Evaluation of a Brief Online Alcohol Intervention for College Students: The Role of Race-Specific Normative Feedback, Racial/Ethnic Identity, and Readiness to Change

Date: July 1, 2019
Time: 1:00 PM
Place: 339 Stadler Hall

Abstract
Brief online interventions are effective for reducing alcohol use among college students. However, some research has suggested that these interventions may be less effective for African American students. This study evaluated the acceptability and efficacy of a widely available brief online alcohol intervention in a sample of African American and Caucasian college students. The aims of this study were to determine if providing race-specific normative feedback impacted treatment efficacy for African American students, and if this effect was moderated by racial/ethnic identity and readiness to change. Participants were 310 heavy drinking African American and Caucasian college students who completed baseline measures and were randomized to receive either the standard intervention with typical college student norms, a race-specific version of the intervention with race-specific norms, or an assessment only control condition. Participants completed follow-up assessment measures one-month after baseline. Results revealed that both interventions were less effective for African American students compared to Caucasian students on all drinking outcomes. African American students experienced greater reductions in alcohol-related problems in the race-specific intervention, although this effect was not present with regard to weekly drinking and peak drinking quantity. Racial/ethnic identity moderated this relationship, with African American students who were low in racial/ethnic identity reporting better outcomes in the race-specific intervention; African American students high in racial/ethnic identity evidenced better outcomes in the standard intervention. Readiness to change was not a significant moderator of intervention efficacy.

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