



# Spin the Bottle

## sex, lies & alcohol



We live in a time when many young people engage in high-risk drinking. There are many factors that contribute to one's decision to consume alcohol; however, recent research indicates that popular culture—advertising, movies, television shows, radio, etc.—has a significant influence on young people's attitudes toward drinking. In an effort to translate the latest analysis of media, culture, and alcohol into an accessible format, the nonprofit Media Education Foundation has released a new video—*Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*.



Award-winning media critics **Jackson Katz** and **Jean Kilbourne** examine how popular culture, by glamorizing and romanticizing excessive alcohol use, supports the notion that high-risk drinking is simply part of the college experience. In the world of popular culture, particularly in the world of media products aimed at young people, high-risk drinking has no negative consequences; in advertising, movies, television programs, and popular music, drinking is linked almost exclusively to good times, fun, spontaneity, and great sex. And while most of us know there is a negative side to alcohol, it is difficult to take the problems associated with high-risk drinking seriously, when the cultural representations we see of alcohol suggest that these negative consequences don't even exist.



Interviews with health professionals—**Alan Calhoun**, Director, Medial Care, UMass-Amherst; **Sally Linowski**, Associate Director, Health Education, UMass-Amherst; and **Ojae Beale**, Program Director, Rape Crisis Services, UMass-Amherst—illustrate the negative effect alcohol is having on the lives of college students, from poor academic performance and addiction, to sexual assault and rape, to physical trauma and even death. Though our cultural representations of alcohol may suggest otherwise, the negative consequences of alcohol do indeed exist. Additionally, they affect men and women differently. In its analysis, *Spin the Bottle* looks at how gender and our definitions of masculinity and femininity, shape our expectations around and experiences with alcohol, particularly with respect to sex, sexuality, sexual freedom, and sexual assault.



Throughout the video, students, young men and women from four different colleges, discuss the drinking culture on their campuses and reflect on their own experiences with alcohol—these are perhaps the video's most poignant voices. They discuss how the cultural messages they hear about alcohol, gender, sexuality, and what it means to be a college or university student, affect their lives. These young people express a desire to bring about change, and suggest that students themselves are ready to challenge the notion that high-risk drinking is a necessary part of the college experience.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.MEDIAED.ORG](http://WWW.MEDIAED.ORG)**

# REMARKS

*"An important examination of the many cultural facets related to collegiate high-risk drinking."*

CINDY McCUE | President, Be Responsible About Drinking (B.R.A.D.) Foundation

*"Spin the Bottle presents a fresh new challenge to critically analyze the impact of alcohol on our relationships, health, and ultimately our future."*

SALLY LASKEY | National Sexual Violence Resource Center

*"A sobering look at the truth behind the happy face that advertising and media put on a contemporary social disease, this is highly recommended."*

VIDEO LIBRARIAN

*"Media critics Jackson Katz and Jean Kilbourne have done it again...A dramatic and sobering assessment of alcohol use, abuse, and the targeted marketing of young people; this video should be required viewing—from high school to college and beyond."*

FRANK BAKER | media educator

*"Spin the Bottle is a wonderful resource for anyone working to reduce alcohol-related problems on college campuses. It presents the issues in a non-threatening, appealing manner and encourages students to make safe and responsible choices."*

CLAIRE FELDMAN-RIORDAN | alcohol educator

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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MEF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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### **RONIT RIDBERG** | *Producer & Editor*

Ronit Ridberg, a producer and editor at the Northampton-based Media Education Foundation (MEF), joined the organization in 2001 after graduating from Duke University with a bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology and a minor in Women's Studies. Her first project, *Wrestling With Manhood: Boys, Bullying & Battering*, written and directed by Sut Jhally and featuring Jhally and Jackson Katz (released Dec. 2002) examines the violent and misogynistic messages of professional wrestling. Her second film, *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol* (March 2004) features Jackson Katz and Jean Kilbourne and explores the drinking culture on college campuses.

Her production work is informed, inspired, and driven by the unique combination of academic background and hands-on experiences in sexual assault prevention education and counseling. As a certified rape crisis counselor Ronit volunteers with the UMass-Amherst Everywoman's Center and has logged over 500 hours on-call for the local rape crisis hotline. It is the very real intersection of her work that continues to push her to ask challenging questions about our culture, and to engage enthusiastically with others in finding the answers.

