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The private diaries of collegiate natural drinking groups: A look at the group formation, structure and continuity

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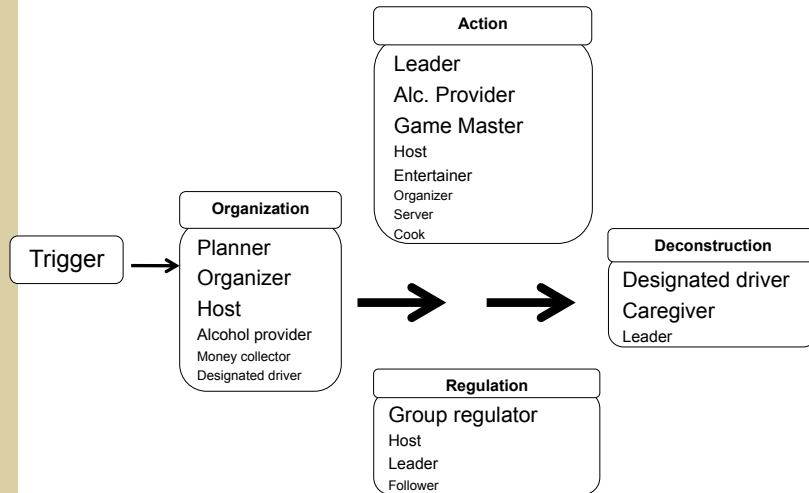


NDG Defined

- A collection of two or more people organized to share a social activity centered on drinking who are bonded by friendship or other interpersonal relationships
- NDG are distinct from parties, which are typically larger than an NDG
 - Parties can be attended by multiple NDG and a single NDG could attend multiple parties
- little is known about natural drinking groups:
 - How they form
 - Their structure
 - Their dynamics
 - How they deconstruct

Source: Lange et al 2006

Results of Interviews: Stages of group processes



Study Purpose

- The present study expands on our previous research
 - Increased No. subjects
 - Increased No. of groups
 - Repeated assessments
- This permits an analysis of the stability of the group structure over time and situations

Recruitment

- Recruitment location
 - Large university campus
 - Booths set up in high traffic areas
- Inclusion criteria
 - 18-24 years old
 - Enrolled at the university
 - Drank in the past year
 - Participated in a NDG in the past 30 days

Procedure

- Required to attend 1 training session (\$15)
- Complete Dairy (PLOG) entry once a week for 4 weeks
- Each week completed earned \$15, plus a \$15 bonus for completing all 4 (\$90 total)

Participants

- 71 students recruited
- 68 completed at least 1 week
- 44% female, 44% White, 32% Seniors, 28% Freshmen
- Mean age was 20 (sd = 1.65)
- Peak number of drinks in past 30 days = 9.6 (sd = 6.3) drinks
- 77% reported at least one past month heavy drinking episode (5/4 drinks)

PLOGs

- 244 total entries
- 200 were alcohol-related events
- 61 of the 68 participants completed all 4 entries including non-drinking events
 - 30 reported 4 drinking events
 - 20 reported 3 drinking events
 - 9 reported 2 drinking events
 - 2 reported 1 drinking event

Coding

- Coding was completed in 3 phases
 - 1st phase = detailed comprehensive coding of individual-level factors
 - 2nd phase = coding of between-week factors (e.g., stability of roles across weeks)
 - 3rd phase = coding checks

Data Coding

- By counting occurrences, qualitative variables were converted into quantitative data
 - Roles (leader, alcohol provider, follower, caregiver)
 - Couples present in the group
 - Mixed student groups
 - Gender composition of groups
 - Group size calculated by counting names and adding 1 (participant)

Results

- Groups averaged 4.5 people (range: 2-11, sd = 1.97)
- The mean percentage of group drinkers was 87% (13%-100%) excluding participant
- Average # of drinks per group drinkers ranged from 3.9 (sd = 1.5) in week 1 to 4.4 (sd = 1.45) in week 4.
- 75% of events were in private locations (homes, dorms, etc.)

Individual & Group Effects on Participant's Drinking

	B(S.E.)	Sig
Male vs. Female	-1.758 (.633)	.006
Age	-.426 (.208)	.041
Number of locations visited	.772 (.501)	.125
Party Type (1=hanging out, 2 = group level party, 3= larger party)	1.802 (.345)	.002
Public vs. Private	-.761 (.820)	.355
Percent of other drinkers in the group	4.154 (1.68)	.012

Roles stability (weeks 1 & 2)

- Occurrence of same roles in both weeks
- Leaders (49%)
 - Makes decision and guide the group
 - Leaders are likely to repeat across 2 weeks
 $\chi^2 = 10.2, p < .01$
 - More likely in parties (dorm or house) vs. bars or restaurants $\chi^2 = 8.46, p < .01$
- Followers (47%)
 - Elect to have little to no impact on group decisions
 - Tends to be the same people $\chi^2 = 3.77, p = .052$

Roles (continued)

- Caregivers (15%)
 - Take care or “babysit” other group members
 - No caregivers were present when the group was all male
 - Male caregivers helped female friends; females helped both male and female friends.
- Alcohol Providers (25%)
 - Most likely for parties $\chi^2 = 6.60, p < .01$
 - Most important for younger groups
- Couples (38%)
 - Although not a role, influenced many aspects of the group dynamics
 - Caring for a girlfriend cues more nurturing behavior by a male
 - Couples tend to be fracture point for groups split

Conclusions

- Effective 2nd step exploring relationships between NDG and drinking
- Stability of roles within group suggests a stable social structure of NDGs
- Contexts are also likely to interact with NDG characteristics (party size, location, party type etc)