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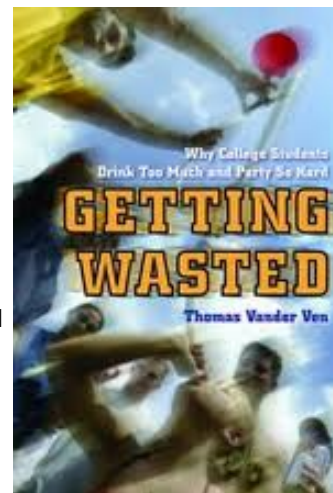
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## Best Practices: Understanding the Drinking Family

At the 2013 NASPA Mental Health, Alcohol, Other Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention Conference, Thomas Vander Ven (2011) presented information from his book, *Getting Wasted: Why College Students Drink Too Much and Party So Hard*. Vander Ven (2011) used a sociological lens to study how co-drinkers drink together to manage risk. He collected over 400 drinking stories, conducted 26 interviews, and spent over 100 hours of field work in bars, house parties, and at street festivals (Vander Ven, 2011).



Vander Ven posed that middle class millennial children have experienced decreased social autonomy due to parental choreography and increased surveillance, and therefore as emerging adults, look for ways to demonstrate adult competence. Doing so often comes in the form of “drunk support” and may explain why students seek out risk and risk management opportunities (Vander Ven, 2011). Vander Ven (2011) describes “drunk support” as the emotional and or instrumental supports delivered from one person to an intoxicated other. This allows students to develop identity and provides a practical context for exercising adult problem-solving skills.

Vander Ven (2011) identified three types of drunk support: 1) I'll hold your hair; 2) I got your back; and 3) Don't worry about it – you were hilarious. In the first, students are able to parent their sick friends, provide emotional support, and drunk counseling. The second calls students to determine what type of friends they are. Will they fight to defend others? This allows them to make and defend their identities. In the third, students are able to comfort their friends after dangerous or embarrassing drinking episodes. This reinforces the “drunk excuse” and post intoxication dissociation, where negative outcomes are redefined (Vander Ven, 2011).

Drunk support often occurs within what Vander Ven (2011) calls the “drinking family.” This is defined as a “dynamic core of friends organized around the facilitation of drinking episodes” (Vander Ven, 2011). The drunk family pursues fun and adventure and also works to minimize risks, including sexual assault together (Vander Ven, 2011). “Each member of the family fulfills a key role: choreographer, nurturer, enforcer, baby sitter, and the s\*!\$ show” (Vander Ven, 2011).

Vander Ven (2011) stated that it is important to recognize the drinking family as an informal peer group. Once drinking families are identified, student leaders such as resident advisors, can be trained to work with their leadership to reduce risk and negative consequences. In addition, conducting bystander intervention training and encouraging peer support can help students learn how to minimize negative consequences from alcohol consumption. Finally, administrative encouragement of leadership roles in positive student groups, such as student government, allows students to demonstrate adult competence in a healthy way (Vander Ven, 2011).

**Vander Ven, T. (2011). *Getting wasted: Why college students drink too much and party so hard*. New York, NY: New York University Press.**

## Timely Topic: Drunkorexia

While not a term recognized by the medical community, popular media coined “drunkorexia” in 2008 to describe the practice of restricting calories so more alcohol can be consumed without weight gain (CBS News, 2008; Kershaw, 2008; Smith, 2008; Stopper, 2008). As college freshman are a high-risk population for negative alcohol consequences, and research indicates a co-morbidity between substance dependency and eating disorders, Burke, Cremeens, Vail-Smith, and Woolsey (2010) conducted a study of 692 freshman to examine caloric restriction among students prior to planned alcohol consumption. The participants reported alcohol consumption, binge drinking, and caloric intake habits prior to drinking episodes (Burke et al., 2010).



To examine the frequency of disordered eating behaviors, specifically the restriction of caloric intake, the following questions were included: a) Do freshman students who have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days restrict their caloric intake on the days they choose to drink? b) Do freshman students who have binge drank in the past 30 days restrict their caloric intake on days they choose to drink? c) Does race/ethnicity impact one's behavior to restrict caloric intake on days when one chooses to drink? d) Does gender impact one's behavior to restrict caloric intake on days when one chooses to drink? and e) Does BMI impact one's behavior to restrict caloric intake on days when one chooses to drink? (Burke et al., 2010, p. 22). Burke et al. (2010) found that 14.2% (99 participants of 692) restricted caloric intake on planned drinking days, with 39 of those students doing so to avoid weight gain and 68 restricting to better feel the effects of alcohol (p. 24).

In addition, 32 students provided qualitative responses about calorie restriction prior to drinking, and five themes emerged: increased ability to drink, prevented getting sick, forgot to eat, was not hungry, and lacked money (Burke et al., 2010, p. 26). Burke et al. (2010) found that only one student indicated that the restriction of food was to account for the added calorie content of alcohol (p. 26).

