

Peter D.

Media Literacy

SEDUCE ME CD-ROM: BINGE DRINKING NARRATION

1. Binge Drinking Title

[Welcome attendees and show next movie.]

2. Coors Favorite Things

Like most products, alcohol companies rely on sexual fantasy in their marketing. This approach especially targets their primary market--young males, between the ages of 12 and 24. Though many people are astounded to admit this is who consumes the most alcohol, the numbers don't lie. Underage drinking accounts for \$6 Billion a year in alcohol sales. Binge drinkers consume 50% of all alcohol sold. Men drink nearly twice as often and as much as women.

In this commercial, Coors plays to the fantasies of young men. It tells them that drinking is one of their favorite things. The predatory look on the young man at the end of the commercial tells it all--mostly naked women will roll around in the snow for your pleasure, while you get to sit in a warm hot tub, if you drink Coors.

Bacardi carries this same fantasy further.

[Play next movie.]

3. Bacardi Bottle Cap

Did you notice that even though the women in this commercial were extraordinary, the guy was only average to nice looking? That's because the target market for alcohol sales is men, particularly insecure men who think that alcohol will help their sex lives.

[Replay the commercial and stop when you see the man's face after he has seen the women on the balcony. Say the following.]

You see, the man in this commercial is not dressed nearly as nice as the women are dressed. In real life, the guy could say to the women, "Hello, I see you've gotten all dressed up to stand on your balcony. Would you like to drink with me," since drinking is what this commercial is supposed to be about. But since he's trying to get insecure guys to identify with his shyness and use alcohol for "liquid courage," he can't speak to her. He throws his bottle cap at her instead.

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[Continue playing the commercial again, with the sound off if possible. Stop the commercial at the scene where the elevator doors open. Supply the following narration.]

He throws his bottle cap at her like he's casting forth his seed. But since he's so insecure, he misses. But in the world of Bacardi fantasy, it doesn't matter if you're a frightened guy who can't say hi or even hit someone with a bottle cap, because there are other women, with impossible bodies who wander the streets at night looking for bottle caps, so they can ride up in elevators to have sex with you.

Now check out the Smirnoff version of this fantasy.

[Play next movie.]

4. Smirnoff Laundromat

Notice how all the elements in this ad are the same as in Bacardi's. The guys aren't your typical Hollywood Hunks, they're just average. The women on the other hand, all fit the Hollywood mold of beauty--skinny, all made up, and pretty.

[Replay the ad, with the sound off if possible. Stop the commercial when the woman pops her head out of the bubbles next to the guy. Supply the following narration.]

Only gorgeous women populate these types of fantasy ads. And the rules of alcohol commercial fantasies are clear. Women are always interested in having sex, and can thus be easily distracted from cleaning their clothes. The guys take inventory of their resources and find they only have laundry soap and alcohol to seduce the women with, so they have at it--again without even having to talk to the women. The women respond to the promise of drinking and the mess the guys make by dancing and spinning around in the bubbles. And this woman even gives this guy a blow job.

This is the fantasy alcohol ads use in their commercials to sell drinking. What's the reality? I want to ask a simple question: True or False--Most adults either don't drink any alcohol at all, or drink only a tiny little bit?

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Raise your hand if you think this is a true statement.

[Give a quick estimate of the percent of the audience who raised their hand that the statement is true. Then show the next slide.]

5. Drinking Percents

Most people, especially those under thirty, think everybody drinks all the time. This is what alcohol advertisers want us to believe and that is what many of you believe based on you show of hands. Let's look at the data. {In case anyone asks, similar statistics are available in SAMSHA, Centers for Disease Control, American Medical Association, or National Institutes of Health reports.}

The column on the right is the all the alcohol that gets consumed in a year in America. The column on the left is people--adults over 21.

One-third of adults (the group in the blue) do not consume a single drop of alcohol. Not one! Why is their story not told on television? Why do "so-called" reality shows always feature a lot of contestants drinking, as if it were normal? On TV, someone comes home after a hard day and says, "Pour me a double." We never hear the characters say, "I had a rough day, I think I'll go rest." Why?

