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Semester and Event-Specific Motives for Alcohol Use During Spring Break: Associated Protective Strategies and Negative Consequences

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Abstract

Motives surrounding alcohol use behavior are important for understanding college student drinking. However, no previous research has addressed how motives for and against drinking during specific events associated with high-risk drinking, such as Spring Break, may differ from motives for and against drinking during the regular semester. Further, we examine the extent to which semester and Spring Break motives are associated with alcohol use, protective behavioral strategies (PBS), and consequences. Participants were college students ($N = 261$; 55% women) who provided data both immediately prior to (Wave 1) and after (Wave 2) Spring Break. Fun/Social motives for drinking were greater for Spring Break, and Driving motives against drinking were lower for Spring Break, compared to semester drinking. Relax and Image motives for drinking and Physical/Behavioral motives for not drinking during Spring Break did not differ from semester motives. Spring Break motives for and against drinking were associated with total drinks, maximum drinks, PBS, and experienced negative consequences during Spring Break. Students' specific motives regarding drinking during Spring Break predict high-risk drinking and may be utilized in creating salient event-specific interventions.

Keywords

Spring Break; motives; alcohol; college; protective behavioral strategies (PBS); drinking consequences

Introduction

Although studies have shown that Spring Break is associated with heavy alcohol use and risk for experiencing negative consequences (Grekin et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2006; Neighbors et al., 2011; Patrick et al., 2011b), less is known about the factors that may relate to why

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college students engage in high-risk drinking during this time. To better understand the risks students take with Spring Break drinking, we examine the reasons why students report drinking during Spring Break. Previous research has shown drinking motives to be associated with heavy drinking, protective behavioral strategies (PBS), and negative consequences (Cooper et al., 1992; Kuntsche et al., 2005; Martens et al., 2007; Patrick et al., 2011a); however, research has yet to examine whether typical drinking motives, such as those regarding the regular semester, vary from motives specific to high-risk events like Spring Break. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to compare semester motives for alcohol use with Spring Break-specific motives for alcohol use to examine the extent to which students view Spring Break drinking as different than drinking during the regular semester. A secondary aim is to determine whether motives for Spring Break drinking predict Spring Break drinking behaviors, PBS, and negative consequences, above and beyond typical drinking and semester motives.

1.1 Spring Break and Alcohol Use

Prior research has shown that college student drinking is highly variable, with large temporal variations in drinking throughout the academic year (Del Boca et al., 2004; Greenbaum et al., 2005). Spring Break is one occasion when college student drinking increases. For a majority of college students, Spring Break is associated with elevated alcohol-related risks, even for those who would typically be categorized as low or infrequent drinkers (Greenbaum et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2009). One reason that drinking may increase during Spring Break is that many college students go on Spring Break trips, traveling with the intent to engage in high-risk behaviors (Josiam et al., 1998; Maticka-Tyndale and Herold, 1997; Patrick et al., 2011b). For example, students who selected a location because of its party reputation drank more and were intoxicated more often compared to students who selected the same location for non-party reasons, such as for its price (Smeaton et al., 1998). Thus, these findings suggest that there are motives specific to Spring Break drinking and that students' motives may predict Spring Break drinking behavior.

1.2 Motives for and against Drinking

Alcohol Use and Related Consequences—Research examining motivational models for alcohol use has suggested that alcohol use serves a variety of functions for individuals, which are represented by motives or reasons for drinking (Cooper, 1994; Cox and Klinger, 1988; Grant et al., 2007). Past work has shown that adolescents and young adults typically drink for social rewards, to enhance positive and/or to reduce negative mood, or avoid social alienation (Cooper et al., 1995; Cox and Klinger, 1988; Kuntsche et al., 2005; Patrick et al., 2011d). Motives and reasons for drinking are associated with short-term and long-term consequences, including quantity and frequency of alcohol use and alcohol-related problems (Carey and Correia, 1997; Martens et al., 2003; Park and Levenson, 2002; Patrick and Maggs, 2010; Patrick et al., 2011c). For example, social reasons for drinking are associated with more moderate levels of alcohol use, enhancement reasons are associated with heavier alcohol use, and coping reasons are associated with more problematic drinking behaviors (e.g., Cooper et al., 1992; Kuntsche et al., 2005; Patrick et al., 2011c).

