

Is it worth it? Examining the Positive and Negative Consequences Associated with Alcohol Consumption

Maggie E. Wright & Rose Marie Ward, Ph.D.

Introduction:

Alcohol in college culture can be used as a social lubricant to help ease social anxiety and promote an overall positive experience. Alcohol can be used as an agent to enhance one's time. The heavy focus on negative health consequences of alcohol consumption causes society to negate the positive effects it can have socially. The use of alcohol can lead to positive social effects and help to build relationships and evoke conversations. It does this by boosting the mood of the situation, the ease and comfort of conversation, and increasing the confidence of the individual. According to a study by University of Pittsburgh researchers, led by Michael A. Sayette. Those who participated in alcohol-drinking groups reported greater social bonding than did those in nonalcohol-drinking groups and were more likely to have all members stay involved in the discussion. **The purpose of this study is to compare the positive and negative consequences of drinking alcohol to the amount consumed. It was hypothesized that as the number of drinks increases the positive consequences will also increase.**

Methods:

Participants: A total of 534 college students from a mid-sized Midwestern University ages 17-30 (M=20.2, SD 1.36) participated in the study. 24.2% identified as male and 74.5% as female.

Procedure: Data was collected in an online survey based, recruited via email using a snowball method (four \$50 gift cards awarded). The survey was preapproved by institutional review board (IRB).

Measures: Participants were asked about alcohol consumption and positive and negative consequences. The Positive Drinking Consequences Questionnaire (pDCQ) scale was used as well as the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI) to assess the consequences.

Miami University

Results:

Alcohol consumption: 92.3% of participants reported drinking alcohol. Average number of days drinking a week was 2.13 days. The typical number of drinks in a day when drinking was 3.6. The highest number of drinks in one occasion on average was 7.05.

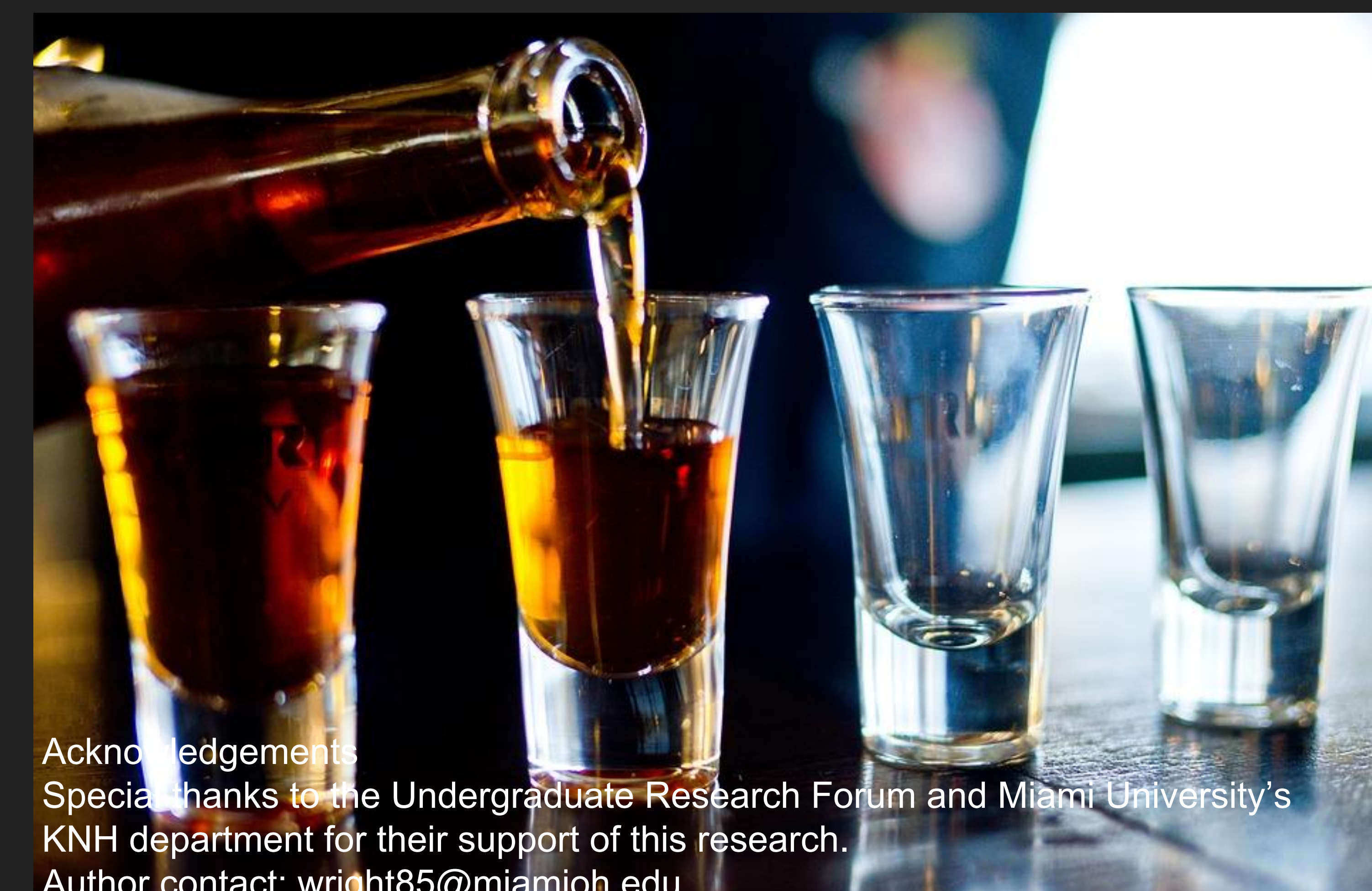
Positive Consequences: Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items was .928. The item means was 2.35 with variance of .282. The item with the highest average was 3.08 for "in a situation in which I would have usually stayed quiet, I found it easy to make conversation".

Negative Consequences: Cronbach's Alpha based on 23 standardized items was .907. The item means was .430 with SD of .079. The item with the highest average was for question 21 which stated "had a bad time" and had a mean of .9698.

Alcohol consumption relation to Consequence: Independent t-tests revealed that the more alcohol students consume the amount of consequences experienced both positive and negative increases but by a greater amount for the positive. The PDCQ had a mean of 34.29 (SD 12.69) for males and 32.42 (11.97) for females whereas the RAPI had a mean of 12.43 for females (SD 12.54) and 9.27 for males (SD 9.87). The results are not statistically significant, however, meaning that both increased and the difference in their increase is not significant.

Discussion:

Overall, the results does support the hypothesis that as drinking increasing the positive consequences also increase, however the negative consequences also increase. Those who consume more alcohol face both positive and negative consequences at an increasing rate. There has been conclusive research to show that alcohol consumption enhances mood (Roizen, 1983). sociability and friendliness typically are cited as primary motives for and consequences of drinking. This was found to be true of the data analyzed in the study. Groups can bond around excessive drinking, for example weekend binge-drinking in college fraternities (Kuh & Arnold, 1993; Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995). Drinking is a large part of the social culture of college and therefore by participating in drinking, one may feel more accepted. This seems to be concluded by the data analyzed in the study. Students in college should know the positive effects of moderate drinking. It allows for greater social experiences and can help one to feel more confident in themselves and their relationships. Students should be informed that as the positive consequences increase, the negative also increase. Some limitations to the study include that fact that some students may choose abstinence which could alter the data. The sample composition being primarily female can also affect the data because of the different effects alcohol may have on different genders. The demographic of the study was primarily Caucasian and this could also limit the findings.



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Author contact: wright85@miamioh.edu