

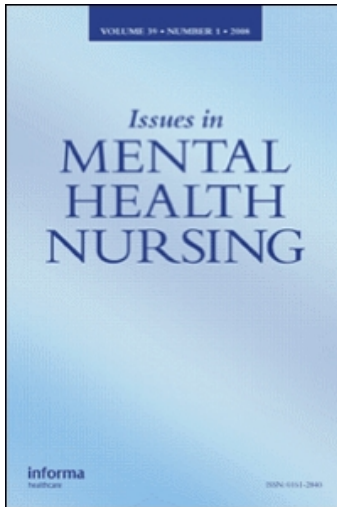
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Before You Slip into the Night, You'll Want Something to Drink: Exploring the Reasons for Prepartying Behavior Among College Student Drinkers

Eric R. Pedersen ^a; Joseph W. LaBrie ^b; Jason R. Kilmer ^c

^a Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA ^b Department of Psychology, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, USA ^c Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

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Before You Slip into the Night, You'll Want Something to Drink: Exploring the Reasons for Prepartying Behavior Among College Student Drinkers

Eric R. Pedersen, MA

Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

Joseph W. LaBrie

Department of Psychology, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, USA

Jason R. Kilmer

Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA

Prepartying among college students is an emerging topic of research and clinical focus. Unfortunately for some students, prepartying, or quick drinking before going out for the primary event of the evening, can lead to high blood alcohol levels, further drinking, and subsequent consequences. The present study was designed to explore the reasons for prepartying among a sample of 444 male and female students. Males and females reported arriving to a social event already under the influence, saving money, and making the night more interesting as their most highly endorsed reasons for prepartying. Males endorsed reasons relating to increased social and sexual facilitation with opposite sex peers to a greater extent than females. Although underage and legal drinking age participants did not differ in prepartying frequency or typical quantity, underage students reached higher estimated blood alcohol levels during prepartying. Finally, alcohol-related consequences were significantly and positively associated with nearly all reasons for prepartying for both men and women.

The negative effects from college student alcohol use continue to impact individuals and the surrounding community at almost every institution of higher education in the United States (Hingson, Heeren, Winter, & Wechsler, 2005; Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002; Wechsler et al., 2002). College administrators, student affairs personnel, and health professionals continually address

The title of the article is a direct quote from the song *Cavern* performed by the band Phish. Words written by Tom Marshall and Scott Herman. Music written by Trey Anastasio. Copyright 1992.

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Address correspondence to Eric R. Pedersen, University of Washington, Department of Psychology, Box 351525, Seattle, WA 98195-1525. E-mail: epeder@u.washington.edu

the needs of student health with respect to alcohol through interventions, counseling, and preventative approaches. Despite efforts to reduce heavy drinking (Carey, Scott-Sheldon, Carey, & DeMartini, 2007; Larimer & Crouse, 2007), interventions that target a student's global drinking behavior may not address specific situations within the college environment where students may be at increased risk for heavy drinking. A further understanding of event- and context-specific situations that perpetuate heavy drinking can aid in the development of intervention and prevention strategies (Neighbors et al., 2007). Research suggest that students' drinking behavior is variable, with spikes during particular community and personal events (Del Boca, Darkes, Greenbaum, & Goldman, 2004; Greenbaum, Del Boca, Darkes, Wang, & Goldman, 2005), such as Halloween and St. Patrick's Day (Martell et al., 2006), football games and tailgating events (Martell et al., 2006; Neal & Fromme, 2007; Neighbors, Oster-Aaland, Berstrom, & Lewis, 2006), spring break (Lee, Maggs, & Rankin, 2006; Smeaton, Josiam, & Dietrich, 1998), and 21st birthday celebrations (Neighbors et al., 2006; Neighbors, Spieker, Oster-Aaland, Lewis, & Bergstrom, 2005). In addition, context-specific situations such as drinking at parties or bars (Harford, Wechsler, & Seibring, 2002) or playing drinking games (Borsari, 2004; Pedersen & LaBrie, 2006) have been associated with heavy drinking behavior. Drinking heavily on just one occasion can possibly lead to the experience of mild/moderate effects (e.g., missing class the next day, fighting) or even life-changing consequences (e.g., alcohol poisoning, trouble with the law, death).