Protective Behavioral Strategies—While a large literature has documented that drinking motives predict alcohol use and negative consequences, little research has examined drinking motives in relation to PBS. Increasing the engagement or use of PBS is a goal of many harm reduction approaches. Of the research that has been conducted, enhancement, social, and coping motives have been shown to be negatively associated with PBS such as limiting drinking quantities, spacing drinks, and being aware of where the drink has been at all times (Martens et al., 2007; Patrick, 2011a). Conformity motives for drinking have been shown to be positively related to PBS (Patrick et al., 2011a). Martens et al. (2007)

also found that drinking for enhancement and social reasons was partially mediated by PBS in predicting alcohol use and related problems. Thus, students' use of PBS was based in some part on their motives to use alcohol. Additionally, Patrick et al. (2011a) found that coping and conformity motives moderated the relationships between PBS and negative alcohol consequences, such that those most likely to report alcohol problems were those higher in coping and conformity motives who did not use many PBS. Thus, while the research literature examining drinking motives in relation to PBS is relatively new, findings generally support the associations of motives and PBS use. We extend the literature by examining the associations between Spring Break-specific motivations and PBS use.

Current research on motives and PBS does not address motives against drinking or motives to limit drinking, despite the fact that it is often these motives that are targeted in intervention programs. For example, efforts to increase students' awareness of negative drinking consequences, such as passing out, hangovers, embarrassment, and unsafe driving, are often prevention strategies designed to increase the use of PBS and reduce high-risk drinking. Empirical study of these motives against drinking, and how they vary by time and experience, is sparse (Johnson and Cohen, 2004; Patrick and Maggs, 2008), although motives to avoid negative consequences are associated with drinking less and with experiencing fewer alcohol problems (Epler et al., 2009; Patrick and Maggs, 2010). Furthermore, the ways in which these motives may differ for Spring Break compared to typical drinking during the semester are an important area for further research describing event-specific drinking and informing intervention programs targeting high-risk occasions like Spring Break.

1.3 The Present Study

The present study contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, differences between general and event-specific drinking motives have not been examined, although event-specific intervention approaches often rely on creating a "hook" to engage participants in the intervention content (Neighbors et al., in press), so understanding what motivates students in the context of the event is particularly important. Effective strategies should be informed by students' motives for the event. Second, both reasons for drinking and for limiting drinking are included. Less is known regarding why students limit their drinking, especially during events like Spring Break associated with heavy alcohol use, despite the clear relevance of these motives for understanding level of alcohol use and utilization of protective strategies during these events. Third, clarifying the associations between drinking motives and PBS and experienced consequences during Spring Break is important for understanding who is at risk for the most severe negative experiences and how to increase utilization of PBS to mitigate risks. As such, our research aims were to: (1) Compare semester drinking motives to Spring Break motives, (2) Determine if Spring Break motives were predictive of Spring Break alcohol use and PBS (with semester motives partialled out), and (3) Examine the extent to which motives predict negative alcohol-related consequences experienced on Spring Break.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants included undergraduate college students ($N = 261$; 55% women) between the ages of 18 and 21 who planned to go on a Spring Break trip with their friends and were surveyed about three weeks before Spring Break. Of these, 61% later reported actually going on a Spring Break trip. Respondents were asked to check all race/ethnicities that applied to them. The sample was 78.2% White, 18.1% Asian, 4.8% Black, 2.6% Hispanic, 1.1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3.0% Other. Of the 320 eligible students contacted, 270

(83.9% response rate) completed the Wave 1 (pre-Spring Break) survey. At Wave 2 (the week after Spring Break), 263 students (97.4% retention rate) completed the survey. In the analyses presented here, data from 261 students (with data on each of the between-person variables of interest) were available.

2.2 Procedures

Participants were screened in through the Student Life Survey (SLS; e.g., McCabe et al., 2005, 2006; McCabe, 2008), a biennial survey with a random sample of undergraduate students at a large university in the Midwest. In January 2011, a random sample of 3,000 students was drawn from the Registrar's Office. Selected students received a mailed pre-notification letter inviting them to participate and informing them that they would receive an email containing a link to the web-based SLS. The overall SLS response rate was 47%. Based on data provided by students in the SLS, eligible students were invited into the current study in February. Students were considered eligible ($N = 320$) if: (a) they were between the ages of 18 and 21 (86% of the SLS sample), (b) they reported planning to go on a Spring Break trip with their friends (29%), and (c) they were willing to be re-contacted by researchers (86%).

