

The University of Wisconsin–Madison is a predominantly white institution operating on a framework that aims to promote diversity, ethnicity, and inclusivity. After reviewing campus alcohol data and soliciting student feedback, administrators explored the impact of the university's drinking culture on students of color. The Color of Drinking initiative collected data on how students of color experienced microaggressions—brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color—connectedness to the university, and environmental impacts around UW–Madison's drinking culture. Results from initiative will be shared and discussed with participants.



the COLOR of DRINKING

Background

In spring 2015, UW–Madison surveyed the impacts of the campus drinking culture on undergraduate students of color. Students of color have the highest rates of non-drinking, but the campus alcohol culture affects their academics and overall experience. Seventy-six percent of UW–Madison undergraduate students identify as white. Students of color perceive and experience alcohol on campus differently from their white peers. Despite students of color having higher rates of non-drinking, they experience problematic consequences of their peers' alcohol use. The success and opportunities for students of color are negatively affected by the implicit messages of bias and isolation that come from the campus alcohol culture.

Elements that contribute to UW–Madison's unique drinking culture

- ★ Wisconsin has the highest binge drinking rate for 18–44 year olds (CDC, 2012) in U.S.
- ★ The alcohol outlet density is 206 within a three mile radius of UW–Madison (Wisconsin Department of Revenue, 2015).
- ★ Wisconsin ranks in the top five states for lowest alcohol taxes on spirits, wine, and beer (Tax Foundation, 2014).

Methods

The survey was deployed March 27, 2015 and closed May 5, 2015. The target population for this study was undergraduate students of color age 18 and older. Students who received the survey identified themselves as one or more of the following races in their admissions demographics: White (European, European American, Middle Eastern), Black (African, African American), Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander). Students who identified as only white were not included. 4500 students were solicited and 490 responded. The response rate was 10.8 percent.