The current study was designed to gain a better understanding of the specific drinking context of prepartying. Prepartying is emerging in the literature as a risky drinking behavior associated with fast-paced drinking within brief stints of time and increased consequences prior to the primary event in which

drinking will occur. Also referred to among college students and researchers as “pregaming,” “front-loading,” “prefunking,” and “preloading,” prepartying involves the consumption of alcohol prior to departing for one’s intended destination or social activity (e.g., bar, party, concert, sporting event). The behavior appears highly prevalent among college student drinkers and is associated with further drinking, binge drinking, and elevated blood alcohol levels (BALs) post-prepartying (Borsari et al., 2007; LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008; Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007). Studies show that 31% of adjudicated students reported prepartying the night of their sanction (Borsari et al., 2007), while others suggest an overall monthly prevalence rate (i.e., at least once in the past month) ranging from 75% (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007) to 85% (LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008) for student drinkers.

Studies examining prepartying behavior among college students have linked the behavior to heavy levels of consumption and to the potential for negative consequences. Pedersen and LaBrie (2007) found that problems specifically related to fast consumption, such as blackouts and passing out, correlated with prepartying frequency and typical amount consumed during prepartying. Event-level analyses revealed a higher incidence of alcohol-related consequences and increased BALs on prepartying days compared to non-prepartying drinking days; the latter particularly true for women (LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008). Additionally, Borsari and colleagues (2007) suggest that prepartiers may be at increased risk for elevated BALs and that prepartying may be linked to higher intoxication levels more so than the risky behavior of drinking games. Finally, students overestimate the prepartying frequency and typical quantity consumed during these events among peers (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2008). Findings from this study suggest that indirect peer influence impacts prepartying, as individual misperceptions of typical quantities consumed during prepartying were associated with one’s own typical quantity consumed.

Although the genesis of prepartying is unknown, it may have its origin in tailgating behavior. During tailgating, professional or college sports fans (including alumni) consume alcoholic beverages in parking lots prior to entering a stadium or arena to watch a sporting event. This behavior has been observed in students prior to college football games (Neighbors et al., 2006). From anecdotal evidence and conversations with students during group discussions, it appears that this behavior has broadened beyond drinking before sporting events to also include drinking before parties, bars, clubs, concerts, movies, and dates and is typically performed with friends while conversing, watching television, listening to music, preparing to go out, and by playing drinking games. Prepartying can be executed in a variety of environments such as fraternity houses, residence hall rooms, friends’ or parents’ houses, cars (as passengers or drivers), and parking lots. The drink of choice may differ between male and female students, as more women than men report consuming shots of liquor and mixed drinks during prepartying while more men report drinking beer (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007).

In addition, prepartying may have emerged from underage drinkers not having access to alcohol once they go out for the evening. Underage college students may consume alcohol prior to attending a club that requires students be 18 years of age to enter, but 21 or older to consume alcohol. In addition, concert venues, sporting arenas and stadiums, or school sponsored events require that students be of legal drinking age in order to consume alcoholic beverages. Therefore, if underage students wish to be under the influence while out at a planned destination, the only option may be to drink beforehand. This “only option” could result in drinking in a more risky manner. Regardless of its evolution, prepartying is a behavior associated with a range of risks, and is a phenomenon identified as an important research topic to address questions pertaining to predictors of the behavior and prevention efforts in response to it (Thomas, 2007).

As one of the initial studies specifically examining this behavior, the present study was designed to further explore college student prepartying behavior. Descriptive analyses focus on exploring three specific domains of prepartying: (1) contexts and situations where prepartying occurs, (2) students’ specific reasons for prepartying and their associations with prepartying behavior, and (3) students’ specific reasons for prepartying and their associations with alcohol-related consequences. We investigate potential sex differences among these three domains. In addition, we examine the idea that prepartying behavior is a more common practice among students under the legal drinking age (i.e., students who cannot legally purchase alcohol at bars, clubs, or liquor stores) by comparing prepartying behavior among underage and of-age participants. While descriptive in nature, the findings seek to provide a further understanding of prepartying and its association with consequences, which can aid in the creation and targeting of interventions, screening procedures, and preventative approaches directed at this high-risk behavior.

