

# **The DRAM, Vol. 3(7) - Thirsty Thursdays: A problematic drinking phenomenon among college students?**

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Researchers have well-documented problematic alcohol use on college campuses (e.g., Presley & Cashin, 1996; Wechsler et al., 2000; Johnston et al., 2004). Consequently, understanding the etiology of problem drinking on college campuses is important to college administrators, health professionals, and alcohol researchers. This week's DRAM reviews an investigation of 'Thirsty Thursdays': the prevalence of excessive drinking on Thursdays, and its relation to class time on Fridays.

Wood and Rutledge (2007) surveyed 3,720 first-time college students at a large Midwestern university. Each semester for four years, the participants completed a web-based survey and self-reported their drinking behavior during the past seven days. Participation rates varied from 66.5% to 74% across semesters; 90% of eligible participants completed a survey at least once. Other measures in the survey included Fraternity/Sorority involvement, precollege reports of being drunk, academic aptitude, attempted credit hours, and academic schedule.

The number of drinks consumed on Thursdays was a function of the starting time of students' first Friday class (see Figure), even after adjusting for participant sex, Fraternity/Sorority involvement, number of attempted credit hours, and student grade. Compared to students with Friday classes before 11am, men with a later first class were 16-18% more likely and women were 8-11% more likely to consume binge amounts of alcohol (i.e., 5+ drinks for men and 4+ for women) on Thursday night.

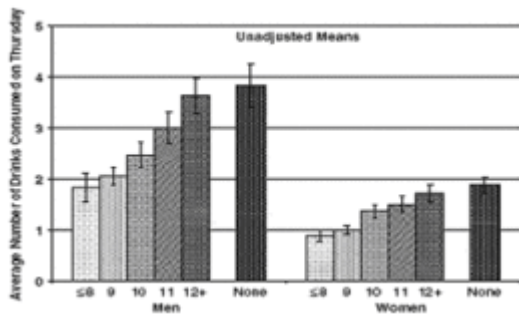


Figure. Mean number of Thursday drinks by time of first Friday class (adapted from Wood and Rutledge, 2007). Click image to enlarge.

Despite limitations to the current study, including reliance on self-reported drinking behavior and failure to measure student truancy from classes, it is possible that drinking less on Thursdays to fulfill responsibilities on Fridays represents rational drinking behavior on the part of college students. However, if students who have early Friday classes engage in harmful ‘catch-up’ drinking (i.e., drinking more on the weekends to ‘make up’ for not drinking on Thursdays), then the Thirsty Thursday effect is problematic for reasons not previously anticipated. To fully understand “Thirsty Thursday”, further research should determine the presence of ‘catch-up’ drinking by investigating weekend drinking behavior in relation to Thursday drinking patterns, as well as whether underlying problematic drinking behavior can better account for the rates of binge drinking on Thursdays rather than the influence of Thirsty Thursday and Friday class schedule.

*What do you think? Please use the comment link below to provide feedback on this article.*

## References

Wood P, S. K., Rutledge P. (2007). College Student Alcohol Consumption, Day of the Week, and Class Schedule. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.*, 31(7), 1195-1207.