

LIKE A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER: AN ECOLOGICAL MOMENTARY INTERVENTION TARGETING NEW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ALCOHOL USE

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Introduction and Aims: Orientation Week (O'Week) has a noble aim. However, it is the period where new students consume more alcohol than any other time and establish a drinking pattern that may continue into the academic year. Last year, we demonstrated that a pilot text-message based Ecological Momentary Intervention (EMI) directed solely during O'Week could reduce alcohol use during both O'Week and the academic year among women (not men). This year, we aimed to test a stronger version of this intervention with more students from two first-year residential colleges, one with a reputation as a heavy drinking college (College 1) and the other with a light drinking reputation (College 2).

Design and Methods: Participants were 292 (124 men) full time first-year university students from two residential colleges. Participants were randomly assigned to either a control or intervention condition. Both conditions reported their alcohol use the week before university, during O'Week, and on weekends during the academic year. Participants in the intervention condition also received two text-messages a night during O'Week highlighting the social impacts of drinking.

Results: Participants in the intervention condition at College 2, but not College 1, consumed significantly fewer standard drinks during O'Week ($M=11.9$ vs. $M=18.3$; $t(77)= 2.319$, $p= 0.024$). At both colleges, participants in the intervention condition consumed significantly fewer weekend drinks throughout the academic year compared to the control group (College 1 $M=8.5$ vs. $M=11.2$; $t(211)= 2.381$, $p= 0.018$; College 2 $M=3.1$ vs. $M=7.4$; $t(77)= 2.331$, $p= 0.024$).

Discussion and Conclusions: This study offers more evidence for the effectiveness of EMIs to reduce alcohol use and highlights the importance of intervening during O'Week.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Universities should aim to implement intervention efforts during O'Week.

Implications for Translational Research: EMI interventions have the potential to reduce problematic drinking in the wider community.

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