METHOD

Participants

Over two sequential semesters (Fall and Spring), 224 Introduction to Psychology students seeking class credit through the psychology subject pool at a medium-sized private university on the west coast completed an online assessment of alcohol behaviors and attitudes. Using a modified respondent-driven sampling design (RDS; Heckathorn, 1997), participants were able to recruit up to two college-aged peers (age range = 18 to 25) from any university in the United States to complete the assessment. For each recruited peer, the subject pool participant received an additional one credit. Subject pool participants were allowed to recruit up to two participants for a total of three credits. Similar recruitment methods used in prior work examining prepartying among college students has found that this method has adequately recruited a sample of students representative of the university population in terms of average drinks consumed, sex, and ethnicity (LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008). Participants in

the current study recruited an additional 330 participants. Of these 554 total participants, we included only participants who drank alcohol at least once in the past month. Thus, our final sample contained 444 college student drinkers (94% from the campus in which the original cohort was recruited, 6% from multiple universities throughout the United States) with a mean age of 19.51 ($SD = 1.36$). Fifty-seven percent ($n = 254$) of the sample were female and ethnicity of the total sample varied: 54% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic/Latino(a), 11% Asian/Pacific Islander, 10% Mixed ethnicity, 4% African American/Black, 2% Other, and 1% declined to state. The sample consisted of 40% first-year students, 21% sophomores, 22% juniors, and 17% seniors. Approximately three-quarters of male (75%; $n = 142$) and female (74%; $n = 189$) participants prepartied at least once in the past month.

Design and Procedure

All measures, forms, and procedures were approved by a local human subject review committee. All participants received a link to the online survey at their e-mail address. Random sequence numbers were embedded in the survey URL, linking data to this number and not to names or e-mail addresses. Participants were allowed to complete the survey anytime within the semester in which it was received. Prior to beginning the survey, participants read and electronically signed a consent form assuring confidentiality. Next, participants completed demographic questions assessing age, sex, weight, and ethnicity. Participants also completed single-item questions assessing how

many days per week they typically consumed alcohol (days per week) and how many drinks they typically consumed per drinking occasion (average drinks). In addition, questions assessed how many days in the past month participants prepartied and how many drinks they typically consumed during prepartying. Prepartying was defined as drinking alcohol prior to attending an event or activity [for example a party, bar, or concert] at which more alcohol may or may not be consumed. Typical time spent prepartying (in 1/2 hour increments) also was collected to estimate the typical BAL reached during prepartying. Pictures of standard drinks of various alcoholic beverages each containing 1/2 ounce of ethyl alcohol accompanied all alcohol questions.

Participants were presented with 16 contexts where prepartying could occur and were asked to choose up to four contexts where they typically prepartied. The 16 contexts were chosen by the authors based on conversations with groups of college students. The items can be found in Table 1. In addition, the authors created a measure of 20 reasons for prepartying based on similar group conversations with students. This measure assessed how often participants prepartied in the past month for each particular reason. Response options ranged on a five-point scale from, "1—Almost Never/Never" to "5—Almost Always/Always." This measure revealed a reliability estimate of $\alpha = .91$ in the present sample. Items included in this measure can be found in Table 2. After the 20-item measure, an open-ended response box asked students to identify any of their other reasons for prepartying not included in the measure. Finally, the Brief Young Adult Alcohol Consequences Questionnaire (BYAACQ; Kahler,

TABLE 1
Typical Prepartying Contexts for Men and Women who Prepartied in the Past Month

Item	Males ($n = 135$) Percentage	Females ($n = 188$) Percentage	Chi Square (X^2)
1 With friends/roommates, while getting ready to go out	78.3%	89.9%	8.48**
2 Before going to a party	52.4%	61.7%	2.85
3 Playing drinking games	50.3%	39.9%	3.60*
4 Drinking in the dorm before you went out	37.1%	43.6%	1.45
5 Before going to a concert/sporting event	27.3%	13.8%	9.30**
6 While sitting and talking with friends	23.1%	17.0%	1.89
7 Before going to a bar	16.1%	28.2%	6.73**
8 While listening to music	12.6%	24.5%	7.35**
9 Drinking in the car on your way out (as a passenger)	11.9%	18.1%	2.39
10 Alone, while getting ready to go out	9.1%	2.7%	6.53*
11 Drinking in the parking lot at destination (i.e., concert, sporting event)	8.4%	5.3%	1.24
12 Before going to a movie	5.6%	1.6%	4.04*
13 While watching TV	4.9%	4.8%	0.00
14 Before participating in a sporting event/activity	4.2%	1.1%	3.38
15 Drinking in the car on your way out (as a driver)	0.0%	1.6%	2.30
16 Before going on a date	0.0%	1.0%	0.76

