less than half of individuals who experienced hangovers, waking up unintentionally in someone else’s bed, or left a party alone rated these consequences as negative. Furthermore, nearly half of individuals who reported blackouts, physical, and/or social embarrassment as a result of drinking described the experience as neutral or positive. While some consequences were primarily endorsed as negative (e.g. alcohol citations, belongings stolen, received a lower grade) no consequence was unanimously perceived as negative.
  - Typically it is assumed in the context of feedback-based interventions (i.e. BASICS) that consequences are perceived as negative and serve as a deterrent for future drinking. However, individuals may not take steps to reduce the risk of experiencing consequences they do not find aversive, and therefore may not change certain patterns of drinking. Therefore, it is important to fully understand students’ perceptions of consequences before incorporating them into an intervention.
- 4) **Mallett, K.A., Lee, C.M., Neighbors, C., Larimer, M.E., & Turrisi, R. (2006). Do we learn from our mistakes? An examination of the impact of negative alcohol related consequences on college students’ drinking patterns and perceptions. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 67, 269-276.**
- The study examined how past consequences were related to students’ perceptions of how much alcohol they would have to consume to risk

## SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

experiencing the same consequences in the future (experiencing a hangover, vomiting, regretted sex, and blackouts).

- Students reported they could consume more alcohol before experiencing the identical consequences compared to the number of drinks they consumed when they last experienced each of the consequences. For example, individuals who had a hangover after 5 drinks reported needing to consume 7 drinks before they would have a hangover in the future.
- In sum, this study suggests that students who experience drinking consequences may be at high risk for experiencing future consequences based on their underestimation of how many drinks it might actually take to experience the consequences. It also suggests that students might think that there are contributing factors in addition to the amount of alcohol they consume that might be contributing to them experiencing consequences.

## CAITLIN ABAR

1) **Abar, C.C., Abar, B., & Turrisi, R. (2009). The impact of parental modeling and permissibility on alcohol use and experienced negative drinking consequences in college. *Addictive Behaviors*, 34, 542-547.**

- Parental modeled use of alcohol and parental permissibility of alcohol use are consistent predictors of teen drinking behaviors and experienced negative consequences.
- The limits parents set for their teens with regard to alcohol consumption are particularly important. Parents in this study who permitted relatively high levels of teen drinking in high school were more likely to have children who engaged in much riskier drinking behaviors than children whose parents permitted relatively low levels of teen drinking.
- Complete disapproval was more protective than approving of alcohol consumption at any level. Findings from the current study do not support the European Drinking Model, or the notion that parental permissibility of alcohol use (even in small supervised amounts) is likely to reduce later (college) misuse.

2) **Abar, C., & Turrisi, R. (2008). How important are parents during the college years? A longitudinal perspective of *indirect* influences parents yield on their college teens' alcohol use. *Addictive Behaviors*, 33, 1360-1368.**

- Parenting behaviors have a direct impact on their teens' selection of friends during college, even after accounting for the influence of one's prior drinking and one's previous friends (high school).
- The more students reported their parents knowing about the ways in which they spent their free time and the more they report their parents try to know about their free time activities, the less an individual tended to associate with heavy drinking peers in college and the less they drank themselves. This pathway represents a

## SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

legitimate mechanism by which parents can and do maintain influence on their teens while they are away at college.

- Findings suggest that parents and prevention programs should work toward actively increasing parental knowledge and monitoring of teen behaviors, while fostering parental disapproval of alcohol misuse. This study shows that efforts of this kind at the high school level will impact college behaviors.
- 3) **Turrisi, R., Abar, C., Mallett, K. A., & Jaccard, J. (2009). An examination of the mediation effects of cognitive and attitudinal factors on a parent intervention to reduce college drinking. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, In press.**
- The data suggest the intervention affects parental knowledge, communication skills, and behaviors, which in turn, have an impact on teen attitudes toward drinking and non-drinking activities, and college drinking tendencies.
  - Results provide evidence to suggest the parent intervention potentially did impinge on these constructs, which in turn, had an influence on both weekend and heavy drinking outcomes. The findings show promise in altering core attitudes and cognitions that affect decision making as far as what activities teens may choose to engage in while at college.
  - This study revealed evidence to support the notion that when an alternative is made more favorable, perhaps as a result of new information or a change in belief the individual might perform a different behavior

## ANNE RAY

- 1) **Ray, A., Turrisi, R., Abar, B., & Peters, K. (2009). Social-cognitive correlates of protective drinking behaviors and alcohol-related consequences in college students. *Addictive Behaviors*, 34, 911-917.**
- Controlling for how much students consume, the more students engage in protective behaviors (e.g., pacing one's drinks, setting limits on the number of drinks they consume, walking home with friends after drinking, diluting one's BAC by drinking water in between drinks), the less likely they are to experience alcohol-related consequences.
  - One's attitude towards engaging in protective behaviors (i.e., how much they like them) is positively associated with using them. Thus, the more students like them, the more they do them.
  - The degree to which students like protective drinking behaviors is influenced by: their self efficacy (i.e., how easy it is for them to engage in the behavior), their normative beliefs (i.e., the degree to which they perceive their friends approve), and their perception of whether or not the behaviors are effective in avoiding harm. Thus, the easier it is for students to use them, the more they perceive their friends approve of using them, and the more they perceive they are effective, the more they like them, and in turn, actually use them.

## SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- 2) **Turrisi, R., Larimer, M.E., Mallett, K. A., Kilmer, J. R., Ray, A. E., Mastroleo, N. R., Geisner, I. M., Grossbard, J., Lostutter, T., Tollison, S., & Montoya, H. (2009). A randomized clinical trial evaluating a combined alcohol intervention for high-risk college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 70, 555-567.**
- In this study, different interventions were tested among a first-year college students at two universities: Penn State and University of Washington:
    - One group received a peer-led BASICS intervention only (similar in theory to what is done at the health center with mandated students) during the first few weeks of the fall semester
    - One group received a parent intervention only – their parents were sent a handbook about college student alcohol use during the summer prior to the fall semester and asked to communicate with their teens about the information in the book
    - One group received both the peer-led BASICS and parent interventions
    - One group received no intervention
  - Results of a spring follow-up assessment revealed that the combined intervention work best to reduce alcohol use (i.e., peak BAC in the past 30 days, number of drinks consumed per weekend, and number of drinks consumed per week) and related consequences.
  - The BASICS only intervention also significantly reduced one's peak BAC and number of drinks consumed per weekend.
  - The research also show benefits of the combined intervention for individuals who initiate alcohol consumption well before starting college (e.g., as early as ages 15 or younger) or as late as when start college. Thus, it is never too early or too late to implement the combination of parents and BASICS.