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DOES ALCOHOL EDUCATION WORK? THE EVALUATION OF A UNIVERSITY ALCOHOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop and evaluate an alcohol awareness program at Indiana University during the 1975 academic year based upon the concept of responsible drinking. Methods include the development of a training manual, a film *Booze and You's*, 5 values clarification discussion exercises and the *Student Alcohol Questionnaire* (SAQ) for this campus program. An experimental and control group of students in one large residential units were invited to participate in the study. The SAQ was administered before the program. After an hour and forty-five minutes of film and discussion, both experimental and control groups were administered an alternative form of the alcohol knowledge scale on questionnaire. After a three month period, students in both the experimental and control groups were again administered the SAQ. Due to transfers and attrition 50 students in the experimental group and 33 students in the control group completed all of the research conditions including the three month post-test. The results revealed a significant difference in terms of knowledge of alcohol in the experimental group both immediately and three months post-test time periods. It was concluded that a film, and values clarification exercises with trained peer leaders was an effective method of imparting knowledge of alcohol.

INTRODUCTION

Indiana university, similar to other colleges and universities, perceived a an increase in drinking and rowdy behavior. Students appear to drink a variety of alcoholic beverages for diverse reasons. Casual and social drinking is common but perhaps more disturbing is the frequency in which these young adults often turn to alcohol for the expressed purpose of getting lost, high, or loaded. When getting drunk is the primary objective, drinking can often result in some type of anti-social behavior such as hostility, aggression, or a general loss of usual inhibitions

After consultation with a representative of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), which was seeking and encouraging alcohol education programs on the college campus, the Division of Student Services, at Indiana University, created the Alcohol Education Task Force composed of students, faculty, counselors, physicians, and administrators. The Task Force was charged with the responsibility of developing an alcohol awareness program for college students. Task Force members agreed upon five criteria for such an educational experience:

1. The program must contain materials that are factually accurate regarding alcoholic beverages and alcohol use.
2. The program must emphasize responsible drinking behaviors rather than advocating abstinence. A decision not to drink, however, should be considered as a legitimate alternative. Positive as well as negative consequences of drinking should be explored.
3. The program should include a cognitive base and then move toward affective considerations. It should demonstrate cultural and social dimensions of alcohol use but, also, provide students an opportunity to focus clearly upon the role of alcohol in relation to their personal objectives, life styles, and values.
4. The program must be designed so that it could be presented by paraprofessionals without the necessity to have professional consultants in attendance.
5. The program must be constructed and presented in a way that is intellectually and socially acceptable to young adults.

Thus A program was developed that contained a 13 minute film, *Booze and You's*, five values clarification exercises, a training manual for student resident assistants, and the development of the *Student Alcohol Questionnaire*.

METHODS

For evaluation of this program a test-retest method with an experimental and control group was utilized. A questionnaire was developed and its face validity and reliability established which is discussed elsewhere. In September 1975, students in one residence center were asked to volunteer for an educational research program regarding "topics of concern to college students such as drinking and human sexuality." Resident assistants were trained as peer leaders and

educators. Student residents who indicated an initial interest in the program were divided equally into an experimental and control group. Both groups were simultaneously administered the *Student Alcohol Questionnaire* (SAQ). The questionnaire contained 11 demographic items which have been found to be related to alcohol consumption such as sex, religious affiliation, parental drinking patterns, and year in school. There were 23 drinking behavior questions and 36 questions concerning information about alcoholic beverages and popular drinking myths to which the student responded True, False or Don't Know.

After the pre-test questionnaire was administered, the 13 minute *Booze and You's* film was shown to the experimental group and *About Sex*, a 1972 Planned Parenthood 22 minute film on human sexuality, was shown to the control group. Students in both groups were then randomly assigned to a small group of ten to thirteen students. Small group participants in the control program received five values clarification exercises containing human sexuality content led by a trained Planned Parenthood volunteer. After an hour and forty-five minutes of discussion, both groups were administered an alternative form of the alcohol knowledge questionnaire. After a three month period, students in both the experimental and control groups were again administered the SAQ. Due to transfers and attrition 50 students in the experimental group and 33 students in the control group completed all of the research conditions including the three month post-test.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

To ascertain if the experimental and control groups were similar populations, the demographic and behavior items from each group were compared by chi-square analysis using a SPSS program. There were no significant differences found between the experimental and control groups on any demographic item, their initial alcohol use behaviors, or their knowledge about alcohol.

The various demographic items of the total population of 83 students produced the following profile: 98% were white; 84% were freshmen and sophomore; 59% were from communities over 50 thousand; 60% were from home backgrounds in which their parents drank at least once a year; 89% had religious affiliations which permitted drinking; and 49% were male and 51% were female.

Drinking Patterns

Of those students who reported drinking once a month or more, 76% drank beer, 31% drank wine, and 73% drank hard liquor. Of students drinking at least once a week, 46% drank beer, 3% drank wine and 26% drank distilled beverages. "Heavy drinking" is defined by the Research Triangle Institute as consuming five or more drinks at any one time at least once a week. Of the 46% of students who drank beer at least once a week, 37% reported drinking at least five glasses or cans at any one time which would be considered heavy drinking.

Of all individuals (86%) who drink beer at least once a year, 20% reported that they drank over five cans or glasses and 63% indicated they drank from one to four cans at any one time. Of all students reporting they drink wine at least once a year (69%), 16% consumed five or more

glasses and 57% consumed from one to four glasses of wine at any one time. Of students who reported drinking hard liquor at least once a year, 27% drank at least five or more glasses and 75% drank between one and four glasses at any one time. About 6% of all students did not drink beer, 17% did not drink wine, and 6% did not drink hard liquors at all. Only 5% of the students adhered to abstinence of all types of alcohol beverages.

Alcohol Information

A t-test revealed no significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of knowledge about alcohol as measured by the SAQ between the experimental and control groups (See Table I). A significant difference, however, in mean scores between the experimental and the control groups for the post test administered immediately after the experimental and control treatments ($p < .05$) was found. There was also a significant difference in means between scores for the three month post test ($p < .05$). This analysis indicated that the students in the experimental group had gained significant knowledge about alcohol as measured by the SAQ immediately after the program and had retained this knowledge after a lapse time of three months. Apparently the program was effective in increasing knowledge about alcohol as well as dispelling misinformation concerning popular myths associated with drinking.

After the experimental treatment, participating students were asked to write anonymously their opinions and feelings about the program. The majority of reactions were most favorable and students found the experience to be not only intellectually and socially acceptable but even enjoyable.

Table I

Means and Standard Deviations of Cognitive Scores on the Student Alcohol Questionnaire for Students between the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Treatment	Pretest				Post-test				Three Month Post-Test			
	x	SD	df	t	x	SD	df	t	x	SD	df	t
Experimental Group (N=50)	20.28	5.34	81	0.29	28.02	3.62	81	7.52*	25.76	4.00	81	4.61*
Control Group (N = 33)	20.64	5.54			20.91	4.93			20.70	6.22		

* $p < .001$

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A test of Indiana University’s *Booze and You* alcohol education program revealed a significant difference between on knowledge of alcohol between the pre-and post-test immediately after the program and also three months later compared to a control group. It was concluded that teaching responsible use of alcohol through values clarification exercises and factual information imbedded in a comic film concerning alcohol appears to be a successful alcohol education method for cognitive information that is acceptable to college students at this university.