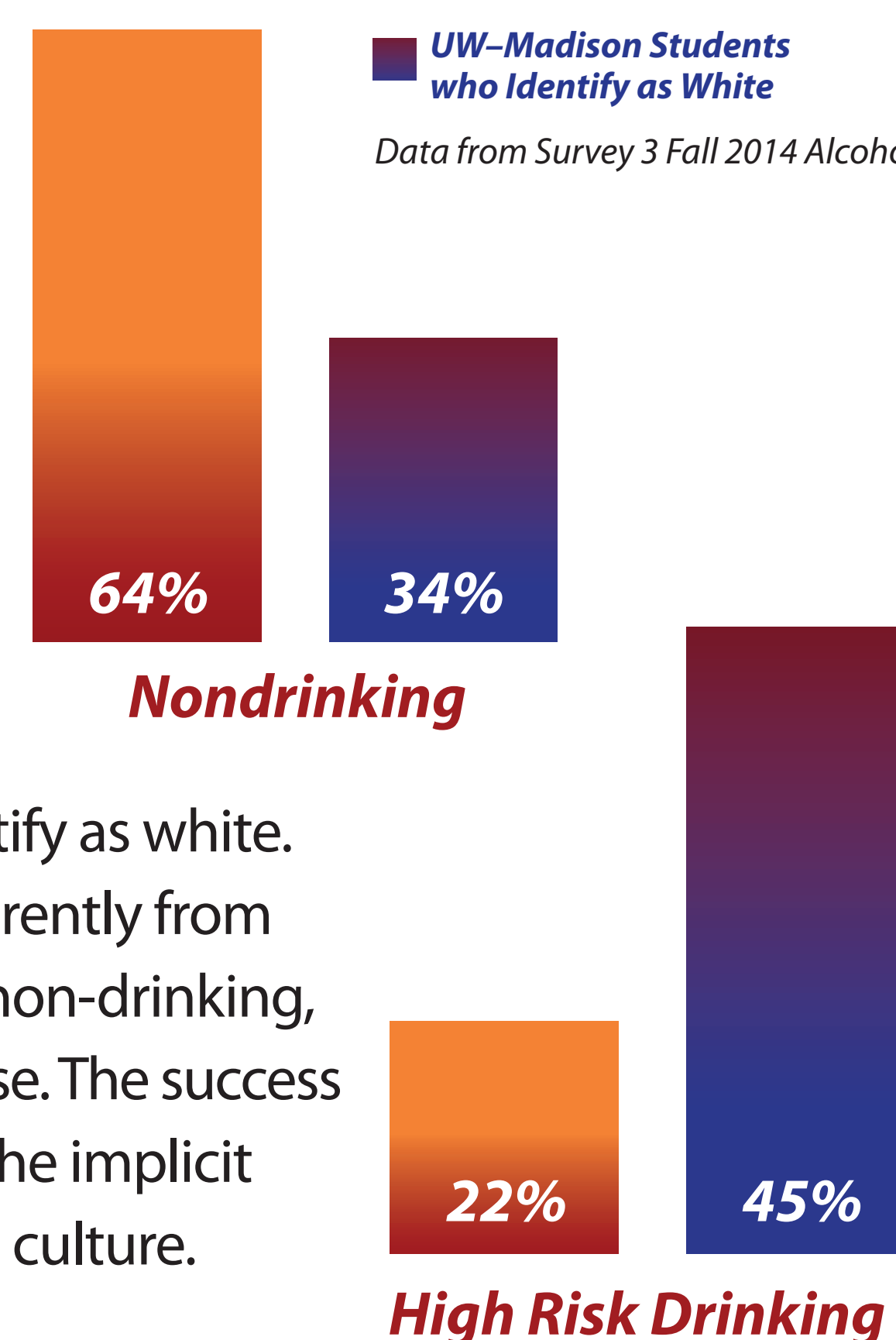
microaggressions

For this survey, microaggressions were defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (Sue et al. 2007).

The Color of Drinking: An Exploratory Study of the Impact of the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Alcohol Culture on Students of Color

Authors: Reonda Washington, MPH, CHES; Melissa Xiong, MSW; Jeanette Kowalik, PhD, MPH, MCHES

■ UW–Madison Students of Color
■ UW–Madison Students who Identify as White
Data from Survey 3 Fall 2014 AlcoholEdu



Results

65% 65 percent of students said UW–Madison's alcohol culture affected their campus experience, including academics, social group/socialization, self-esteem, safety, and overall perception of the institution.

62% 62 percent of students of color experienced microaggressions from other students at any time. These microaggressions included reports of students being called derogatory names and racial slurs, as well as reports of drunk students questioning the race and ethnicity of other students and making assumptions about their language, culture, race, or ethnicity based on physical appearance.

48% 48 percent of students of color said they experienced microaggressions from intoxicated students.

28% 28 percent of participants stated that the alcohol culture affected their academics and cited pressure from friends to drink instead of studying, missed lectures and discussions due to hangovers, and received poor grades as a result of excessive drinking.

Students reported

Classes felt less competitive as a result of the campus alcohol culture.

Academic settings felt uncomfortable because their professors and/or teaching assistants discussed drinking.

They avoided areas on campus including residence halls and streets with popular off-campus housing because of harassment by drunk people.

STRATEGIES

- Increase and publicize access to reporting incidents of racial harassment.
- Mandatory inclusivity and diversity training for all students (fall 2016).
- Promote bystander intervention standards across content areas (sexual assault, alcohol, and diversity/inclusivity).
- Support nondrinkers by providing spaces and alcohol-free events and activities.

IMPLICATIONS

- Focus on supporting low-risk and non-drinking populations.
- Examine the type of health environments that campus creates for students of color and non-drinkers.
- Need to increase research about the drinking habits of students of color

CONCLUSIONS

- Students of color report lower rates of drinking, but experience increased negative encounters with their white counterparts when they are drinking.
- These interactions have been linked to poor academic and quality of life outcomes in students of color.

The survey consisted of 4 sections, with a total of 24 questions.

Section 1
Demographic Information

Section 2
Participant's alcohol use
• Quantity, type, frequency

Section 3
Perceptions of the UW–Madison alcohol culture and its effect on participants
• Defining UW–Madison's drinking culture, impact on academics, impact on overall experience, places they avoided, and microaggressions experienced from students sober and intoxicated.

Section 4
Suggestions for UW–Madison to address alcohol culture and additional comments.