Participants for the current study were sent a mailed letter with a pen embossed with the Spring Break Behavior and Health (SBBH) study logo as a pre-notification. The letter included a personal identification number to be used for authentication in data collection. A couple of days later, participants were sent an email with a secure link to the Wave 1 (pre-Spring Break) survey. All surveys were web-based. One half of participants were each randomly assigned to an intervention and a control group. Both groups were assessed with a Wave 1 baseline survey, which was immediately followed by a personalized feedback intervention for the intervention group only. Intervention group is controlled in the analyses and results pertaining to the limited intervention effects are presented elsewhere (Patrick, Lee, & Neighbors, in review). A Wave 2 follow-up assessment was conducted immediately after Spring Break. Participants were offered incentives for the Wave 1 (\$25) and Wave 2 (\$30) surveys. All procedures were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board and a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality was obtained for the project.

2.3 Measures

At Wave 1, participants were asked about their typical motives surrounding alcohol use during the semester and their Spring Break-specific motives for alcohol use. Semester motives for drinking were assessed with the Importance of Consequences of Drinking (ICOD) measure (e.g., Lee et al., 2011; Patrick and Maggs, 2008, 2010). The stem question says, "There are many positive or desirable consequences that people might wish to experience as a result of drinking alcohol. How important is it to you to experience each of the following consequences as a result of drinking this semester?" Responses were on a scale of 0=*Not at all important to me* to 4=*Very important to me*. Three reasons for drinking subscales were used: Fun/Social (5 items, $\alpha = .88$; e.g., "have a good time"), Relax (4 items, $\alpha = .88$; e.g., "help you unwind"), and Image (4 items, $\alpha = .84$; e.g., "seem more exciting to others"). Mean values were computed for each scale.

At Wave 1, semester motives for not drinking or for limiting drinking were assessed with the Importance of Consequences of Drinking (ICOD) measure (e.g., Lee et al., 2011; Patrick and Maggs, 2008, 2010). The stem question says, "There are many negative or undesirable consequences that you might NOT wish to experience as a result of drinking alcohol. How important is it to you to avoid experiencing the following consequences as a result of drinking this semester?" Responses are on the same scale as motives for drinking: 0=*Not at all important to me* to 4=*Very important to me*. Two motives against drinking subscales

were used: Physical/Behavioral (8 items, $\alpha=.88$; e.g., “pass out,” “do or say something embarrassing”) and Driving (4 items, $\alpha=.87$; e.g., “have no one sober enough to drive”).

Spring Break-specific motives for drinking and Spring Break-specific motives for not drinking were also asked at Wave 1 with the same measures as above, with the substitution of “during Spring Break” for “this semester” at the end of the stem questions. Subscale reliabilities for Spring Break-specific motives for drinking (Fun/Social $\alpha=.92$, Relax $\alpha=.89$, and Image $\alpha=.89$) and against drinking (Physical/Behavioral $\alpha=.92$, Driving $\alpha=.88$) were similar to motives surrounding semester drinking.

Spring Break trip was coded at Wave 2 based on participants’ responses to the question, “Where did you spend each night of Spring Break (10 nights total)?” Response options were: In (city name)/Where you live now, At a family home or friend’s family home, On vacation with family or a friend’s family, On a Spring Break trip with friends, On a service project or volunteer work trip, and Other. The total number of days students spent on a Spring Break trip with friends was used in analyses.

Alcohol Use. At Wave 1, students were asked about their typical drinks consumed with the question, “During the last 30 days (one month), how many alcoholic drinks did you have on a typical day when you drank alcohol?” At Wave 2, a measure similar in format to a brief time-line follow-back (Sobell and Sobell, 2000) and the daily drinking questionnaire (Collins et al., 1985) assessed alcohol use. Participants were asked, “During the 10 days of Spring Break, how much alcohol (measured in number of drinks) did you drink each day?” A drink was identified as, for example, a 12-ounce can/bottle of beer, 4-ounce glass of wine, 12-ounce bottle/can of wine cooler, or mixed drink or shot glass of liquor. A drop-down menu was available with choices from 0 to 25+. Students who had previously reported not drinking at all during Spring Break were given a 0 for each day. Total number of drinks reported across Spring Break was used as a dependent variable. In addition, participants were asked about their maximum drinks during Spring Break with the question, “During Spring Break, what is the maximum number of drinks containing alcohol that you drank within a 24-hour period?”

