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Social and situational characteristics associated with adolescents' drinking at party and non-party events

Sharon Lipperman-Kreda*, Laura J. Finan, Joel W. Grube

Prevention Research Center, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 180 Grand Avenue, Suite 1200, Oakland, CA 94612, United States

HIGHLIGHTS

- Parties with large numbers of people are risky contexts for underage drinking.
- Access to alcohol increases risk for underage drinking at parties in home contexts.
- Contexts with friends and people of mixed gender are risky for non-party drinking.
- Perceptions of getting caught can prevent non-party underage drinking at home.
- Enforcement and other prevention efforts should target and consider these contexts.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Underage drinking
Parties
Contexts
Ecological momentary assessments
Ambulatory assessment

ABSTRACT

We investigated social and situational characteristics associated with adolescents' drinking at party and non-party events and whether these associations vary by party location (homes versus other locations). Ecological momentary assessment data were obtained over two weekends from 149 adolescents in California (46% female, M age = 16.4 years), using smartphone surveys administered early and late in the evening and the following morning. We assessed whether, where, and with whom adolescents drank alcohol. Social contexts with more people ($RRR = 1.05, p \leq 0.005$) and with mixed gender composition ($RRR = 3.15, p \leq 0.05$) were positively associated with increased risks of alcohol use at parties, but not at non-party events. Conversely, social contexts with friends were positively associated with alcohol use at non-party events ($RRR = 4.32, p \leq 0.005$), but not at parties. Perceived access to alcohol was associated with increased risks for alcohol use at both party and non-party events, but the association was stronger for alcohol use at parties than non-parties ($RRR = 1.85, p < 0.005$ versus $4.01, p \leq 0.005$). Additional analyses showed that contexts with mixed gender composition were positively associated with alcohol use at parties not in homes ($RRR = 11.29, p \leq 0.05$), and perceptions of getting caught by parents or police were negatively associated with non-party alcohol use in homes ($RRR = 0.57, p \leq 0.005$). This study identified social-ecological contexts of underage drinking parties, which are high risk settings for heavier drinking and other alcohol-related problems. Findings can inform context-based interventions to target these high-risk settings, whether at homes or other locations.

1. Introduction

Adolescent drinking is a costly public health problem (Miller, Levy, Spicer, & Taylor, 2006). Although drinking rates have declined significantly since the 1990s, they have leveled out in recent years and alcohol remains the most commonly used drug among adolescents (13–18 years old), with 61% reporting lifetime, 56% reporting past year, and 33% reporting past month alcohol use in 2016 (Miech et al., 2017). Research suggests that different underage drinking contexts (e.g., home location, number of people) are associated with different risks such as violence or increased consumption (Bersamin, Lipperman-

Kreda, Mair, Grube, & Gruenewald, 2016; Mair, Lipperman-Kreda, Gruenewald, Bersamin, & Grube, 2015). Parties are important contexts to consider as youth frequently drink at parties (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Degenhardt et al., 2015; Friese & Grube, 2014; Lipperman-Kreda, Mair, Bersamin, Gruenewald, & Grube, 2015) and parties are one of the most commonly reported contexts where youths obtain alcohol (Paschall, Grube, Black, & Ringwalt, 2007). Further, adolescents who drink at parties are more likely to develop riskier drinking over time (Power, Stewart, Hughes, & Arbona, 2005).

Beyond location, the social and situational characteristics of drinking contexts are important to consider as they are associated with

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: skreda@prev.org (S. Lipperman-Kreda).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.12.001>

Received 7 July 2017; Received in revised form 2 December 2017; Accepted 4 December 2017
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drinking behaviors and problems (Freisthler, Lipperman-Kreda, Bersamin, & Gruenewald, 2014; Monk & Heim, 2014). For example, the number of people and gender composition of friends (e.g., same vs opposite gender friends) in a drinking context predict adolescents' alcohol use (Anderson & Brown, 2010). Similarly, a recent study found that the number of people present at a drinking event was associated with an increase in the number of drinks adolescents consumed in home contexts (Bersamin et al., 2016). Moreover, the presence of a responsible adult for girls and having more boys at the drinking event for boys were associated with consuming fewer drinks. Also, when boys perceived greater ease of access to alcohol in a specific context, they reported consuming more drinks in that context. Examining party contexts in home settings, another study found that when parents knew about a party it was less likely for alcohol to be present, although parents' actual presence at home was not associated with the presence of alcohol at parties (Friese & Grube, 2014).

Although research has demonstrated that parties are frequent contexts for adolescent drinking, less is known about the social and situational characteristics associated with adolescents' drinking at party versus non-party events. Further, although underage drinking parties are often hosted in homes (Friese & Grube, 2014; Friese, Grube, & Moore, 2013; Paschall et al., 2007), it is unclear whether and how the social-ecological contexts differ if the party is in homes or other locations. Since a growing number of states and communities are enacting social host (SH) laws to prevent or reduce underage drinking in private settings (Paschall, Lipperman-Kreda, Grube, & Thomas, 2014), understanding context characteristics associated with underage drinking in private settings can inform SH policies or efforts to prevent drinking in these risky contexts.