Part of the answer is that alcohol is the 2nd leading source of ad revenue for television stations. And remember because of all the mergers taking place, 85% of all media is owned by only six corporations. So it's the exact same companies that are making the movies, TV shows, songs, and commercials. Do you think they're going to NOT feature their second leading source of revenue in their movies, TV shows, and songs?

If you stop and think for a moment you'll realize how many people in America don't drink at all. There's the whole state of Utah! (This is a joke.) But really, you have people who don't drink for religious reasons, people who don't drink for health reasons, people who don't drink because they're in recovery from alcoholism, people who don't drink because they don't like the taste, and people who just don't drink. It adds up to 1 out of every 3 adult Americans who doesn't drink at all. We simply never see or hear of them in the media.

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The next third of the population (the group in the green) only consumes 20% of the booze. People who fall in this category are very light drinkers. These are people who have only 1 or 2 drinks a week, perhaps a glass of wine with dinner every so often, or a just a couple of drinks with friends every week or so. This means that the answer to the question I asked you is false. Two out of three adults in America either don't drink at all, or drink only a tiny little bit.

This means that 80% of all booze is consumed by the last third of the population. In fact, 50% of the booze is consumed by only 7% of the population (the group in the red). I call them alcoholics, because we don't know what else to call people who drink half the booze.

Do you think marketers try to sell to an audience segment that doesn't use any of its product, or one that will consume huge amounts of it? How are they going to make the most profit? The point of alcohol ads is to create alcoholics. They do this by selling you the sexual fantasy that women will want guys who drink a lot. So far, the ads have been pretty successful at creating binge drinkers. A binge drinker is someone who consumes 5 or more drinks at a time. Alcohol companies are dependent on binge drinkers for their enormous profits. If the government required every adult in America to take 2 drinks a day, and only 2 drinks--no more, no less--alcohol sales would drop by 40%. Do you think these companies really want people to drink moderately, when half their sales are due to binge drinking?

[Show Next Slide]

6. The Slant

This ad tells the truth about drinking at the University of Missouri. Most students have between zero and four drinks per week. Most--that's more than half.

Of course, just like you demonstrated with your show of hands, many students didn't believe this was true. That's why the ad included the survey data in the box below the text, so that many of the students could remember that they had indeed participated in the survey.

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If you look at the horizontal lines on the right side of the page, they look like they slant. [Trace over one of the lines with your finger or a laser pointer.] But they really are perfectly flat. This optical illusion shows how our perceptions can be deceived with the right images. The same kind of illusion is what keeps alcohol companies in business.

[Show Next Slide.]

7. JL After

This slide shows Jamie Lee Curtis after she's all made up for a photo shoot.

[Show Next Slide.]

8. Jamie Lee Before

This slide shows her before the shoot. In mass media, the camera always lies!

What alcohol companies do is take the lies mass media creates and twists them into fantasies they can use to sell binge drinking. The problem is that the fantasies don't come true, only the drinking. What is left for most people who end up drinking, like the ads tell us to, is that the alcohol becomes their relationship.

The next ad I'm going to play comes from an ABC television show that is hosted by an actor who played one of the "Wazzzup" guys in Bud commercials. Notice how he says the world would be better if it was like a beer commercial.

[Play next movie.]

9. Empathy Mask

Notice that once again the male is shown in a sympathetic light, because he has trouble communicating. The subtle message being that drinking, rather than talking, is what your relationships need. Notice how the woman in this commercial is depicted. The guy complains that he can't go out with his friends until he spends time with his wife, implying that this is a chore for him. Minimizing relationships with women is standard fare in Bud ads.

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[Play next movie.]

10. Great Listener

Here the man doesn't have to be present with his date, he only has to nod his head while watching sports. And the woman is portrayed as being so dumb, that she's happy the guy is a good listener. The alcohol fantasy suggested to men is that women don't really care if you are interested in what they're talking about, just as long as you drink with them.

