

Alcohol Dominates in Pop Music Lyrics: Study

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FRIDAY, Aug. 30 (HealthDay News) -- Today's popular music often celebrates excessive drinking as a fun, beneficial pastime, even highlighting select booze brands in many lyrics, a new study finds.

Hip-hop, rap, R&B and country songs included references to Patron tequila, Hennessy cognac, Grey Goose vodka, and Jack Daniel's whiskey, which is featured in half of the songs that mentioned alcohol, the study found. But rock songs had no alcohol references at all.

Music can have a particularly powerful influence, the researchers said, because American teens spend about two and a half hours each 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," study co-author David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said in a university news release. The findings were published online this month in *Substance Use & Misuse*.

Overall, Jernigan's team found that when drinking is mentioned in a pop song, it is almost always done so in a positive light. The downside of excessive drinking -- alcoholism, violence, incarceration -- is rarely portrayed.

The study was based on an analysis of lyrics from hits on *Billboard's* most popular song list for 2009, 2010 and 2011. The researchers from Johns Hopkins and Boston University School of Public Health examined 720 songs for references to alcohol and alcohol brands.

Nearly a quarter (23 percent) of the songs mentioned alcohol. Of these, 6.4 percent mentioned specific alcohol brands. Booze references were especially frequent in rap, hip-hop and R&B songs, with nearly 38 percent of those songs mentioning some form of alcohol.

About 22 percent of the country songs had alcohol references, as did about 15 percent of pop songs. Most often pop and country songs mentioned whiskey and beer brands.

The lyrics of those that did have alcohol references often tied excessive drinking to sex, the authors noted. For example, the hip-hop song "One More Drink" by Ludacris (with T-Pain) contains the lines: "Was taking shots and tipping the bartender/Surrender to the woman end up bringing me home/Cause she started looking better every shot of Patron."

Drinking to get drunk and underage drinking was also encouraged. In the Asher Roth rap hit "I Love College," college freshmen (who are typically young to drink legally) are urged to "Chug chug chug chug chug chug."

The researchers note that 14 long-term studies have found that exposing young people to alcohol marketing in mass media boosts the likelihood they will start drinking or increase their drinking.

What's more, "a small number of alcohol brands and beverages appear to make frequent appearances in popular music," Dr. Michael Siegel, a professor of community health sciences at the Boston University of Public Health, said in the news release.

However, the promotion of heavy drinking in pop music and elsewhere could have tragic, unforeseen consequences, the authors said, noting that there were at least 4,700 alcohol-related deaths involving underage young people in the United States each year.

More information

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides more information on [children and media](#).

-- Mary Elizabeth Dallas

SOURCE: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, news release, Aug. 28, 2013; Aug. 23, 2013, *Substance Use & Misuse*

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