Note: *represents a difference between males and females for the item; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

TABLE 2
Means and Standard Deviations of Reasons for Prepartying Items for Men and Women who Prepartied in the Past Month

Reason for Prepartying	Males (<i>n</i> = 142)		Females (<i>n</i> = 189)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 To show up to a party/social event buzzed	3.35	1.25	3.38	1.36
2 To show up to a party/social event drunk	2.34	1.31	2.29	1.31
3 To save money at the bar/club	2.73	1.53	2.79	1.60
4 Because I am underage and cannot purchase alcohol at the bar/club	2.47	1.57	2.52	1.54
5 To have something to do while I wait to go out	1.81	1.08	1.78	0.97
6 To meet members of the opposite sex during prepartying***	2.16	1.11	1.52	0.93
7 To meet members of the opposite sex once I go out***	2.44	1.22	1.83	1.15
8 To pump myself up to go out	2.51	1.27	2.75	1.26
9 Because having a few drinks before going out makes the night more interesting	3.04	1.28	2.98	1.35
10 To meet new friends once I go out	2.23	1.19	2.10	1.18
11 To meet new friends while prepartying	2.06	1.07	1.99	1.15
12 To relax before I go out	2.35	1.22	2.14	1.27
13 To enjoy my favorite drink in case the place I am going does not serve that drink	1.69	1.07	1.70	1.08
14 To work up the courage to talk to someone of the opposite sex that I wouldn't normally talk to sober.**	1.99	1.24	1.59	1.05
15 So I can have sex with someone***	1.67	1.11	1.15	0.60
16 It makes talking to new people easier*	2.57	1.26	2.24	1.23
17 Because other people are doing it**	1.89	1.11	1.59	0.90
18 It helps me feel more relaxed when meeting new members of the opposite sex once I go out**	2.31	1.29	1.94	1.20
19 It helps me better enjoy sporting events**	2.11	1.26	1.70	1.04
20 It helps me better enjoy concerts**	2.24	1.30	1.79	1.10

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ indicates significantly higher mean for male participants.

Strong, & Read, 2005), a measure of 24 alcohol-related consequences specifically related to college students, was included in the online assessment. Items include "I have had a hangover (headache, sick stomach) the morning after I had been drinking," "I have woken up in an unexpected place after heavy drinking," and "While drinking, I have said or done embarrassing things." The measure contained a yes/no response format (coded 1/0 for analyses) and a reliability estimate of $\alpha = .90$ in the present sample ($M = 6.06$, $SD = 5.49$; median = 3; range = 0–24).

Data Analyses

Drinking days per week and typical drinks per occasion were used to assess typical overall drinking. Prepartying days in the past month and typical amount consumed during prepartying events were selected as prepartying dependent variables of frequency and quantity. BAL during prepartying was estimated using the BAL formula from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (1994): men: (typical # of drinks during prepartying $\times [2.24146232 / (\text{weight} \times 0.58)] - (0.017 \times \text{typical hours spent prepartying})$); women: (typical # of drinks during

prepartying $\times [2.24146232 / (\text{weight} \times 0.49)] - (0.017 \times \text{typical hours spent prepartying})$). For all variables, outliers higher than three standard deviations above the mean were adjusted to a value of three standard deviations above the mean.

RESULTS

General Drinking and Prepartying Behavior

Male participants drank a mean of 2.06 ($SD = 1.44$) days per week and consumed a mean of 5.57 ($SD = 2.76$) drinks per occasion. Overall, female participants drank significantly less than men; consuming 3.88 ($SD = 2.25$) drinks on average, $t(441) = 6.88$, $p < .001$, over a mean of 1.50 ($SD = 1.16$) days, $t(442) = 4.48$, $p < .001$. Regarding prepartying behavior, males and females did not differ in the number of occasions in the past 30 days that they reported prepartying ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 3.83$ for males; $M = 3.18$, $SD = 3.45$ for females); $t(442) = 1.16$, $p = .25$. However, males reported drinking more drinks per prepartying occasion than females ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 2.12$ for males; $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.50$ for females),

$t(327) = 7.12, p < .001$. Despite this, men and women did not significantly differ in average prepartying estimated BAL; men reported a typical prepartying estimated BAL of .08 ($SD = .04$) and women reported an average estimated BAL of .09 ($SD = .05$).