[Show next slide]

11. Destroyed Spirit

This ad takes the portrayal of women a step further. Being with the here woman is depicted as being tied to a ball and chain. But drinking, that's shown as having a free spirit. I find it interesting that the term spirit is used here. Since drinking like these ads recommend has destroyed the spirits of nearly all who have done so, isn't it a bit insulting to associate spirit with drinking? Of course, the reason why ads work in the first place is that they "address a product's negatives." This is PR lingo that means the ad lies to you by promising that what really happens when you consume a product won't happen to you. For those who buy into the fantasy alcohol ads sell, women and booze become interchangeable, as we'll see in the next several ads.

[Show next slide]

12. Three Olives

Here the woman crouches in the martini glass with her high heels on and cleavage jutting out, as if she's asking you to drink her up.

[Show next slide]

13. Bacardi Tattoo

This women has loose strips of cloth partially covering her curvaceous breasts and ass that she is jutting in the viewers face. Does she really need a Bacardi symbol tattooed above the cleft of her behind to get the sexy she's depicted as being

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after? Of course not. But the fantasy being sold requires men to associate a woman's sexual parts with commercial products.

[Show next slide]

14. Perrier

This woman has the logo of the champagne bottle tattooed on her naked body as she crouches down and presents herself for men's drinking pleasure.

Ads used to promise men women if they drank. But since this was a false promise that alcohol companies couldn't deliver, they now sell the notion that alcohol and women are one and the same.

[Play next movie]

15. Dancer

Michelob tells us we're "sophisticated" if we believe that bottles turn into women -- or is it women will turn into bottles -- and then dance around and to sexual entice us?

[Show next slide]

16. Bottle Body

For many men lost in the sexual fantasies of alcohol ads, the relationship they have is with a bottle, not a woman.

[Show next slide]

17. Staked

In fact, these people have staked their lives on it! Nothing is more important than drinking in the world of alcohol ads--even though you may get burned at the stake by doing so.

Let me ask this question: What happens when men are continually promised a fantasy and the products sold to them don't deliver the goods? What happens to you when you finally realize you've been lied to? I know I get angry.

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Unfortunately, advertisers are all too aware of how angry they've made consumers. They compensate by using that anger to fuel their sales even further. They ad violence into their ads, giving the suggestion that violence is pleasurable and drinkers will want to enjoy it. In this Coors commercial, it's very subtle. Notice the quick sexual images at the beginning of the ad. Then pay attention to what kinds of images are shown after they tell you what you're supposed to love.

[Play next movie.]

18. Coors "I Love"

[Restart the movie and stop it during the first several frames.]

After arousing us with close ups of women's crotches and twins making kissey faces, the ad tells us that we love quarterbacks eating dirt, and shows us mascots being kicked in the head. The point to the ad is that men are supposed to love sex, food, and violence--all of which is and enhanced by drinking.

This next spot is also subtle. It shows violence as accidental and comic.

[Show next slide and play commercial]

19. Show Me

Of course, this ad is funny. Everyone I've shown it to has laughed, including myself. Instead of just laughing, let's look at this ad critically. Please count how long the guy point the beer at the women while its spraying out.

[Replay the part of the commercial where the man points the beer bottle at the woman.]

I counted 4 or 5 seconds. Now I ask you, if the guy gave a damn about this women, do you think he would have had time to move the beer away? Of course, but the audience is too busy laughing to realize the meanness Bud intended.

What strikes me is how both men and women laugh at the model who is hosed down in this commercial. I figure that most men have spent their whole lives being seduced by media images of fake women. Let's face it. A guy can't even go to the

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grocery store and buy dinner without having to walk past a wall of women in pornographic poses jutting out their scantily clad bodies--you know, magazine covers. The problem is that none of these women shown over and over again in the media ever goes home with the men who sees them in the grocery store and practices the "50 Secret Spots for An Incredible Orgasm" or whatever the latest sexual headline of the magazine is. Given a lifetime of seduction and frustration, it makes sense that men would be conditioned to be angry at beautiful models, and laugh when they see one get hosed down.

I think a similar effect takes place with women. They've spent their whole lives being told they need to be more slim, have a bigger chest, or be whatever the fashion craze of the day that the media is selling. After a lifetime of comparisons to fake models, I think many women would be happy to see such a "perfect" woman get humiliated, having her clothes and hair ruined.

The unfortunate part of the natural hostility men and women have been trained to have for models is that it's misplaced. The companies marketing the products, not the models, are the ones frustrating men and humiliating women.

