



The relationship between group size, intoxication and continuing to drink after bar attendance



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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study was undertaken to explore multilevel determinants of planning to continue to drink alcohol after leaving public drinking events. We assessed whether individual-level factors, group-related factors, or event-level bar characteristics were associated with post-bar drinking.

Method: We recruited a total of 642 participants from 30 participating bars in urban Southern California. Groups who arrived to patron a bar were interviewed upon their entrance and exit. Given data nesting, we employed a multilevel modeling approach to data analysis.

Results: More than one-third (40%) of our sample reported the intention to continue drinking as they exited the bar. Results of our multilevel model indicated eight individual-level variables significantly associated with intending to continue to drink. Time of night moderated the relationship between BrAC change and intentions to continue to drink. Although none of the group factors were significant in our model, a significant cross-level interaction between BrAC change and number of group members indicated the effect of intoxication on planning to continue to drink increases as group members increase. At the bar level, the presence of temporary bars and server offers of non-alcoholic drinks significantly decreased intentions to continue to drink.

Conclusions: Given the large percentage of participants who reported the intention to continue drinking after exiting a bar, this study draws attention to the fact that field studies of drinking behavior may assess drinking mid-event rather than at the end of a drinking event.

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1. Introduction

Excessive or heavy use of alcohol in the U.S. is estimated to result in almost 80,000 deaths annually and in 2006 was estimated to cost society nearly 225 billion dollars (Bouchery et al., 2011). According to recent alcohol epidemiology data, 69% of young adults in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 28 report having consumed alcohol during the past year while among alcohol consumers of the same age range, nearly 37% report heavy drinking during the past two weeks (Johnston et al., 2012). Despite the 6% decrease in 30-day prevalence of drinking since 1986, the rate of past two-week heavy drinking among 19–28 year olds has remained virtually unchanged (Johnston et al., 2012). Furthermore, analyses of data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BFRSS) showed that young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 had the highest rates of binge drinking relative to other age cohorts. Given the strong association between binge drinking

and negative alcohol-related consequences such as unintended injuries, alcohol dependency, risky sexual behavior and drunk driving among young adults (Brown and Vanable, 2007; Hingson et al., 2009; NIAAA, 2000), gaining a more comprehensive understanding of drinking behavior may help elucidate the best leverage points to target drinking reduction interventions in young adult populations.

In the past decade, studies have examined young adults' alcohol use as it relates to drinking contexts (Clapp et al., 2009; Nyaronga et al., 2009; Thombs et al., 2009; Treno et al., 2000). These studies have examined various aspects of drinking such as drinking intentions at the event-level (Clapp et al., 2006), correlates of pre-drinking behavior (Reed et al., 2011a; LaBrie and Pedersen, 2008), and motives to get drunk prior to a drinking event (Kuntsche et al., 2010; Trim et al., 2011). However, to our knowledge, there has only been one other study that examined factors influencing continued drinking after leaving a public drinking event (Bellis et al., 2010). The present study investigates the role of individual, group-level (i.e., group size), and event-level (i.e., bar) influences on continued drinking utilizing field study data obtained from young-adult bar patrons. The following research questions are addressed in this paper: (1) Does intoxication influence post-bar drinking? (2) Do group factors influence post-bar drinking? (3) At the event level, do bar characteristics influence persons to continue drinking upon

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leaving the bar? (4) Do both time of night and group-related factors moderate the relationship between intoxication and continued drinking?

1.1. Individual influences on drinking behavior

The research literature on young adult drinking behaviors has demonstrated significant associations between demographic variables such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, student status and drinking behavior. Specifically, males, older adolescents, whites, and students display more frequent and heavier drinking behaviors than females, younger adolescents, non-whites and non-students (Clapp et al., 2006; Johnston et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2011a, 2011b). Drinking often facilitates an individual's motivation to attain a particular outcome such as having fun or meeting a potential sexual partner (Clapp et al., 2009) given the close proximity between these motivations and observed behavior (Cox and Klinger, 1988). Results of studies examining adolescent and young adult drinking behaviors have also shown significant associations between motives to drink and drinking behaviors (Clapp et al., 2008; Kuntsche et al., 2005). The association between event-level drinking behavior among young adults and drinking history has also been demonstrated in several investigations (Clapp et al., 2006, 2009). Playing drinking games within drinking contexts has also become an important focus for alcohol researchers. The results of these studies have found young adults frequently play drinking games during drinking-related events and engaging in this type of drinking behavior is associated with increased intoxication and alcohol-related harms (Clapp et al., 2003; Bosari, 2004).