### **SUT JHALLY** | *Executive Producer*

Sut Jhally is a professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and founder and executive director of The Media Education Foundation in Northampton. He is one of the most popular teachers at the University of Massachusetts and is nationally known among college students for his videotape *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Music Video*, which received national press after MTV threatened with a lawsuit. The national recognition and numerous requests for copies of the video led to the founding of The Media Education Foundation in 1991. Over the ensuing 13 years, Sut Jhally has been the executive producer of more than twenty-five videos produced and distributed by the Media Education Foundation.

He is the author of *The Codes of Advertising*, the forthcoming *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, and co-author of *Social Communication in Advertising and Enlightened Racism*. He is also co-editor of *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* and the forthcoming *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire*. He has written broadly on issues of popular representation and is regarded as one of the world's leading cultural studies scholars in the area of advertising, media, and consumption.

### **LORETTA ALPER** | *Executive Producer*

Loretta Alper has been on the staff at MEF since the summer of 2000, when she was hired as a freelance producer. In the fall of 2001, she became an executive producer to work with producers and editors on the various stages of pre and post-production.

Loretta graduated from the University of Massachusetts with B.A. in English and Communication. She also holds a Master's degree in Secondary English Education from UMass. She became interested in media literacy while a high school English teacher. After having taught for six years, Loretta joined the staff at MEF eager to produce video resources for teachers to utilize in their work as media educators. Since coming to MEF, she has produced videos on topics raging from the media coverage of female athletes to advertising in schools, and is currently working on *Class Dismissed: Looking for the Working Class on Television*.

Loretta has done some independent print and public radio journalism, programmed an independent film series, worked as a projectionist and too many other odd jobs to mention. In addition to being a media producer, she is also an avid media consumer.

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## CREDITS

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Produced by **RONIT RIDBERG**

Edited by **RONIT RIDBERG**

Executive Producers **SUT JHALLY • LORETTA ALPER**

Camera **KELLY GARNER & DAVID RABINOVITZ**

Motion Graphics by **ALISA PLACAS • MICHELLE ROJAS**

Audio Engineering & Mixing **THOM MONAHAN**

Second Camera **KENYON KING • JEREMY SMITH**

Sound Recording **JEREMY SMITH**

Assistant Producer **JEREMY EARP**

UNITED STATES • 2004 • 44 mins • Color • BETA/DVD/DVCAM/VHS  
1.16:1 aspect ratio • In English • English/Spanish Subtitles

A MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRODUCTION  
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## FEATURED INTERVIEWS

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**JEAN KILBOURNE** ([jkilbourne@aol.com](mailto:jkilbourne@aol.com)) is internationally recognized for her pioneering work on alcohol and tobacco advertising and the image of women in advertising. A widely published writer and speaker, she has twice been named "Lecturer of the Year" by the National Association of Campus Activities. Her recent book *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel* was called by Publishers Weekly "a profound work that is required reading for informed consumers." It won the Distinguished Publication Award from the Association for Women in Psychology. She is also known for her award-winning documentaries *Killing Us Softly*, *Spin the Bottle* and *Calling the Shots*. A Visiting Research Scholar at the Wellesley Centers for Women, she lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

**JACKSON KATZ** ([jacksonkatz@aol.com](mailto:jacksonkatz@aol.com)) is one of America's leading anti-sexist male activists. He is widely recognized for his groundbreaking work in the field of gender violence prevention education with men and boys, particularly in the sports culture and the military. He has lectured on hundreds of college and high school campuses and has conducted hundreds of professional trainings, seminars, and workshops in the U.S., Canada, and Japan. His video, *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity* (1999), is the first educational video geared toward college and high school students to systematically examine the relationship between images of popular culture and the social construction of masculine identities at the dawn of the 21st century.

**SALLY LINOWSKI** is director of health education with University Health Services at UMass-Amherst and a co-founder of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts statewide higher education initiative.

**OJAE BEALE** is director of direct rape crisis and violence prevention services at the Everywoman's Center, UMass-Amherst.