Regarding alcohol-related consequences and behavior, the BYAACQ significantly and positively associated with prepartying frequency (for men, $r = .55, p < .001$; for women, $r = .58, p < .001$), quantity (for men, $r = .32, p < .001$; for women, $r = .28, p < .001$), and estimated BAL (for men, $r = .26, p < .01$; for women, $r = .30, p < .01$).

Typical Prepartying Contexts

The 16 prepartying contexts and situations endorsed by students can be found in Table 1. The largest percentage of male and female students chose prepartying with friends/roommates while getting ready to go out to a party as the most typical prepartying context. Chi square analyses revealed significant differences between the percentage of male students and the percentage of female students who chose to engage in prepartying during particular contexts. Males were more likely than females to preparty while playing drinking games, before going to a concert/sporting event, alone while getting ready to go out, and before going to a movie. Females were more likely than males to preparty with friends/roommates while getting ready to go out, before going to a bar, and while listening to music.

Reasons for Prepartying and Behavior

Males and females had the same three most highly endorsed reasons for prepartying—"To show up to a party/social event buzzed" (rated as most of the time or almost always/always by 50% of men and 55% of women), "To save money at the bar/club" (rated as most of the time or almost always/always by 37% of men and 42% of women), and "Because having a few drinks before going out makes the night more interesting" (rated as most or all of the time by 38% of men and 42% of women). Despite these similarities, men rated several reasons for prepartying to a higher degree than women did. Table 2 contains means and standard deviations for each reason for prepartying by sex. Reasons for prepartying related to meeting and relating with members of the opposite sex were rated higher by males, as were reasons for prepartying related to more enjoyment of concerts or sporting events.

To determine which reasons for prepartying were most closely associated with alcohol consumption during prepartying, we ran a series of correlations, split by sex, between each reason for prepartying and prepartying frequency, prepartying quantity, and typical prepartying estimated BAL (see Table 3). Small to moderate significant correlations existed between multiple reasons for prepartying and prepartying frequency, quantity, and estimated BAL. Notably, "to show up to a party/event drunk" correlated with prepartying estimated BAL at $r = .37, p < .001$ for men and at $r = .55, p < .001$ for females.

Reasons for Prepartying and Alcohol-Related Consequences

Correlations split by sex (see Table 4) revealed that for men, every reason for prepartying included in the study significantly and positively correlated with the measure of alcohol-related consequences (BYAACQ). For women, 19 of the 20 reasons for prepartying also significantly and positively correlated with the BYAACQ. The exception for female participants was "so I can have sex with someone." Boredom (i.e., "To have something to do while I wait to go out") had the highest correlation with the BYAACQ for men ($r = .44, p < .001$), while reaching intoxication prior to going out (i.e., "To show up to a party/social event drunk") correlated the highest with the BYAACQ for females, $r = .48, p < .001$. Subsequent regression analyses to determine if sex differences existed indicated that interactions between sex and prepartying behaviors did not significantly contribute to the equation predicting variance in alcohol-related consequences. Thus, both male and female prepartiers appeared to experience overall alcohol-related problems at similar rates.

Legal Drinking Age versus Underage Prepartying Behavior

As suggested, students may preparty because they may not be able to obtain alcohol at their intended destination spot. Therefore, we were interested to determine if prepartying was a function of being under 21 (i.e., the legal drinking age in the United States). One-hundred and four participants were 21 years of age or older, while 338 participants were under the age of 21 (two participants did not identify age). Despite differences in age, underage and of-age students did not differ in prepartying frequency in the past month ($M = 3.47, SD = 3.68$ versus $M = 2.92, SD = 3.38$, respectively, $p = .18$) or typical quantity consumed during prepartying ($M = 3.98, SD = 1.97$ versus $M = 3.50, SD = 1.77$, respectively, $p = .11$). However, during prepartying, participants under the age of 21 reported reaching higher estimated BALs than those 21 or older, .09 ($SD = .05$) vs. .07 ($SD = .04$), $t(323) = 2.31, p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

The drinking context of prepartying is emerging in the research as a prominent risky drinking event among college students (Borsari et al., 2007; Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007). The present study was designed to explore male and female students' specific reasons for engaging in prepartying, as well as how prepartying reasons relate to behavior and alcohol-related consequences. Through a series of descriptive and correlational analyses, it was revealed that males and females reported arriving to a social event already under the influence (i.e., "buzzed"), saving money, and making the night more interesting as their most highly endorsed reasons for prepartying. However, males had significantly higher ratings for reasons relating to meeting members of the opposite sex, facilitating sex opportunities, enjoying concerts and sporting events more, and conforming to