Protective behavioral strategies (PBS) were assessed at Wave 2 with the Protective Behavioral Strategies Survey (Martens et al., 2005). The measure was modified to address PBS use during Spring Break, specifically. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they engaged in protective behaviors “when using alcohol or ‘partying’ during Spring Break” on a scale of Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, and Always. The items represent three subscales: Limiting/Stopping drinking (7 items, $\alpha = .89$, e.g., “determined not to exceed a set number of drinks”), Manner of drinking (4 items¹, $\alpha = .82$, e.g., “drank slowly, rather than gulped or chugged”), and Serious Harm Reduction (3 items, $\alpha = .81$, e.g., “used a designated driver”). Means for each subscale were created.

Negative alcohol-related consequences during Spring Break were reported at Wave 2 in response to the question, “During Spring Break, how many times did the following happen to you while you were drinking or because of your drinking?” Items were adapted from two subscales of the ICOD (described above): Physical/Behavioral (e.g., “passed out,” “did or said something embarrassing”) and Driving (e.g., “found yourself in a situation where no one was sober enough to drive”). A sum of all negative drinking consequences was calculated.

¹The item “drank shots of liquor” was excluded.

2.4 Plan of Analysis

The first research aim was to compare semester alcohol use motives to Spring Break-specific alcohol use motives. Paired-samples *t*-tests were used to compare the five semester motives subscales to their five corresponding Spring Break-specific motives subscales. The second research aim was to examine the associations between motives and alcohol use behaviors, PBS, and consequences. In particular, we were interested in whether Spring Break-specific motives would predict behavior during Spring Break, above and beyond other variables in the model. A series of hierarchical linear regression models were estimated to predict alcohol use and three types of PBS (stopping/limiting, manner of drinking, and serious harm reduction). Gender, number of days on a Spring Break trip, intervention group, and typical drinks served as control variables. Semester motives for and against alcohol use and Spring Break motives were the primary independent variables. A final regression model was used to address the third research aim, to examine predictors of negative consequences, with the same predictors described above.

3. Results

3.1 Spring Break-Specific Motives

Figure 1 shows the means for the ICOD subscales for each time frame. Paired-samples *t*-tests indicated that two of the five subscales differed for semester versus Spring Break-specific motives. On average, Fun/Social motives were significantly greater for Spring Break than for semester drinking, $t(254)=-2.14$, $p<.05$. Driving motives were significantly lower for Spring Break than semester drinking, $t(254)=2.96$, $p<.01$. Effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) for these comparisons are small: .13 for Fun/Social and .18 for Driving. Spring Break-specific Relax ($t[254]=0.96$), Image ($t[254]=- .92$), and Physical/Behavioral ($t[254]=1.19$) motives did not significantly differ from semester motives (all $p>.05$). The percentage of students who reported that motivations (based on mean values of subscales) were more important during Spring Break than the semester was 48% for Fun/Social, 33% for Relax, 29% for Image, 44% for Physical/Behavioral, and 19% for Driving. No difference was reported by 23% for Fun/Social, 23% for Relax, 38% for Image, 22% for Physical/Behavioral, and 61% for Driving. The percentage of students who reported that motives were less important during Spring Break than during the semester was 29% for Fun/Social, 44% for Relax, 33% for Image, 33% for Physical/Behavioral, and 20% for Driving.

3.2 Alcohol Use Behaviors and Consequences

Descriptive statistics of outcome variables, control variables, semester motives, and Spring Break motives are shown in Table 1. Bivariate correlations with outcome variables are also shown. Multivariate regression results for alcohol use (total drinks and maximum drinks) are shown in Table 2. With respect to the control predictors, men (with only trend level of significance for total drinks), students who went on longer Spring Break trips, and those who typically drank more tended to consume more total drinks and more maximum drinks during Spring Break. There were no significant differences by intervention group.

In the final multivariate model, semester drinking motives did not predict Spring Break alcohol use, although on the block they were entered (before Spring Break motives) they trended toward predicting 2.7% ($p<.10$) of additional variance for total drinks and predicted 3.3% ($p<.05$) of additional variance for maximum drinks. Spring Break-specific motives were associated with alcohol use in the multivariate model. Having more important Fun/Social reasons for drinking during Spring Break was associated with consuming a greater number of total drinks and maximum drinks on Spring Break. Rating Relax motives as more important on Spring Break was associated with a trend toward a smaller number of total drinks. There were no differences by Spring Break motives for Image motives. Students who

reported that Physical/Behavioral motives for not drinking were more important on Spring Break consumed fewer total drinks and maximum drinks. Reports that Driving motives for not drinking were more important on Spring Break predicted more total and maximum drinks.