In this next ad, the violence is no longer just a comic accident. It's intention.

[Play next movie.]

20. Miller "Dog Collar"

The guys in this commercial know how much the dog collar hurts, because they've tried it. Yet Miller beer shows them putting the collar on a woman so the drinking pleasure of the guys at the party can be enhanced. Compared to this next Miller commercial, being tortured with a dog collar is tame.

[Play next movie.]

21. Miller "Cat Fight"

The USA Today published an editorial calling this commercial "just good fun." They said, "so what if it pushes a few buttons." Consider these facts: People 18-24 years old--college aged--are the age group beer companies say they are targeting

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with their ads.

[Show next slide]

22. 70,000 Rapes

On college campuses, 70,000 women are raped every year. SEVENTY THOUSAND!

[Show next slide]

23. 85%

And in 85% of those rapes, the perpetrator was drinking.

Of course everyone's salary at the USA Today is paid for by advertising. Do you think is could be why they felt the need to run an editorial defending this ad?

The way the commercial is set up, we see women with impossibly large breasts, rip off each others clothing and beat each other while the camera focuses on tight crotch and breast shots. The guys in the commercial then humiliate their dates by asking, "who wouldn't want to watch this?" Do you think the 70,000 women who are raped, almost always by a guy who was drinking, do you think maybe they wouldn't want to watch this?

As gross as Miller beer was in this commercial, they sank even lower. Miller produced a special version of this commercial that only ran very late at night. Let's take a look at how it ends.

[Play next movie.]

24. Alternate Ending

Not only do the women beat each other for our drinking pleasure, but in this version of the commercial, but they act like they're aroused by it and now want to have sex. The implication is that as long as the men watching are drinking, women will enjoy a beating as foreplay before sex.

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Now the only thing that is missing from alcohol companies use of violence towards women to sell their products is an instructional video. But leave it to Budweiser to come up with step by step instructions on how to stalk a woman in this Michelob ad.

[Play next movie.]

25. Michelob "Stalker"

Most of people viewing this commercial are horrified that the guy would throw the woman's luggage away so that he could trap her at the airport, then follow her so that he can "drink" with her. What's interesting, is that some people who view this, almost always men, will say that the guy wasn't throwing her luggage away. Some men say that he threw away his own luggage so that he could be as helpless as the women and share comfort by drinking together.

In fact, the author of this slide show was contacted by a man who told him that he was a friend of the male actor in the ad and, get this, the director told him it was his luggage. Too bad the director didn't bother to tell the audience whose luggage it was!

For a moment, let's take the point of view that it was his luggage. Then best thing you can say about the guy in this ad is that he's living down to the expectations that alcohol companies sell to men--Be insure. Don't talk to women, instead act helpless because women will want to share feelings of worthlessness with you. The guy could have walked up to the woman and said, you look like you have a problem, do you want to go drink with me? After all, if he's throwing his own luggage away it's not likely his motive is to help her find her lost luggage. If it really was his luggage he threw away, then the motivations of the people at Budweiser are clear. They are trying to tell guys that are insecure that acting helpless and drinking will solve their problems.

Yeah, right!

On the other hand, if it was her luggage that he threw away, then this commercial is a lesson in stalking--plain and simple. The fact the Budweiser left it ambiguous

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speaks to the fact that they're giving a nudge to guys disposed to assaulting women, while winking at less aggressive guys who are affirmed for their lack of courage.

Even more gross than this commercial, the next slide I'm going to show you is actually worse. It is an advertisement for drinking while you watch topless women beat each other for your drinking pleasure.

[Show next slide.]

26. Boxing

There really is nothing that needs to be said to understand this slide. Our culture has created a large population that pleases itself by inflicting pain. Alcohol companies and bars are riding this wave because they view getting drunk and beating women as a source of profits. It's as if we've returned to the coliseums of ancient Rome, only this time around, corporations sponsor the slaughter and woman, not slaves are the victims.

I apologize in advance for the next slide I'm going to show you, because even though this one is disgusting, the next one is pornographic. However, I want you to see it because I want you to understand that many men have been conditioned to believe drinking and assaulting women are parts of having sex. This is one of the many pop-up porn ads that can be found on the web.