TABLE 3
Correlations between Reasons for Prepartying and Frequency, Quantity, and Estimated BAL in the Past Month for Men and Women who Prepartied in the Past Month

Reason for Prepartying	Males (<i>n</i> = 142)			Females (<i>n</i> = 189)		
	Prepartying Frequency	Prepartying Quantity	Prepartying BAL	Prepartying Frequency	Prepartying Quantity	Prepartying BAL
1 To show up to a party/social event buzzed	.28**	.34***	.39***	.40***	.48***	.44***
2 To show up to a party/social event drunk	.34***	.46***	.37***	.51***	.54***	.55***
3 To save money at the bar/club	.28**	.23**	.20*	.26***	.15*	.13
4 Because I am underage and cannot purchase alcohol at the bar/club	.11	.17*	.15	.13	.22**	.19**
5 To have something to do while I wait to go out	.32***	.14	.10	.19*	.24**	.27***
6 To meet members of the opposite sex during prepartying	.28**	.24**	.16	.14	.10	.07
7 To meet members of the opposite sex once I go out	.27**	.28**	.25**	.23**	.25**	.18*
8 To pump myself up to go out	.20*	.18*	.19*	.31***	.27***	.30***
9 Because having a few drinks before going out makes the night more interesting	.23**	.36***	.40***	.42***	.36***	.32***
10 To meet new friends once I go out	.25*	.17*	.15	.27***	.26***	.22**
11 To meet new friends while prepartying	.21*	.21*	.13	.21**	.15*	.15*
12 To relax before I go out	.20*	.22**	.17	.15*	.03	.05
13 To enjoy my favorite drink in case the place I am going does not serve that drink	.20*	.10	.02	.11	.09	.12
14 To work up the courage to talk to someone of the opposite sex that I wouldn't normally talk to sober	.16	.14	.10	.14	.17*	.12
15 So I can have sex with someone	.15	.17*	.09	.03	.03	.00
16 It makes talking to new people easier	.11	.13	.11	.17*	.16*	.17*
17 Because other people are doing it	.11	.10	.06	.02	.14	.21**
18 It helps me feel more relaxed when meeting new members of the opposite sex once I go out	.22*	.18*	.10	.17*	.20**	.15*
19 It helps me better enjoy sporting events	.27**	.31***	.27**	.16*	.12	.12
20 It helps me better enjoy concerts	.31***	.28**	.22**	.25**	.10	.16*

Note: **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001 indicates significant correlation.

social pressure. Alcohol-related consequences examined in this study were significantly and positively associated with all reasons for prepartying for men and with all but “so I can have sex with someone” for women. Interactions between sex and prepartying behaviors predicting consequences were non-significant suggesting that prepartying behavior may not have a differential impact on the experience of consequences for male and female students.

Previous work suggests that prepartying is most closely associated with general social reasons for drinking (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007). This study broadens that research to examine

the specific reasons for drinking within the social context of prepartying—addressing the question “why do students choose to engage in prepartying behavior?” Men and women appear to have similar reasons for prepartying, but compared to women, more men may preparty as a means to increase social and sexual facilitation with opposite sex peers. Perhaps men preparty as a way to ease the potential awkwardness or nervousness accompanying new social situations, especially with female students. Reliance on alcohol in social situations may help intensify feelings associated with self-esteem, low confidence, and social anxiety in the absence of the drug. Educating students about

TABLE 4
Correlations between Reasons for Prepartying and Alcohol-Related Consequences for Men and Women who Prepartied in the Past Month