3.3 Protective Behavioral Strategies

A parallel set of analyses predicted three domains of behavioral strategies students used to protect themselves against harms related to alcohol consumption (see Table 3). Men reported using fewer Serious Harm Reduction strategies than did women, but there were no gender differences in Stopping/Limiting and Manner of Drinking strategies. Students who went on longer Spring Break trips with friends reported a trend toward using more Stopping/Limiting and reported more Serious Harm Reduction PBS. Those in the intervention group reported a trend toward using more Manner of Drinking PBS.

Semester motives for drinking were associated with Spring Break PBS. Drinking to Relax predicted a trend toward greater use of Serious Harm Reduction strategies. Placing greater importance on Physical/Behavioral consequences of drinking during the semester was associated with using more Stopping/Limiting strategies and Manner of Drinking strategies, but not with Serious Harm Reduction strategies. Greater semester Driving motives were associated with using fewer Stopping/Limiting and Manner of Drinking strategies.

Spring Break-specific motives predicted additional variance in Manner of Drinking and Serious Harm Reduction PBS. Drinking for Fun/Social motives during Spring was associated with using more Manner of Drinking and Serious Harm Reduction PBS. Greater Image motives during Spring Break predicted a trend toward using more Stopping/Limiting strategies. There were no differences by Spring Break Relax or Physical/Behavioral motives. Having greater motives to avoid Driving consequences of drinking during Spring Break than during the semester was associated with using more Serious Harm Reduction strategies.

3.4 Predicting Negative Consequences

Table 4 presents results for a model predicting negative consequences of alcohol use experienced on Spring Break. In the multivariate model, the only significant control variable was typical drinking, which was associated with more negative consequences. Semester motives for drinking were significant predictors of negative consequences experienced during Spring Break, such that those with greater Relax motives for drinking during the semester experienced more negative consequences.

Spring Break motives were also significant as a block of predictors. However, only one coefficient reached significance in the multivariate model. Having greater Image motives for Spring Break drinking was associated with experiencing more negative alcohol consequences on Spring Break. In addition, greater concern over Physical/Behavioral consequences on Spring Break was associated with a trend toward experiencing fewer negative consequences.

4. Discussion

A long tradition of research focused on motivational models of alcohol use has suggested that there are many different reasons college students drink alcohol. Drinking motives have been found to be proximal predictors of alcohol use and often show direct and indirect relationships with alcohol-related consequences (Cooper, 1994; Cooper et al., 1995; Cox and Klinger, 1988; Grant et al., 2007; Patrick and Maggs, 2010; Patrick et al., 2011c). Recent research has focused on within-person variability of drinking motives, suggesting that motives can vary based on the day, context, and experienced consequences (Arbeau et

al., 2011; Patrick and Maggs, 2008). The present research extends prior work by examining whether college students adjust their motives during a known specific high-risk drinking occasion, namely Spring Break from college, and whether these event-specific motives predict alcohol use during the specific event. Understanding event-specific motivations is particularly important for engaging students in interventions designed to promote health during known times of risk. Second, reasons for not drinking were also included in order to describe why students choose to limit their drinking or engage in protective strategies. Finally, documenting the relationship between motives, PBS, and negative consequences is necessary in order to identify which students are most vulnerable, what times of the year pose acute risks, and potential strategies to target intervention messages to mitigate potential harm.

Our findings suggest that college students' motives for Spring Break drinking do indeed differ from their semester drinking motives, although primarily in two domains. On average across the sample, we found that students reported that experiencing fun and social motives for drinking was more important during Spring Break than during the semester and that avoiding driving-related consequences was less important during Spring Break than it usually was. Spring Break may be seen as a time-out from normal responsibilities (e.g., academic or work demands), particularly for students who go on a Spring Break trip. Increases in the importance of fun/social motives during this time support the notion that high-risk and situation-specific drinking may be planned and "reasoned" (Lee et al., 2006). Interestingly, driving-related consequences may not be as salient for students during Spring Break, possibly because students do not anticipate being in situations where they need to drive.

We found that typical drinking motives during the semester were associated with PBS utilized during Spring Break, and Spring Break alcohol-related consequences, although typical drinking motives were not associated with Spring Break alcohol use once Spring Break-specific motives were included. Students who typically drink to relax during the semester were more likely to use serious harm reduction protective strategies.