To address these gaps, this study investigated (a) the social and situational characteristics (e.g., number of people, presence of friends, and adult supervision) that contribute to adolescents' drinking at parties, and (b) whether these contextual characteristics vary by party location (i.e., homes versus other locations). We used longitudinal Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) to collect data from adolescents over two weekends to assess social and situational characteristics of reported alcohol use events. We then compared context characteristics associated with alcohol use at party events, alcohol use at non-party events, and no alcohol use events to better understand how context characteristics are uniquely related to alcohol use at parties. Findings from this study will help identify the mechanisms by which social and situational contexts influence drinking at parties. Moreover, the findings can help identify possible points of intervention for prevention, including informing SH policies to prevent or reduce underage drinking in private settings.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Sample

2.1.1. Sample of cities and adolescents

Data for the current study were drawn from a larger research project (Bersamin et al., 2016; Lipperman-Kreda, Gruenewald, Grube, & Bersamin, 2017). The current study uses data collected from adolescents (15 to 18 years old) in 12 midsized California cities that were randomly assigned to the control condition of a randomized trial conducted in 24 midsized California cities to evaluate effects of environmental strategies to reduce community alcohol problems. A total of 1217 adolescents from the 24 cities participated in a baseline survey and the estimated response rate was 42%. The selection of cities and sample recruitment has been described elsewhere (Bersamin et al., 2016).

2.1.2. Recruitment of EMA sample

Using baseline data, we created a list of 252 potential participants in the 12 control sites for the EMA study. Specifically, we included all

participants who self-reported past month drinking ($N = 126$) and matched them with non-past month drinking participants by age, gender, race (non-White versus White) and ethnicity (non-Hispanic versus Hispanic). Potential participants were invited to take part in a study about alcohol and young people using their personal smartphone. They were told that the study involved 12 brief text prompted online surveys across two weekends and that they could receive up to \$80 for participating. A postcard invitation was mailed to households followed by a telephone contact to obtain parental consent and youth assent. Institutional review board approval was obtained prior to implementation of the study.

2.1.3. EMA sample

Of the 252 eligible youths, we recruited 154 adolescents (51% past month drinkers) to participate in the EMA study (61% cooperation rate). Participants represented all 12 cities. The number of participants per city ranged from 5 to 19. For the current study, we used data from 149 participants who provided complete data for all measures in each assessment. This sample included 46% females ($n = 69$), 15% Hispanics ($n = 22$) and 80% Whites ($n = 119$). The average age at baseline was 16.4 years ($SD = 0.90$).

2.2. EMA methods

2.2.1. Timing of EMA surveys

We restricted EMA data collection to the weekends to minimize respondent burden, but capture the maximum number of drinking events, which typically occur on weekends for adolescents (Kauer, Reid, Sanci, & Patton, 2009). Surveys were conducted Friday evening through Sunday morning over two weekends (12 assessments). Participants received text messages with links to the surveys each day at 8 pm, 11 pm, and the following morning at 11 am for a total of 6 surveys per weekend. At 8 pm, adolescents reported about contexts and their behaviors from 5 to 8 pm and at 11 pm they reported about contexts and their behaviors from 8 to 11 pm. The morning surveys asked about alcohol use and contexts between 11 pm and bedtime as well as problems that happened to them or others the previous night. Participants received two reminders to complete the surveys and responses were only accepted within a 6-hour window. On average, participants completed the surveys within 35 min after receiving the first reminder. Each survey took approximately five minutes to complete. EMA data collection continued for 10 months with 7–8 adolescents participating every 2 weekends. The current study includes 1249 surveys collected from the 149 participants.

2.2.2. Incentives

Participants received a visa card, which initially had no value. Incentives were electronically wired to the participants' cards on the Monday morning after each weekend. Participants received \$5 for each completed survey and a \$10 bonus if all 6 surveys were completed each weekend. On average, participants responded to 9.94 of the 12 assessments (83%). The number of completed surveys per participant ranged from 2 to 12.

2.3. Outcome measures

2.3.1. Alcohol use and alcohol use at a party events

At each survey, we asked adolescents whether they drank alcohol during the past 3 h. The timeframe at each survey was specified for respondents (e.g., between 8 and 11 pm), and response options were yes or no. Participants were then asked about the last place they drank alcohol or the last place where they were within each timeframe, including whether the context was a party (yes or no). For the analyses, we used an event-level multinomial outcome measure with no alcohol use as the reference category (0), alcohol use not at a party (1), and alcohol use at a party (2).

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