Identifying Problem Drinking:
Social Media Alcohol Displays by Community College Students

Kole Binger, BS[1]; Reese Hyzer, BS[1]; Brad Kerr, MS[1];
Melissa Lewis, PHD[2]; Anne M. Fairlie, PHD[3]; Megan Moreno, MD, MPH, MSEd[1]
University of Wisconsin – Madison[1], University of North Texas[2], University of Washington[3]

INTRODUCTION

- Problem drinking is a major public health issue among college students

- Previous research has focused on screening and interventions for four-year university students, but less is known about community college (CC) students

- Social media may provide a way to identify students engaging in problem drinking and direct them towards interventions

PURPOSE

This study sought to understand the prevalence and frequency of Facebook and Instagram alcohol displays among community college students.
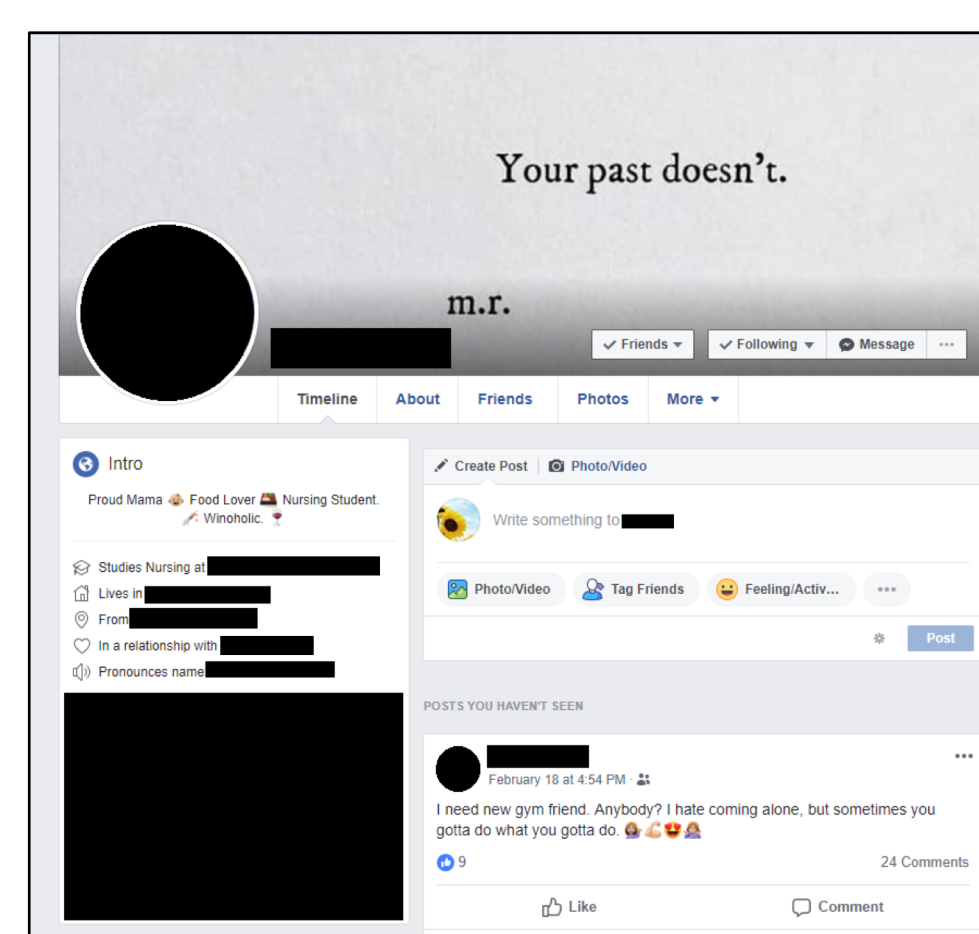
METHODS

This study was approved by relevant IRBs.

Setting and Subjects

- Participants recruited from four community colleges in the Northwest and Midwest

- Eligible participants:
  - 18-29 years old
  - Current alcohol use (in the past month)
  - At least one episode of heavy episodic drinking in the past year
  - Facebook profile owner (PO)
    - At least monthly use
  - English speaking

- After informed consent, researchers created a friendship link with participants on Facebook and followed them on Instagram

Content Analysis

- Participants' Facebook and Instagram profiles were reviewed for a six-month period

- Alcohol displays were identified using an adapted version of a previously validated codebook

Example Facebook Profile

METHODS CONT.