Not surprisingly, students who worried about physical/behavioral effects from drinking during the semester engaged in more stopping/limiting and manner of drinking protective strategies during Spring Break. Interestingly, being motivated to avoid driving consequences during the semester was associated with less utilization of stopping/limiting and manner of drinking protective strategies during Spring Break. It may be that avoiding driving-related consequences is a major influence on limiting one's semester drinking; however, during Spring Break students are less likely to use protective strategies perhaps because they are less likely to be in situations where they are driving. Overall, students may be adjusting their use of PBS during Spring Break to match their motivations and intentions for drinking during this high-risk event.

While we found that there were significant differences overall only between semester and Spring Break-specific fun/social and driving motives, we did find that an individual's Spring Break motives were related to alcohol use and consequences during Spring Break, above and beyond the effects of semester motives. Students who said that fun/social reasons and avoiding driving consequences motives were more important during Spring Break tended to report more drinking, but also more manner of drinking and serious harm reduction protective strategies, perhaps in anticipation of increased alcohol consumption. Similarly, students who reported more important motives to avoid driving-related consequences consumed more alcohol, but also engage in more serious hard reduction strategies.

Not surprisingly, individuals who reported that it was more important to avoid consequences like passing out or doing something embarrassing during Spring Break reported drinking less and experiencing fewer negative consequences during Spring Break. A similar finding was revealed for relaxation motives, in that greater importance placed on relaxing during Spring Break was associated with less total drinking. Students who were motivated by image enhancement as a reason for drinking during Spring Break reported using more stopping/limiting protective strategies but also experienced more negative consequences during Spring Break. These students may drink to impress others, which may occur in new or different contexts with new peers during Spring Break, and thus may experience different types of consequences than typical in these new situations. While these students engaged in stopping/limiting strategies more, it may be that the limits they set for Spring Break drinking is quite a bit higher than other students and thus also associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing negative consequences. Further research should examine whether students with image enhancement motives are more likely to have higher intentions for drinking during Spring Break or whether they are more susceptible to interpersonal pressures.

Spring Break alcohol use and protective strategies also helped explain who experienced more negative alcohol-related consequences during Spring Break, above and beyond the variance explained by semester motives and Spring Break-specific motives. Students who consumed more alcohol also reported more alcohol-related consequences. More notably, students who reported more protective strategies, in particular, manner of drinking protective strategies like drinking slowly and avoiding trying to out-drink others, experienced fewer negative consequences. This supports previous work suggesting that PBS is an important mediator of motives (e.g., Martens et al., 2007) and an effective target of intervention efforts to reduce negative alcohol consequences (e.g., Larimer et al., 2007).

The present findings are consistent with previous research and further demonstrate that Spring Break trip-taking is a risk factor associated with greater drinking. Students with intentions to drink during Spring Break may also anticipate increased risk of negative consequences, and thus try to minimize the occurrence of these negative consequences by engaging in additional or alternative PBS (Lewis et al., 2012). This strategy may work for the most part, as there was not a significant correlation between number of nights on a Spring Break trip and negative consequences, despite differences in drinking. It would be worthwhile in the future to explore the synergistic effect of going on a trip with different motives and semester drinking status (e.g., lighter versus heavier drinkers). Prior research has shown that lighter drinkers are at great risk of experiencing negative consequences during times of heavier drinking, possibly because of lack of tolerance or experience with drinking in certain situations (Lee et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2009). It would be interesting to explore whether there may be differences in Spring Break motives between lighter and heavier drinkers and the implications for drinking and consequences during Spring Break. In addition, a more thorough investigation of the extent to which use of various types of PBS mediates the association between alcohol use and negative consequences is warranted.

Event-specific interventions targeting drinking associated with known high-risk events are starting to be developed and evaluated with some success. Neighbors et al. (2009) developed a web-based personalized feedback intervention for 21st birthday drinking and found reduced drinking on 21st birthdays compared to an assessment control group, particularly for college students who intended to drink more during their birthday celebration. The intervention in the present study appeared to increase manner of drinking protective strategies, although there were no other observed effects. The findings related to Spring Break motives suggests that students have motives regarding drinking that are specific to Spring Break and this information could be used for screening and incorporated into personalized feedback interventions. For example, interventions could be tailored to students

who have greater fun/social motives, greater image motives, and lower concerns over physical or behavioral consequences during Spring Break, since these students may be at higher risk for drinking and negative consequences. Interventions could also incorporate individual motives and highlight strategic PBS which may be effective in reducing risk from high intended drinking and resulting consequences. The findings related to driving suggest that interventions should incorporate physical context, as well as motives, into discussions about drinking and consequences. That is, interventions could include discussions about how and why motives may be different during Spring Break and how the context (e.g., being on a trip, not having access to a car) influences decision making. Interventions that use general, rather than event-specific, motives may not be able to find the right “hook” to engage participants in the material presented.