# QUOTES FROM THE FILM

*"Most of us know that there's a negative side to alcohol. But at the same time, there's this whole world of billboards and TV commercials and films, in which everyone is so happy and having such a good time and there are no negative consequences, so its very difficult to really take it seriously, that this is in fact a drug that has often really dreadful consequences."*

JEAN KILBOURNE

*"It's like, oh yeah, drink Bud Light, you'll have a good time, and then you see what happens in real life when you're at a party with all this alcohol, and its just messy."*

DAN | college student

*"It's quite an experience for someone to go into the hospital on a Friday night or a Thursday night or a Saturday night and see the number of college students that clog up that emergency room with alcohol related issues, whether its just intoxication or trauma of some kind, broken bone, busted nose, what have you. We've had to put individuals on respirators because they've stopped breathing; individuals who are so intoxicated they clearly would have died if they had not been brought to the hospital."*

ALAN CALHOUN

*"What else can you do for eight hours straight where you can forget about everything else?"*

JARED | college student

*"When you're a guy people just do expect you to drink a certain amount. And the more you drink that means the more of a man you are for some reason."*

DARREN | college student

*"When you throw alcohol into the mix of a cultural definition of manhood as defined with aggression, physicality, not backing down, is it any surprise that we have so much alcohol related violence perpetrated by men, and all other forms of aggression and in some cases abusive behavior? Just to say that alcohol is a big problem in a culture is not enough. We need to look critically at how the gender system figures into the uses and abuses of alcohol."*

JACKSON KATZ

*"Young women today are caught up in an impossible double-bind. They've gotten the message almost from birth that what's most important is to be attractive, to be desirable to men, to be sexy, uninhibited, and really available. But at the same time, they should be good girls – that they should be nice, that they should be feminine. Now this is an impossible contradiction to be both, and alcohol is a way to resolve this contradiction."*

JEAN KILBOURNE

*"You're not gonna go to your girlfriend the next day, 'Yeah, I was completely sober and I slept with him but I don't want to be his girlfriend.' If you're drunk, you can be like 'Oh, I was drunk, and I slept with him because I didn't know what was going on.'"*

AIMEE | college student

*"We're a very sex-centric society but also in a lot of ways sex-phobic. We fight sex education in the schools, we fight condom distribution, we don't want to make HIV treatment services available in high schools perhaps or in colleges, but yet on the other hand, everywhere you look in the media its sex, sex, sex, sex, sex. You're supposed to want sex all the time, you're supposed to be sexy, you're supposed to be having a lot of it, its supposed to be magical and wonderful and the reality of it is that it isn't that easy and it isn't always wonderful and its hard to negotiate and students feel those tensions they feel those pressures, and alcohol is sometimes seen as a solution for that."*

SALLY LINOWSKI

(continued on next page)

# QUOTES FROM THE FILM

*"If somehow society could reflect inner-beauty and not so much outer-beauty, and the values changed, I think that alcohol would not be as much of a necessity to make people feel good and make people feel comfortable and break down social barriers."*

RACHEL | *college student*

*"The response from her friend is 'oh, that happens all the time,' 'you go to these parties, you should expect something like that to happen.' Or, 'how were you dressed?' 'Did you ask for it?' Those kinds of things and I think that there's some level of normalization around sexual assaults happening... Regardless of what you were wearing, regardless of how much you had to drink, regardless of who you were with – being sexually assaulted, being raped is not your fault."*

OJAE BEALE

*"I never thought about it, and I'm just realizing it now, that I don't have to do this to have a good time, but in realizing that, I have to change my whole way of life – all my friends, when we get hang out and socialize, we build all of our experiences and our fun on alcohol, we really do, so its really tough."*

AMANDA | *college student*

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## FACT SHEET

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The following statistics were taken from research performed and compiled by the Center on Alcohol Marketing & Youth ([www.camy.org](http://www.camy.org))