Codebook Variables

Alcohol Display Variables

Variable	Definition
General Alcohol Display (GA)	Post references alcohol but does not meet the above Intoxication/Problem Drinking criteria
Intoxication/ Problem Drinking (I/PD)	Post references CRAFFT criteria*, alcoholism, intoxication, or binge drinking

*Set of clinical criteria for assessing problem alcohol use among adolescents

Types of Social Media Content Variables

Variable	Definition
About	PO information in the About section of the profile
Likes section*	PO likes a Facebook page
PO text only post*	PO writes status update on timeline without any multimedia
PO multimedia	PO uploads original multimedia to their timeline or photo uploads
PO share*	PO shares an existing post on their timeline
Friend multimedia	Friend uploads original multimedia to PO timeline or tags PO in multimedia
Friend wall post*	Friend posts or shares a post on PO's timeline
PO comment	PO writes a comment in response to any item in any location on the profile
Friend comment**	Friend writes comment in response to any item in any location on the profile
Timeline PO Like*	PO likes any content on their Timeline

*Facebook only, **Instagram only

Analysis

- Descriptive statistics

RESULTS

Participant Information

- 164 Students total
- 22.7 years old (SD = 3.40)
- 114 (70%) with Instagram accounts

Demographic Variable	Number (%)
Gender	
Female	134 (81.7%)
Male	28 (14.6%)
School	
Northwestern CC	110 (67.0%)
Midwestern CC	54 (32.9%)
Ethnicity	
Caucasian/White	120 (73.1%)
Hispanic/Latino	19 (11.5%)
More than one	19 (11.5%)
Black/African American	2 (1.2%)
Asian	2 (1.2%)
Native American/Alaskan Native	1 (0.6%)

Social Media Use

Average Number of Social Media Posts

- 45.9 status updates (SD = 80.7)
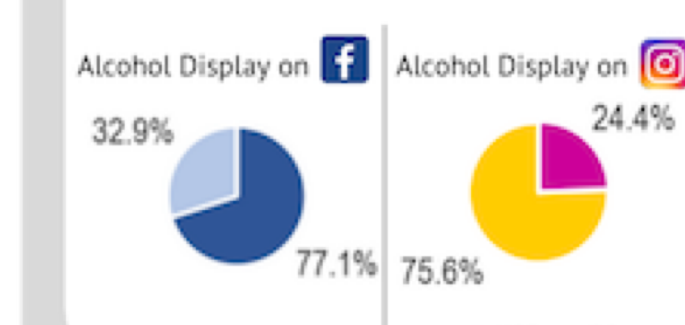- 20.2 photos (SD = 40.0)

Alcohol Displays

Average Number of Alcohol Displays

- 8.5 (SD = 13.8)
- 1.1 (SD = 2.7)

Participants with at Least One Alcohol Display

Alcohol Display on Facebook: yes 32.9%, no 77.1%
Alcohol Display on Instagram: yes 24.4%, no 75.6%

Example Facebook post with I/PD Display

Example Instagram post with GA Display

Participants with General Alcohol Display and Intoxication/Problem Drinking Displays

Variable	Facebook	Instagram
General Alcohol Display	124 (75.6%)	38 (33.5%)
Intoxication/ Problem Drinking	70 (42.7%)	4 (3.5%)

Participants with Alcohol Displays of each Type of Social Media Content

Variable	Facebook	Instagram
About	3 (1.8%)	0
Likes section	80 (48.8%)	-
PO text only post	25 (15.2%)	-
PO photo	46 (28.0%)	35 (30.7%)
PO share	58 (35.4%)	-
Friend photo	33 (20.1%)	4 (3.5%)
Friend wall post	51 (31.1%)	-
PO comment	31 (18.9%)	4 (3.5%)
Friend comment	-	3 (2.6%)
Timeline PO Like	65 (39.6%)	-

DISCUSSION

Main Findings

- Contrary to some reports of declining alcohol references by adolescents and young adults on Facebook, most participants referenced alcohol on Facebook at least once in six months

- Alcohol references were uncommon on Instagram

- Most commonly, participants displayed alcohol through interaction with other users' existing content

Implications

- Efforts to identify and prevent problem alcohol use among community college students via social media should consider focusing on Facebook

- Research into prevalence of alcohol references on social media should be population-specific and consider different types of social media content

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CONTATCT INFORMATION

Kole Binger — kbinger@pediatrics.wisc.edu
Reese Hyzer — reese.hyzer@wisc.edu
Megan Moreno — mamoreno@pediatrics.wisc.edu

SMAHRT
SOCIAL MEDIA & ADOLESCENT HEALTH RESEARCH TEAM