[Show the next slide briefly, then move to the next]

27. Internet Banner

This ad says, "Naughty college cuties, liquored up and ready . . ."

[Remember to move on to the next slide before you begin discussing the Internet Banner]

28. Tips

As much as the news media reports on the horrors of other date rape drugs, make

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no mistake about it. Alcohol is the leading drug used in date rapes. In fact, all the other date rape drugs combined do not even come close to adding up to how often alcohol is involved in date rapes. The media doesn't bother reporting this fact because, as I've mentioned earlier, alcohol sales and advertising are a significant source of profits.

Here are some tips that women who choose to socialize by drinking ought consider.

1. Always go with, and leave with, a same sex-friend. Make sure that you and your friend know in advance a code word or signal that you need their help and they need to leave with you right away--no questions asked!
2. Only take a drink given to you by a server. If someone other than the bartender or waitress hands you a drink, you don't know if its been altered. And when you're at a party, make sure you know who serves you a drink and who mixed it. Otherwise, you don't know if your drink is spiked. This is especially true with a punch bowl.
3. Never drink from an unattended glass. If you put your drink down to dance, don't pick it up again. You don't know who had access to your drink while you were away.
4. Plan for your partner to take you to the emergency room if necessary. If you or your same-sex friend that you are drinking with start acting strangely, pass out, or tell you something is wrong, IMMEDIATELY take them to the emergency room. Don't wait to see if they get better, since they may get worse. And don't even think about taking them home to sleep it off. This could be asking for a coma, death from alcohol poisoning, or brain damage from some of the nastier date rape drugs.

And if you are a woman who wakes up feeling terrible and can't remember what happened the night before or suspect that something did happen, go IMMEDIATELY to the emergency room. Don't clean up first. The evidence that a rape took place could still be on your body.

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I know these measures may sound extreme, but the reality is that 70,000 women DO get raped on college campuses every year. I've shown you ads selling alcohol and pornography that encourage guys to assault women. There are many great men on campus. Please don't get me wrong. But there are predators out there too; guys who have bought into a lifestyle where they enjoy causing violence. And the alcohol industry is all too happy to encourage them.

In fact, our whole commercial culture conditions men to fantasize about and enjoy sexual violence. The next clip I'm going to show you is from the computer game Grand Theft Auto III--Vice City. As of September of 2003, this game was the number one selling computer game of all time. In it, players get extra points for picking up prostitutes, having sex with them, and then killing them.

[Play next movie.]

29. Grand Theft Auto

Many teen aged boys today have developed into outstanding young men. They are strong and compassionate. They are creative, spontaneous, and have developed impulse control. Unfortunately, many have not. They've bought the bill of goods the media has sold them. They're weak, insecure and believe binge drinking makes their lives better and solves their problems. Some of them simply play games where women are abused for fun. Others, act out violently, especially when drinking. Alcohol companies have seduced these men since they were young, and now profit handsomely off them and their destructive behaviors.

These next two slides show the effort of people who have been fighting back.

[Show next slide]

30. Coors Fight

This was a social statement made in Portland, Oregon.

[Show next slide]

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31. Coors Sexism

What's funny about these acts of culture jamming is that the police in Oregon issued a \$1,000 reward in their Crimestoppers program for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who did this. I thought Coors was acting criminally here, but according to the police, I'm wrong.

Earlier I showed you a slide from the University of Missouri that most of the students there drank between 0 and 4 drinks per week. The statistics from Missouri are not unusual. Nationally, most college students drink infrequently. By the time they're seniors the average college student drinks twice a week or less and has only one or two drinks when they do.

[Show next slide]

32. Arizona

Sixty-four percent of students at the University of Arizona have four or fewer drinks when they party.

[Show next slide]

33. Texas

Seven out of ten students at the University of Texas 0 - 3 drinks when they party.

[Show next slide]

34. Nebraska

Seventy-four percent of the students at the University of Nebraska have 5 or fewer drinks when they party.

[Show next slide]

35. Rutgers

Two-thirds of the students at Rutgers University step at 3 or less drinks. One in five don't drink at all.

