Alcohol in the Environment:

South Bronx Community Report

Healthy CUNY Initiative
CUNY School of Public Health
at Hunter College
and
Church of God of Prophesy, Bronx, NY
Background

- Alcohol is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States.

- Excessive alcohol use worsens:
  - violence
  - chronic disease
  - accidental injuries
  - sexual assault
  - mental health problems (CDC, 2014).
Background

- Less advantaged neighborhoods experience more negative consequences of drinking, compared to more affluent neighborhoods (Jones-Webb & Karriker-Jaffe, 2013).

- Alcohol is one of the most readily available consumer products. Many communities, especially in low-income areas, are saturated with alcohol outlets (Community Guide, 2013).

- Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States, more than tobacco and illicit drugs (CDC, 2014).
Just over half of NYC adults drink

When asked, 57% of adults report drinking in the last 30 days
- Of those who drink, almost half (43%) binge drink

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009-10; Community Health Survey 2010
Binge drinking varies by neighborhood

Key:

- 6.7–12.4%
- 12.6–16.2%
- 17.2–32.1%

Source: Community Health Survey, 2010
One in three NYC high school youth drink

When asked, 31% report having 1+ drink in the last 30 days

- Of those who drink, almost half (44%) report binge drinking

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2011, Survey of NYC public high school students, grades 9-12
Background

- The South Bronx has a lower overall rate of drinking (49% / 57%)

- but twice the number of alcohol related hospitalizations as the rest of NYC (SPARCS, 2012)

*Source: NYC Community Health Survey 2012*
Introduction

Who?
- CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College
  + Youth Group at Church of God of Prophesy
  (12 participants, 3 > 18 years, 9 < 18 years old)
- Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

What?
- Collaborative research project about alcohol in the community, with youth members of the Church of God of Prophesy, South Bronx
- Not a comprehensive report, but a snapshot based on the viewpoint of a group of concerned community members
Introduction

How?

1. PhotoVoice
   • Members of the youth group took photos showing harms associated with alcohol in their community
   • Focus on environmental harms – how alcohol affects their community - rather than individual consequences
   • Group members meet before and after to discuss issues, photos, themes, and solutions
   • Not a comprehensive report: A snapshot

2. Environmental Audit
   • Members of the youth group collected data on:
     o Locations where alcohol is served or sold
     o Concentration, placement, and marketing techniques of alcohol ads
Ecological Framework of Health

Societal
- Cultural Norms of Drinking
- Weak economic safety nets
- Social Inequality

Community
- Crime Levels
- Policing
- Unemployment
- Outlet Density
- Advertising

Relationship
- Friends, family who drink
- Family environment
- Social Support

Individual
- Lifestyle / Behaviors
- Psychological Disorders
- History of Trauma
Findings

Following are themes that the authors have identified through group discussions about the photographs and the issue of environmental alcohol harms. Quotes are included to illustrate community members’ points of view.
Community Strengths

• Strong community ties, social unity:
  – Youth group meets weekly and connects socially outside of the group (school, social media)
  – Families are long-time members of the church

"This is a community, it's a family. We know that we all have had similar upbringings and similar challenges and trials, and I think that's something that holds us together."

• Leadership
  – Youth group leader is a committed church member, activist and advisor to the young people in the community

• Vision
  – Enthusiastic group of young people with new ideas and insight
Environmental Assessment

• Youth group learned to assess community for:
  – presence of alcohol ads and outlets
  – marketing tactics geared toward youth (4 Ps - price, placement, product and promotion)

• Findings/Overall youth perception of alcohol in the community:
  – Alcohol outlets not densely clustered in this community but there is a strong presence of alcohol use and alcohol promotion
  – Sales to minors and before noon on Sundays are common
Photographs

Theme 1:

*Personal responsibility*

**vs.**

* environmental influence

Making the Connection Between Alcohol and What We See in the Community
Effects of drinking are visible in the streets.
"It’s very easy to become homeless. If you're a teenager, that person holding that bottle, they go drinking, they come home they get in an argument with their parents, his parents kick him out. "
"It can happen to anyone . . . He was probably one of the top, smartest people."
Theme 2: Crime

drunk driving, vandalism, sexual assault

“It makes you think the rules don’t apply here”.
"I think that when you're in a neighborhood where people are more likely to drink you have to be careful”.

“There’s a tunnel on Fordham Road right by Fordham University, and right underneath that tunnel there's a memorial of a young man who got killed”.
Broken glass on the sidewalk where cars have been broken into.
“When I was working in the summer day camp we walk our kids up and down this block to a school, past 167 and it’s 11 a.m., 10:30 a.m. .... and there’s always a drunk man. Every other day he’s there sitting by a deli, drunk....”

“But he has this young teenage girl. She looks no older than 13, and touching her...And there were a few other younger boys, probably teenagers, drinking too. And it’s really disgusting to watch. But I couldn’t take a picture of that.”
“More police is not the answer. Racial profiling makes people feel less safe, and causes stress”.
Theme 3: Underage drinking
- Influence of social media and authority figures
- Drinking in the school environment
- Adults buying for minors
Images of alcohol and excessive drinking posted by peers serve as free advertising.

“They want the likes.”

Social media is a powerful environmental influence for young people.
“It was an Instagram post. That’s my teacher. She knows good and well that we have her Instagram too.”
“[This] was on Snapchat. I was looking at random stuff. I wasn’t even looking up alcohol stuff.”
“I wanted to show people what the teens around us - what the typical picture or person is doing.”

“He’s under 18. Somebody had to buy it for him.”
Proposed Solutions from Youth Group at Church of God of Prophesy

- Directed counter-advertising campaign using social media
- Billboard featuring a celebrity community member getting a college degree
- Less police – take care of community – store owners & residents
- Video interview of community member who has been harmed by alcohol use
- Leverage strength of church community and prayer
Proposed Solutions from Larger Community

- State Liquor Authority (SLA) should increase Compliance Checks and Responsible Beverage Seller & Server (RBS) Training
- Directed social media campaign linked to advertising and sales to minors at specific locations in the neighborhood
- Disseminate this information to community board & committees
- Work with schools to identify potential policy changes to address drinking in schools
- Increase availability of youth-focused interventions
For more information about this report go to: www.cuny.edu/healthycuny and click on Alcohol Initiatives

For more information on alcohol-related harms:
Visit The Community Guide for information about strategies to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and related harms, including interventions to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.


Look at this infographic about alcohol’s hidden harms, from The Partnership for a Healthier New York City.
If you or someone you know needs help:

Visit Rethinking Drinking, Alcohol & Your Health for tips and tools you can use: rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/

Contact the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (OASAS): (800) 522-5353 or www.oasas.state.ny.us

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org

Call the New York State HOPELine at 1-877-8-HOPENY.

- Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for help with alcoholism, drug abuse and problem gambling.
- All calls are toll-free, anonymous and confidential.

Visit findtreatment.samhsa.gov to find an alcohol abuse treatment program.