Based on their findings, Burke et al. (2010) reported that drunkorexia may not be as widespread as it has been portrayed by the media. The authors found no association between body mass index (BMI) and alcohol consumption patterns (Burke et al., 2010, p. 28).

**Burke, S., Cremeens, J., Vail-Smith, K., & Woolsey, C. (2010). Drunkorexia: Calorie restriction prior to alcohol consumption among college freshman. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 54(2), 17-34.**

## Getting Game: Pregaming During Freshman Year

Pregaming, the practice of drinking before going out for an occasion where alcohol may or may not be served, is problematic for many college students, as it leads to heavy episodic drinking and negative consequences (Borsari, Boyle, & Hustad, 2007). Haas, Smith and Kagan (2013) conducted a study of 708 freshman to determine how this style of drinking changes during the first few weeks of college.



Students were assessed after orientation (mid-September) and again at the end of fall quarter (mid-November). Participants reported the number of times in the past three months they participated in “pre-partying” or “front-loading,” and Haas et al. (2013) also used the Behavioral Inhibition/Behavioral Activation Scales (BIS/BAS) to measure personality attributes (p. 97). Based on responses, students were stratified into one of four groups: no pregameing at either assessment, pregameing at baseline but not follow-up, pregameing at fall but not at baseline, and pregameing at both fall and baseline (Haas et al., 2013, p. 98).

Haas et al. (2013) found:

- At follow-up, more students were pregameing, consuming more drinks, and attaining a higher BAC per pregameing occasion
- Those who initiated pregameing upon college entry exhibited an increase in consequences at follow-up, while those who were pregameers at orientation showed a reduction in problems
- Students who were classified as fun seekers on the BIS/BAS were more likely to initiate pregameing behavior
- Approximately 38% of the overall sample did not pregame prior to college, but over half of those students initiated during the fall quarter (p. 98-101).

Because the majority of high school pregameers continue this behavior in college and many freshman begin pregameing during the first few weeks of school, Haas et al. (2013) suggested including information about the negative effects in prevention programming as soon as students arrive on campus before habits are formed or integrated as college practices. In addition, social norms media campaigns can be tailored to this issue to reduce misperceptions and prevalence of behavior.

**Haas, A., Smith, S., & Kagan, K. (2013). Getting “game”: Pregaming changes during the first weeks of college. *Journal of American College Health*, 61(2), 95-105.**

## What's Happening at Your School?

### Mississippi State University: Coming Soon - Summer Workshop! Monday, June 24 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This summer, MSU will host a meeting for MCPP members led by Jason Powell, director of the Coalition for Healthy and Safe Campus Communities (CHASCo), which is an organization in Tennessee that is very similar to MCPP. Powell will lead a workshop to present ways that our group can strengthen alcohol/drug initiatives on campus and provide specific intervention suggestions. In addition, he will address the challenges of coalition membership and how to best alleviate those, as well as budgetary concerns and suggestions of expense priorities for alcohol education/prevention. For more information on CHASCo, please visit: <http://www.tnchasco.org/>. We look forward to seeing you in June!

The meeting will take place in the Longest Student Health Center, 3rd floor classroom, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and lunch will be served. Please let Michelle know if you will be able to attend: [mlafleur@saffairs.msstate.edu](mailto:mlafleur@saffairs.msstate.edu)

### Mississippi University for Women: Drinking and Driving Prevention

During March and April, MUW's Stay Dry! Interns held several events to educate students about the dangers of drinking and driving. The first allowed participants to release environmentally friendly balloons filled with helium in remembrance of people they knew that lost their lives because of drunk driving. Before participants were allowed to release the balloons, a short speech was given about the purpose, and afterward, there was a moment of silence.

To help students remember to be responsible during spring break, the interns also implemented a Pledge Board Signing event. The objective was to get students to sign the pledge board and another list stating that they would not drink and drive over spring break, and they would be responsible if/when drinking. In addition, students were also given information about being responsible with alcohol. What began as a one-day event grew to two because of its popularity.



MUW Student Signs Pledge

Finally, during Alcohol Awareness Month, MUW hosted Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) speaker Sherrel Clark, who lost three family members as a result of another individual's decision to drink and drive. Clark's goal is to educate others on the dangers of driving under the influence and how it impacts the lives of numerous individuals, not just those choosing to take part in the risky health behavior.

## Poll: Pregaming

Does your institution provide programs or events to educate students about pregameing? If so, when does this occur?

Do you include it in any social norms campaigns?

Email Michelle, and your results will be published anonymously in the next edition. We can also discuss possibilities for addressing this problem at the summer meeting!



## Suggestions?

If there is a specific topic you would like us to address in the next edition of this newsletter, please email Michelle. Also, please share with us the ways in which you address the issues covered in this edition on your campus. We want to use this newsletter as an informal way to share ideas with one another, and we'll publish your feedback (anonymously) in the next edition!