- » \$1.9 billion was spent on alcohol advertising in measured media (*television, radio, print, outdoor, major newspapers and Sunday supplements*) in 2002.
- » A *USA Today* survey found that teens say ads have a greater influence on their desire to drink in general than on their desire to buy a particular brand of alcohol.
- » The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth found that, in 2001, youth in the United States were 93 times more likely to see an ad promoting alcohol than an industry ad discouraging underage drinking.
- » A 1996 study of children ages 9-11 found that children were more familiar with Budweiser's television frogs than Kellogg's Tony the Tiger, the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, or Smokey the Bear.
- » A study of 12-year-olds found that children who were more aware of beer advertising held more favorable views on drinking and expressed an intention to drink more often as adults than did children who were less knowledgeable about the ads.
- » Drinking by college students, ages 18-24, contributes to an estimated 1,400 student deaths, 500,000 injuries and 70,000 cases of sexual assaults or date rapes each year, according to a 2002 study commissioned by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Task Force on College Drinking.
- » On campuses where more than half of the students drink to excess, 87% of students who live on campus experience one or more problems resulting from alcohol abuse.
- » In 2001, beer and ale companies spent over \$695 million to advertise their products on television.
- » In 2001, alcohol advertising on television reached 89% of young people 12-20, who saw an average of 245 alcohol ads each.

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## ABOUT MEF

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THE MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION (MEF) is a nonprofit, public interest organization dedicated to media literacy and education. MEF produces and distributes video documentaries and a range of educational resources that provide the information and skills needed to critically engage media as active citizens rather than as passive spectators and consumers.

MEF grew out of a battle in 1991 between University of Massachusetts Communication professor Sut Jhally and media giant MTV over his right to use music video images to encourage his students to think critically about media representations of women. A decade and forty documentaries later, MEF continues to believe that media education is the best way to check the power of media conglomerates to shape our understanding of the world and ourselves.

In bringing the expertise of progressive academics, writers, policy analysts, and activists to a broad cross section of the public, our founding mission remains the same: *to translate the latest cutting-edge research and expertise into visually compelling and accessible narratives, to inspire democratic debate about our media system, and to show how knowledge is a prerequisite to progressive social change.*

### BOARD OF ADVISORS

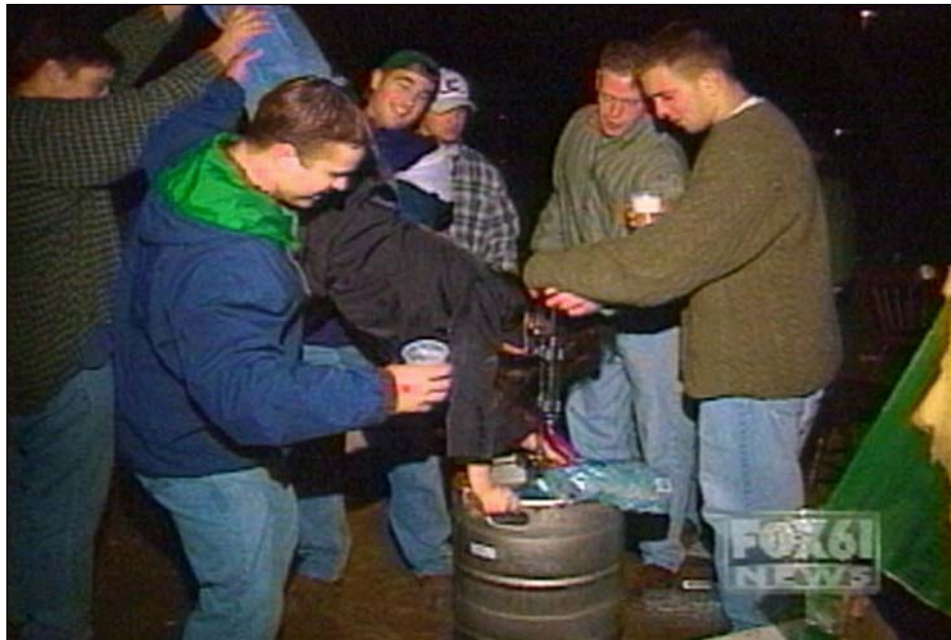
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Still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*



Still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*

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Media still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*



Media still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*

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**Jackson Katz** interview still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*



**Jean Kilbourne** interview still from *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | 06.24.04**

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## SPIN THE BOTTLE:

STUDENTS SOBER UP TO TALK ABOUT THE BIG CONSEQUENCES OF BINGE DRINKING

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*"I drank so much, I drank like a 30 pack."*

*"Like, seven jello shots and a strawberry daiquiri."*

*"I pounded twelve to fifteen beers."*

These were just a few of the answers found when producer **Ronit Ridberg**, of the Media Education Foundation (MEF), asked a random sampling of Western Massachusetts college students: "How much do you drink on a typical night out?" for her latest video *Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies & Alcohol*. In the video, award-winning media critics **Jackson Katz** and **Jean Kilbourne** examine how popular culture glamorizes and normalizes high-risk drinking, and college students discuss the consequences they have witnessed.