1.2. Group level influences on drinking behavior

Observational studies of drinking behavior describe the consumption of alcohol as a social activity comprised of friends, acquaintances or both (Cutler and Storm, 1975; Lange et al., 2011; MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Van De Goor et al., 1990). Given the social nature of drinking, there has been a long history in the alcohol research field of examining group context effects. For example, early observational studies of drinking behavior in bars demonstrated positive relationships between group size and alcohol consumption (Aitken, 1985; Aitken and Jahoda, 1985; Rosenbluth et al., 1978; cf., Sykes et al., 1990, 1993). Similar group context effects have also been observed in research utilizing retrospective recall methods (Harford et al., 1983; Senchak et al., 1998), daily diary studies (Cullum et al., 2012), and laboratory-based experiments (Kuendig and Kuntsche, 2012; Larsen et al., 2009, 2010). The effects of the normative group context on individual drinking behavior has also been studied extensively. For example, the role of social norms within these group-drinking contexts may also be an important influence on the drinking behavior of young adults (Kuendig and Kuntsche, 2012).

1.3. Event-level influences on drinking behavior

Within the larger environmental context of drinking events, researchers have identified several factors that influence individual drinking behaviors. In a study of environmental predictors of intoxication, Clapp and colleagues (2009) found bar patron intoxication levels were lower in bars where loud music was playing and patrons were dancing relative to bars without loud music and dancing. In the same study, the presence of temporary bars (e.g., additional bars set up in a bar on busy night with the purpose of reducing long lines at the permanent bar(s)) served as a risk factor and was associated with higher levels of intoxication. Furthermore, increased patron intoxication has been demonstrated in bars with discounted drinks (Stockwell et al., 1993; Thombs et al., 2008) and

those permitting crowding (Stockwell et al., 1993) while patron intoxication has been shown to be lower in bars with food service (Hughes et al., 2010).

1.4. Methodologies used to study drinking among young adults

Alcohol consumption can be conceptualized as dynamic and complex, often occurring in multiple environmental and social settings over time. Current research methods, however, are typically unable to capture the full event in vivo. Exceptions include ad lib. bar studies simulating drinking environments (Kuendig and Kuntsche, 2012; Larsen et al., 2010), but these studies may lack mundane realism. Other studies exploring drinking event behaviors rely on retrospective reports (Clapp et al., 2006; Harford et al., 1983), diary studies (Cullum et al., 2010, 2012), observational research (Aitken and Jahoda, 1983; Sykes et al., 1993) or field studies (Thombs et al., 2009; Clapp et al., 2008). Although retrospective studies can ostensibly assess an entire drinking event, the survey methodology used in such studies is often limited and relies on respondent recall (Clapp et al., 2006). Diary studies occur more proximally to drinking events and thus may be less affected by respondent recall. However, this type of methodology still relies on respondents reconstructing events from memory. Observational studies are non-reactive, but are limited in what variables can be measured. Field studies (Clapp et al., 2008; Thombs et al., 2009) do not rely on retrospective reports of behavior and tend to have high ecological validity (Clapp et al., 2006). However, most of these studies measure intoxication mid-event (Clapp et al., 2008; Bellis et al., 2010) or when drinkers leave a particular bar or bar district (Clapp et al., 2009; Thombs et al., 2010). As such, researchers know very little about drinking intentions after one leaves a bar or drinking establishment for the evening. While many field studies have examined the behavior of drinking leading up to and within a drinking event (Reed et al., 2011a, 2011b; Clapp et al., 2008, 2009), few have examined factors influencing the intentions to continue drinking beyond the drinking event (cf., Bellis et al., 2010). The present study tests whether individual, group, and event-level factors within *specific* drinking environments (Clapp et al., 2009) are associated with intentions to continue drinking upon leaving a bar. Due to the dearth of literature regarding factors related to continuing to drink after leaving a drinking event, this study aims to fill this gap. Furthermore, it is important to empirically characterize factors related to intentions to continue to drink, particularly as these factors relate to alcohol-related harms.

2. Methods

2.1. Study participants, procedure, and measures

For this study, we were interested in testing group factors that predict intentions to continue to drink; thus, we only included patrons in our analysis who: (1) exited the bar with the same group of individuals with whom he or she entered and (2) reported drinking at some point during the evening. These criteria yielded a sample of 642 participants (609 participants with complete data) nested within 262 groups (level-1) at 30 bar locations (level-3) in a large Southern California city. Bars were purposively selected based on their location, clientele, and management. A more detailed overview of the study methodology can be found elsewhere (Clapp et al., 2009). The San Diego State University IRB approved all study procedures.

2.2. Patron sample

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, we interviewed patrons between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. prior to bar entry (pre) and upon bar exit (post). After patrons agreed and consented to participate in our study, a short survey was verbally administered to the participants prior to bar entry. We intentionally minimized the number of items we asked participants to complete prior to entering the bar to increase patron participation. The pre-survey included demographic items such as participant gender, age, race/ethnicity, and military status (college student, non-student). Military status was dummy coded with non-students serving as the reference category. Participants were also asked to endorse (yes/no) from a list of six responses (e.g., to socialize with friends, to meet a potential sexual partner, etc.)

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