

# Teen binge drinking influenced by adults

April 10 2014, by David Stacey

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(Medical Xpress)—Teenage binge drinking is influenced heavily by the role of adults in endorsing and facilitating unsafe behaviours, according to a study by researchers at The University of Western Australia Business School.

The study, selected as one of three Highly Commended Papers of 2013 by the *Journal of Social Marketing*, examined Australian teenagers' discussions on various websites and online chat rooms.

Significantly, the study is among the first to use teenagers' online accounts of [alcohol](#) usage, in addition to being innovative by examining the role adults play in influencing teenage attitudes and behaviour around drinking and [binge drinking](#).

The teenagers' discussions highlighted by the study showed parents could be a positive influence on teenage drinking through setting expectations and exercising vigilance over teenagers' access to alcohol.

However, parents also impacted on drinking [behaviours](#) negatively by providing access to alcohol, being ignorant of their children's drinking, or showing tolerance to dangerous drinking behaviours. One teenager, for example, wrote: 'Our parents supply our grog, or else we raid the beer fridge.'

Older youths, siblings and police can also encourage [excessive drinking](#) through providing access to alcohol, modelling unsafe drinking behaviours, or showing tolerance.

One teenager wrote: '13 year olds like me really look up to the older kids - we watch what they drink, what they smoke, their piercings and stuff.'

The study's authors said strategies to target teenage binge drinking should include interventions aimed at influencing parents and other adults.

"As long as older people continue to supply alcohol and model and encourage its use among young people, efforts to change drinking behaviours among teenagers are unlikely to be successful," they said.

"The attitude- and behaviour-change process will... take some time and will require persistent [social marketing](#) programs to inform the population of the negative consequences of alcohol consumption for all drinkers, especially younger drinkers."

The researchers suggest increasing awareness of the risks associated with youth [drinking](#), and encouraging conversations between parents and their teenagers. This will, they hope, ensure adults refuse to supply alcohol to

teenagers, minimise their modelling of alcohol use, and more closely monitor the leisure activities of [young people](#).

These findings are reflected in current alcohol-related social marketing campaigns, including the 'Alcohol.Think Again Parents, Young People and Alcohol Campaign,' run by the Drug and Alcohol Office, the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

'Teens' blog accounts of the role of adults in youth [alcohol consumption](#)' was authored by Simone Pettigrew, Melanie Pescud, Wade Jarvis and Dave Webb and published in the Journal of Social Marketing in 2013.

**More information:** Simone Pettigrew, Melanie Pescud, Wade Jarvis, Dave Webb, (2013) "Teens' blog accounts of the role of adults in youth alcohol consumption", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 3 Iss: 1, pp.28 - 40. [DOI: 10.1108/20426761311297216](https://doi.org/10.1108/20426761311297216)

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