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[Show next slide]

36. Once a Week

Going back to the University of Missouri, 71% of the students drink only once a week or less. Across the nation, drinking on campus is nothing like that portrayed in the media. If these statistics don't match up with your experience, you've got to ask yourself why is the drinking that you or your friends do so much heavier than other students? Is it just a habit or an addiction? What do you get out of it?

[Show next slide]

37. GPA

There is a strong correlation between high alcohol consumption and low grades. In fact, the leading indicator of what makes students drop out of school is alcohol use. Binge drinking is correlated with some of the most serious problems students face--depression, arrest, and suicides on campus are all strongly related to alcohol abuse.

[Show next slide]

38. Missed Class

At the University of Missouri, most students have never missed class due to a hangover. If your drinking is causing you to miss class, then you've got to ask yourself what are you going to school for? If you want to make alcoholism your career, wouldn't you be better off going to a bar instead of a college?

[Show next slide]

39. How Much

We've talked a lot about how much students drink. I think it's important to understand what a drink is. One drink is 12 ounces of beer--that's one regular sized can or bottle. One drink is 5 ounces of wine--that's just slightly more than half a coffee mug. One drink is 1 ounce of hard liquor. One ounce is a shot glass. When a server gives you an extra pour out of the bottle into your glass, that's two drinks you've been given.

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[Show next slide]

40. Designated Driver

Most students also use a designated driver. I want to clear up any confusion you may have about what a designated driver is. Contrary to what many of you believe, it's not the person who is least drunk. A designated driver is a person who has not consumed ANY alcohol or drugs during the night at all.

Many of you worry about what the legal limit is when you try to determine if driving is safe. If you're under 21, the limit in most states is zero. If you're over 21, a good rule of thumb to follow is based on your sex and weight. Since guys metabolize alcohol quicker and tend to weigh more than women, most men can drink about one drink an hour and stay under the legal limit for driving. Remember one drink is a single 12 oz. can of beer, a 5 oz. glass of wine, or a mixed drink with only 1 oz. of liquor. This is all a man of average weight can consume during an entire hour to stay under the legal limit. For an average sized women the rule of thumb is no more than one drink every two hours.

Please remember that being under the limit does not mean that driving is safe. Any alcohol you consume increases your chances of causing a car crash. Each drink you take doubles your chances of crashing. After one drink you're twice as likely to crash. After two drinks you're four times as likely. After three drinks you're eight times as likely.

During this talk I've tried to show you some of the ways media lies to you about alcohol. I'm hoping you'll walk away understanding that just about everything produced in commercial media is fake, especially how alcohol is show in TV shows, movies, and commercials.

[Show next slide]

41. Kate

Here is a picture of Kate Winslet standing next to a life-sized blow up of a magazine cover that she is on. This photo of her was taken at the same time the magazine was released. This is just one more example of how fake the fantasies

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are that our media tries to sell to us. Are you buying it? The fantasies we're sold are almost always sexual. Do you think you can have those kind of experiences if you're bingeing on alcohol?

[Show next slide]

42. Not Sexier

Eighty-seven percent of the college students polled in a nation-wide survey said that drinking alcohol does not make them feel sexier. I don't know about you, but I know that what I'm looking for in my intimate relationships is presence. I want my partner to show up. To fully be there--especially when making love. Anything that dulls their presence or takes them away is a barrier to having a truly fulfilling, ecstatic experience. This is why the media sells the fantasies it does. Drinking doesn't really deliver the kind of sex or relations promised in the ads. That's why alcohol becomes the relationship for people who buy into the alcohol companies' baloney. That's why their ads have to get more and more extreme, selling violence and humiliation as a substitute for the pleasures binge drinking could never deliver in the first place. Are you buying it?

[Show next slide]

43. Potential

I'd like you to ask yourself, why are you in college? What do you want from your relationships? From your recreation? What is your potential? If you honestly ask these questions, you'll know what's true for you. You'll see though the lies mass media has been selling to you. And you'll see why most people drink so little, if they drink at all. You'll know that you're worth so much more than what the media tells you. I'm asking you to be bigger and better than anyone has possibly imagined. I'm asking you to live up to your potential.

Thank you.