Reason for Prepartying	Males (<i>n</i> = 142) BYAAQ	Females (<i>n</i> = 189) BYACCQ
1 To show up to a party/social event buzzed	.21*	.39***
2 To show up to a party/social event drunk	.35***	.48***
3 To save money at the bar/club	.21*	.25**
4 Because I am underage and cannot purchase alcohol at the bar/club	.19*	.20**
5 To have something to do while I wait to go out	.44***	.20**
6 To meet members of the opposite sex during prepartying	.26**	.25**
7 To meet members of the opposite sex once I go out	.27**	.27***
8 To pump myself up to go out	.33***	.30***
9 Because having a few drinks before going out makes the night more interesting	.26**	.42***
10 To meet new friends once I go out	.33***	.29***
11 To meet new friends while prepartying	.35***	.33***
12 To relax before I go out	.29***	.28***
13 To enjoy my favorite drink in case the place I am going does not serve that drink	.23**	.15*
14 To work up the courage to talk to someone of the opposite sex that I wouldn't normally talk to sober	.25**	.26***
15 So I can have sex with someone	.31***	.14
16 It makes talking to new people easier	.21*	.26***
17 Because other people are doing it	.34***	.21**
18 It helps me feel more relaxed when meeting new members of the opposite sex once I go out	.28**	.29***
19 It helps me better enjoy sporting events	.38***	.31***
20 It helps me better enjoy concerts	.32***	.35***
Prepartying frequency	.55**	.58***
Prepartying quantity	.32***	.28***
Prepartying BAL	.26**	.30***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

BYAACQ = Brief Young Adult Alcohol Consequences Questionnaire.

relying on alcohol as a “social lubricant” may help hinder these issues in further adulthood.

In addition to exploring the reasons for prepartying, we examined the contexts where prepartying generally takes place. Approximately 78% of males and 90% of females reported prepartying with friends/roommates while getting ready to go out as one of their most likely prepartying contexts. As in previous research (approximately 45% of males and females in Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007) a substantial portion of participants (approximately 52% and 67% of males and females, respectively) reported prepartying while playing drinking games, further highlighting the relationship between these two risky behaviors. However, in the present study, males were more likely than females to report prepartying while playing games.

The high estimated BALs reached during prepartying are a cause of concern because students may be reaching dangerous levels of intoxication ($\geq .08$) even before going out for the night, when they may potentially drink more. Students drinking multiple alcoholic beverages in a short period of time may not experience the full effects of the ingested alcohol until they have arrived at their destination. For some, high intoxication levels can ruin a planned evening; either by not ever making it to the event (e.g., passing out before leaving the preparty location) or by showing up too drunk to meet one's intended goals for the evening (e.g., meet new people; spend time with friends or a potential relationship partner). On the extreme end, intoxicated students lost in the crowd at a heavily attended event may not be able to receive the attention they may need from friends or medical personnel if experiencing alcohol poisoning,

vomiting, dehydration, or passing out. Related to this idea, research suggests that a student's perception of risk decreases as BAL increases (Fromme, Katz, & D'Amico, 1997), thus, students may not follow the same cues to stop drinking that they normally follow on non-preparty drinking days. For example, many students continue to drink after preparty (LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008; Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007), and not perceiving continued drinking to be a risk may lead some students to experience high BALs post-preparty. Therefore, the risk of experiencing negative consequences is even greater. It also is important to mention that as in previous work (LaBrie & Pedersen, 2008), men and women reached similar preparty estimated BALs despite differences in typical quantities consumed during preparty. This may be due to the varying levels of ethyl alcohol contained in males' and females' drink of choice and the differential impact alcohol has on different sexes (Freeza et al., 1990; Jones & Jones, 1976; Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002). Despite men reporting drinking more drinks during preparty, sex differences may actually place women at a similar intoxication level to men prior to going out for the night.

Students anecdotally claim that they preparty because they are underage and may not be able to obtain alcohol when they go out. In the present study, 39% of underage students reported preparty "because I am underage and cannot purchase alcohol at the bar/club" almost always/always or most of the time. However, the findings suggest that preparty frequency and quantity does not vary as a function of legal drinking age status. Participants under 21 and those of legal drinking age both prepartied to a similar extent. Nevertheless, of particular clinical interest is the finding that students under 21 reach higher estimated BALs than of-age students during preparty. One possible suggestion is that those under 21 try to reach a "buzz" or level of intoxication that will last them longer into the night, as they may be going to an event where access to alcohol is not possible. Alternatively, these students may drink in this way prior to a party to reduce the likelihood of being seen with alcohol in their hand and avoid facing judicial or legal consequences from campus or community authorities (Kilmer et al., 1999). A final interpretation is the notion that as students grow older and approach graduation, they may begin to mature out of heavy drinking behavior resulting in high BALs. This is supported by research suggesting that the majority of students tend to mature out of drinking post-graduation (Schulenberg et al., 2001).