The present study should be evaluated in light of certain limitations, including sample generalizability and study design. The sample is drawn from an intervention trial, which adds additional complexity to the data. It should also be noted that the sample came from one Midwest university and students were selected based on pre-Spring Break intentions for going on a Spring Break trip; however, less than 2/3 reported actually going on a trip. It would be interesting to explore predictors of the discrepancy between intended and actual trip taking. The present study advances the field in that it also focuses on motives for avoiding negative consequences; however, the negative consequences assessed during Spring Break may not have adequately assessed the type of consequences that occur and are salient to college students during Spring Break, particularly if they are on trips (e.g., sexual risks and consequences, safety concerns). Further research could examine a broader range of consequences experienced, more detail about socially acceptable protective strategies, and the extent to which motivations and protective strategies predict different domains of event-specific consequences.

This study documents differences between Spring Break drinking motives and drinking motives during the regular semester, with small effect sizes for higher motivations for fun and social experiences and lower concerns about driving consequences during Spring Break. Furthermore, after controlling for motivations for drinking during the regular semester, Spring Break motives for and against drinking were associated with drinking behavior, protective behavioral strategies, and experienced negative consequences during Spring Break. Therefore, understanding the event-specific context of alcohol use behaviors can potentially improve the ability to predict outcomes and intervene effectively.

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Highlights

- Fun/Social motives for drinking were greater for Spring Break than the semester.
- Driving motives against drinking were lower for Spring Break than the semester.
- Both semester and Spring Break motives predicted behavior.
- Protective behavioral strategies predicted fewer negative consequences.

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

Figure 1.
Mean Differences in Semester and Spring Break-Specific Alcohol Use Motives

Descriptive Statistics Regarding Spring Break Alcohol Use, Protective Behavioral Strategies (PBS), and Negative Alcohol-Related Consequences.

Table 1

	Mean (SD)	Range	N	Correlations With Outcome Variables					
				1	2	3	4	5	6
Outcome Variables									
1. Total Number of Drinks	17.95 (25.41)	0–150	262						
2. Maximum Drinks on one day	5.23 (5.94)	0–25	263	.84***					
3. Stopping/Limiting PBS	2.13 (1.10)	1–5	259	–.01	–.02				
4. Manner of Drinking PBS	2.63 (1.20)	1–5	258	–.04	–.02	.75***			
5. Serious Harm Reduction PBS	3.40 (1.53)	1–5	259	.27***	.34***	.64***	.64**		
6. Negative Consequences	3.13 (3.87)	0–27	173 ^a	.67***	.59***	–.20**	–.38***	–.02	
Control Variables									
Male Gender	0.45 (.0.50)	0–1	271	.27***	.30***	–.14*	–.13*	–.06	.29***
Number of Nights on SB Trip	3.74 (3.52)	0–10	265	.36***	.34***	.17**	.15*	.33***	.05
Intervention	0.49 (0.50)	0–1	271	.00	.00	.09	.11	.06	.03
Typical Drinks	3.72 (3.25)	0–20	270	.51***	.58***	.02	–.02	.25***	.35***
Semester Motives									
Fun/Social	1.77 (1.08)	0–3.8	270	.39***	.42***	.08	.04	.26***	.30***
Relax	1.22 (0.97)	0–4	271	.35***	.36***	.09	.04	.25***	.30***
Image	0.67 (0.79)	0–3.5	271	.36***	.31***	.09	–.02	.13*	.34***
Physical/Behavioral	3.03 (0.86)	0–4	271	–.23***	–.23***	.20**	.22***	.11	–.17*
Driving	3.63 (0.81)	0–4	271	–.02	.07	.05	.10	.20**	–.80
SB Motives									
Fun/Social	1.91 (1.28)	0–4	270	.44***	.48***	.15*	.17**	.38***	.35***
Relax	1.15 (1.11)	0–4	270	.27***	.30***	.08	.08	.22***	.26**
Image	0.71 (0.94)	0–4	270	.29***	.24***	.15*	.05	.16*	.43***
Physical/Behavioral	2.98 (1.08)	0–4	270	–.21**	–.20**	.19**	.22**	.12	–.20*
Driving	3.46 (1.07)	0–4	270	.02	.11	.11	.19***	.25***	–.04

^aNegative Consequences are only reported by those who used alcohol during Spring Break.