Anyone who has picked up a paper recently has undoubtedly read about the trend of nighttime rioting on college campuses nationwide, and while the catalysts range from the losing pitch in a baseball game to an increase in the price of textbooks, the enabler is always the same: alcohol. Even when rioting mobs are in the most celebratory of moods, the results are still destructive, and the trend has caught on across the country. Alcohol, adrenaline, and destructive behavior are quickly becoming the most problematic of recipes for underage drinkers. In *Spin the Bottle*, Katz and Kilbourne explain how violence is inevitable in a climate where television, music, film, and advertising link drinking with having fun and being "cool".

"*Spin the Bottle* presents a fresh new challenge to critically analyze the impact of alcohol on our relationships, health and ultimately our future(s)," says **Sally Laskey**, Associate Director of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. The buzz is beginning among media critics and educators who are excited that this video is the first educational program of its kind to attack the discrepancy between the glamorized drinking scenes of Hollywood film, television, and commercials, and the disturbing realities of the young people who drink. As one UMass student says in the video, "'Oh yeah, drink Bud Light, you'll have a good time.' And then you see what happens in real life when you're at a party with all this alcohol and it's just messy." Another student reflects on her experiences on weekend nights, "How many times have I walked into the bathroom and girls would be on the floor, I mean, wearing half their clothes, and lying next to the toilet, or I go out in the hallway and there's puke everywhere."

Inevitably, when the keg's kicked and the party's over, fun isn't always the last thing to follow. Many students regrettably find themselves both as the perpetrators and the victims of rape, sexual assault, vandalism, rioting, and random violence. A 2002 study commissioned by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Task Force on College Drinking reports that drinking by college students, ages 18 to 24, contributes to an estimated 1,400 deaths, 500,000 injuries and 70,000 cases of sexual assaults or date rapes each year, a statistic that, although the average college student is not familiar with, probably doesn't come as a shock.

For them, the party environment on college campuses normalizes binge drinking and oftentimes alcohol becomes a means to an end—to go out, to meet new people, to pursue a romantic interest. In fact, many students don't know how to have fun without it. As one student in the video comments "Why do I drink? Why don't I drink?" While another student says, "You're able to do things that you're not able to do, you make excuses for yourself when in normal situations, you wouldn't be able to do that."

*(continued on next page)*

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But often, there can be no excuse for the events that unfold after a night of drinking. Aside from the potential harm an underage drinker can cause to those around them, each time they engage in the culture of binge drinking they are putting their own life in the balance. One only needs to remember a case like Brad McCue's, the former Michigan State University student who drank himself to death on his twenty-first birthday, after 'winning' a game of "twenty-one shots" and consuming not twenty-one, but twenty-four shots with the encouragement of his fraternity brothers. In the end, he like too many others, lost in an alcohol-related tragedy that began under the guise of fun.

In this "Which came first, the chicken, or the egg?" scenario of underage drinking and popular representation, this video doesn't try to provide answers to the societal woes of alcohol consumption. Instead, it invites the viewer into an earnest glimpse of the standards set for the underage drinker, and the harsh realities for those who buy into the hype. *Spin the Bottle* challenges young people to question the culture of cool that comes with binge drinking and to take control of their own lives. As one UMass student spoke about her own realities with binge drinking, "It's hard because drinking in college just seems like the thing to do—I grabbed a keg cup and never really thought about it. But after watching this video, I'm thinking about why I do it, and why I think it's cool. And the reality is—somewhere along the way, someone else made it cool. If I'm drinking then to be myself and to have a good time, I'm following someone else's definition of fun—and for the risks involved, that's just lame."

*To receive a review a copy of this video or to set up an interview with the video's producer/editor, **Ronit Ridberg**, please contact **Kendra Olson** at [kendra@medied.org](mailto:kendra@medied.org) or call 413.584.8500 x 2203.*