These findings have implications for nurse practitioners and others involved in health care treatment with college students. First, screening for alcohol problems as well as brief alcohol interventions are becoming increasingly popular in health care settings (Babor et al., 2007; Hyman, 2006). The risk associated with college drinking suggests that health care settings that serve college students might be ideally situated for the delivery of brief alcohol interventions. Nurses and other personnel can be trained to deliver these brief interventions. These interventions may be more likely to be successful when practitioners show

understanding for and address the real contexts in which risky drinking occurs. As preparty is a significant risky context that occurs commonly among college students and is associated with negative alcohol consequences, nurses and others who work with college students need to be informed about preparty and the reasons students have for preparty. They can address preparty behavior either separately or as part of a brief intervention where they inform students of the increased risk associated with this behavior as well as engage students in a discussion about some of the common reasons for it. Further, college-based nurses and other health care personnel who service particular campus events need to be aware of and prepared for students arriving to events and school-sponsored activities with high BALs from preparty. Finally, although the research on preparty is just beginning, it is likely the adolescents may be engaging in this behavior prior to entrance into college. Thus, school-based nurses and others delivering health care to adolescents ought to be informed about preparty and willing to discuss it and its consequences with their patients.

Limitations

Despite the important findings, the present research has limitations involving both interpretation and methodology. Regarding interpretation, the use of a single item self-report measure to assess preparty behavior—including typical amount consumed and typical time spent drinking—may not have clearly captured a student's actual preparty behavior in the past month. Similarly, BALs were based on a student's recollection of typical behavior and are interpreted as estimates. In addition, the large majority of participants were from one site and the recruitment method used may have led subject pool participants to recruit friends with similar drinking patterns as themselves (e.g., prepartiers recruiting only friends who also prepartied). As the target population was "drinkers," we may have sampled a heavier drinking subset of students at the university. However, comparing these data to a campus-wide survey of nearly 1/4 of the university population, we found comparable demographics and drinking rates (i.e., student drinkers from the large scale study drank approximately two days per week and averaged nearly four drinks per occasion). Despite this, these results may not be generalizable to students at other universities and in different parts of the country. It has been our experience that students refer to this behavior differently in varying part of the country (e.g., "preparty" on the Southwest coast, "pregaming" in the Northeast, "prefunking" in the Pacific Northwest). It is unknown if as the label of this behavior varies so does the definition and popularity of the behavior. Thus, further research comparing preparty behavior throughout the U.S. is warranted.

Regarding methodology, participants were only able to endorse four preparty contexts on the online questionnaire. This limits the interpretability of Table 1, as students may have desired to endorse more preparty contexts rather than the four that were most relevant to them. Asking participants to indicate whether they had "ever prepartied in any of the following

contexts” may have been helpful to fully capture the portrait of prepartying drinking contexts. Clearly, future researchers could further develop and examine the assessment of prepartying behavior. It is noteworthy that four items specifically assessed drinking to facilitate meeting “members of the opposite sex.” Unfortunately, sexual orientation was not assessed in the survey, and the wording of the measure implied that participants were heterosexual. Consequently, the focus on “members of the opposite sex” may have created some ambiguity among findings. Finally, while reasons for prepartying were generated from anecdotal conversations with students, participants only had the option of endorsing reasons for prepartying defined in the 20-item measure. However, participants were given the opportunity to provide their own “other” reasons for prepartying. Most students did not endorse additional reasons, however a theme of “there may not be any alcohol at the party (i.e., it runs out before arriving, it is not provided, lines for kegs are too long)” emerged and was endorsed by 29 participants. Also, six students mentioned that prepartying was safer because the content of the drink is known and that it was “easier to trust the friends you preparty with more than strangers at a party.” A more in-depth examination of the potential “protective effects” of prepartying warrants attention.

The present study intended to further explore the high risk context of prepartying by examining students’ specific reasons for engaging in the behavior. In conclusion, although this topic is novel in the research literature, it is becoming increasingly clear that a stronger focus on prepartying behavior is a necessary and warranted addition to preventative and intervention programs with students. Particularly during screening within health care and counseling facilities, understanding the extent of this behavior and the reasons that motivate students to drink are important considerations. Connecting with students by using terms they understand (e.g., prepartying, pregaming, prefunking) can be an indispensable component of alcohol screening procedures and help yield a more accurate picture of students’ drinking patterns. Finally, during screening and interventions, discussing with students about their own specific reasons for engaging in a potentially harmful activity, as well as providing students with moderate drinking strategies to employ during prepartying, can help reduce the incidences of high BALs and negative consequences associated with this behavior.

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