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

Table 2

Semester and Spring Break-Specific Motives as Predictors of Alcohol Use Behavior on Spring Break.

	Total Drinks β	Maximum Drinks β
Controls	$\Delta R^2=.363^{***}$	$\Delta R^2=.422^{***}$
Male Gender	0.96 [†]	0.10 [*]
Spring Break Trip Days	0.24 ^{***}	0.18 ^{***}
Intervention Group	-0.03	-0.03
Typical Drinks	0.28 ^{***}	0.34 ^{***}
Semester Motives	$\Delta R^2=.027^{\dagger}$	$\Delta R^2=.033^*$
Fun/Social	-0.02	0.02
Relax	0.12	0.06
Image	0.04	-0.05
Physical/Behavioral	0.03	-0.03
Driving	-0.08	0.03
Spring Break Motives	$\Delta R^2=.036^*$	$\Delta R^2=.056^{***}$
Fun/Social	0.19 [*]	0.26 ^{**}
Relax	-0.15 [†]	-0.10
Image	0.08	-0.01
Physical/Behavioral	-0.29 ^{**}	-0.36 ^{***}
Driving	0.23 [*]	0.32 ^{**}
Total Adjusted R ² Value	0.393	0.484

Note. N=260–261.

[†] $p < .10$,

^{*} $p < .05$,

^{**} $p < .01$,

^{***} $p < .001$.

All standardized betas (β) shown are for the final multivariate model. ΔR^2 values are given for each set of predictors, and for the final multivariate model.

Semester and Spring Break-Specific Motives as Predictors of Drinking Protective Behavioral Strategies on Spring Break.

Table 3

	<u>Stopping/Limiting β</u>	<u>Manner of Drinking β</u>	<u>Serious Harm Reduction β</u>
Controls	$\Delta R^2=.054^{**}$	$\Delta R^2=.047^*$	$\Delta R^2=.154^{***}$
Male Gender	-0.09	-0.05	-0.13 [*]
Spring Break Trip Days	0.12 [†]	0.08	0.20 ^{**}
Intervention Group	0.08	0.11 [†]	0.03
Typical Drinks	0.02	-0.02	0.11
Semester Motives	$\Delta R^2=.062^{**}$	$\Delta R^2=.048^*$	$\Delta R^2=.043^*$
Fun/Social	0.01	-0.05	-0.01
Relax	0.10	0.04	0.17 [†]
Image	0.00	-0.08	-0.10
Physical/Behavioral	0.30 ^{**}	0.30 ^{**}	0.11
Driving	-0.25 [*]	-0.21 [*]	-0.03
Spring Break Motives	$\Delta R^2=.032$	$\Delta R^2=.044^*$	$\Delta R^2=.071^{***}$
Fun/Social	0.10	0.22 [†]	0.29 ^{**}
Relax	-0.11	-0.07	-0.13
Image	0.17 [†]	0.03	0.07
Physical/Behavioral	0.10	0.04	-0.17
Driving	0.02	0.12	0.28 [*]
Adjusted R ² Value	0.149	0.089	0.226

Note. N=258-259.

[†] $p<.10$,

^{*} $p<.05$,

^{**} $p<.01$,

^{***} $p<.001$.

All standardized betas (β) shown are for the final multivariate model. ΔR^2 values are given for each set of predictors, and for the final multivariate model.

Table 4

Semester and Spring Break-Specific Motives and Protective Behavioral Strategies as Predictors of Alcohol-Related Consequences on Spring Break.

	<u>Negative Consequences β</u>
Controls	$\Delta R^2=.159^{***}$
Male Gender	0.11
Spring Break Trip Days	0.02
Intervention Group	0.06
Typical Drinks	0.17 [*]
Semester Motives	$\Delta R^2=.059^{*}$
Fun/Social	-0.04
Relax	0.25 [*]
Image	-0.11
Physical/Behavioral	0.14
Driving	-0.11
Spring Break Motives	$\Delta R^2=.090^{**}$
Fun/Social	0.13
Relax	-0.13
Image	0.36 ^{***}
Physical/Behavioral	-0.22 [†]
Driving	0.15
Adjusted R ² Value	0.247

Note. $N=172$.

[†] $p<.10$,

^{*} $p<.05$,

^{**} $p<.01$,

^{***} $p<.001$.

All standardized betas (β) shown are for the final multivariate model. ΔR^2 values are given for each set of predictors, and for the final multivariate model.