



## Short communication

## Drinking to have fun and to get drunk: Motives as predictors of weekend drinking over and above usual drinking habits

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## ABSTRACT

Most evidence on the motives-alcohol use link has come from cross-sectional research using retrospective assessments. It remains also to be demonstrated whether motives predict drinking in particular circumstances. In the present study, drinking motives assessed 2 weeks prior to a diary study were used to predict the number of drinks on weekend days as reported via short message service (SMS). Multi-level regression models were estimated based on 391 reports from 55 participants (mean age 22.7). The results revealed that enhancement motives but not gender, age, or social, coping, or conformity motives predicted weekend drinking over and above usual consumption. Consumption and motives together explained more than three-quarters of the inter-individual variance in weekend drinking. To conclude, this study points to a heavy episodic weekend drinking culture of young people who drink large quantities on Friday and Saturday nights apparently because they are seeking fun and excitement. Preventive measures should aim to counteract young people's drinking at peak times and in high-risk situations.

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## 1. Introduction

Drinking motives are among the most proximal factors for drinking (Cooper, 1994; Kuntsche, 2007), and are assumed to be the gateway through which more distal influences, such as personality factors and alcohol expectancies, are mediated (Cooper et al., 2000; Kuntsche et al., 2007). Drinking motives have explained up to 50% of the variance in cross-sectional alcohol use (Kuntsche, 2007) and predicted alcohol dependence in later life (Beseler et al., 2008). According to Cox and Klinger (1988, 1990), individuals drink to obtain *positive* outcomes or to avoid *negative* ones. In addition, they may be motivated by *internal* rewards such as enhancement of a desired emotional state or by *external* rewards such as social approval. Crossing these two dimensions results in four distinct categories or types of drinking motives (Cooper, 1994): enhancement (internal, positive; e.g. to have fun); coping (internal, negative; e.g. to forget problems); social (external, positive; e.g. to be sociable); and conformity (external, negative; e.g. to fit in with a group).

Internally focused motives, enhancement and coping, have been associated with heavy drinking (see Kuntsche et al., 2005, for a review). However, most of the evidence is based on cross-sectional data which prevents firm conclusions about the predictive power of drinking motives. In the few longitudinal studies conducted

to date, scoring high on enhancement motives in adolescence predicted risky drinking 5–12 years later (Bradizza et al., 1999; Cooper et al., 2008). The same was found over a shorter time frame among college students (Read et al., 2003; Schulenberg et al., 1996). For coping motives, studies have found an effect on subsequent alcohol use among adolescents (Cooper et al., 2008), medical students (Richman et al., 1992), and depressed patients in treatment (Holahan et al., 2003), whereas other have failed to find such a link over time among college students (Read et al., 2003; Schulenberg et al., 1996) and adult employees (Sikora et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, most studies have used exclusively North American samples; drinking has typically been assessed retrospectively over relatively long recall periods (e.g. 30 days, 12 months), and even in longitudinal studies, prior alcohol use was not always controlled when predicting subsequent use from drinking motives. These design features are problematic for several reasons, including the impact of cultural factors on alcohol use (Kuntsche et al., 2004; Room and Mäkelä, 2000); the fact that the precision of recall declines considerably even after only 2 or 3 days (Ekholm, 2004); and finally the strong cross-sectional link between drinking motives and alcohol use (Kuntsche et al., 2005) which should be taken into account for prediction over time.

To answer the question whether drinking motives explain variance (a) in subsequent drinking, (b) measured over short time intervals, (c) over and above usual drinking habits and (d) in populations outside North America the present paper investigates whether drinking motives predict subsequent daily weekend

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drinking among young adults in Switzerland once drinking habits have been taken into account.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Study design and participants

Data was collected over four subsequent weekends via Short Message Service [SMS] sent to the participants' cell phones (Kuntsche and Robert, 2009). The cell phone numbers were treated confidentially by the electronic system (i.e., not accessible even to the researchers) and the SMS answers were free of charge for the participants. Approximately 2 weeks prior to the SMS survey, participants were asked to complete a baseline Internet questionnaire. A lottery to win cinema tickets served as an incentive. Young adult participants were recruited via several methods, including face-to-face invitations in four driving schools, by e-mail invitation sent to 404 students of two small Universities of Applied Sciences, and by advertising on the Lausanne University website and a private Facebook site. Due to financial constraints, only the first 70 persons who responded to the invitation could be accepted to participate in the study. Of these, 66 (94.3%) successfully registered and completed the Internet questionnaire (five from face-to-face condition, 30 via e-mail, and 31 from the Internet advertisement); 55 took part in the SMS-based survey. This overall retention rate of 83.3% did not vary significantly over the recruitment conditions (Kuntsche and Robert, 2009).

The analyses were based on 391 reports of drinking on weekends by 55 individuals who answered all questions in the Internet survey and participated in the SMS survey for at least one entire weekend. On average, participants were 22.7 years old ( $SD = 1.9$ ); 67.3% were female. Most participants (84.4%) answered all SMS alcohol use questions or left only one question unanswered (7.1 reports per participant on average over 8 weekend days).

### 2.2. Measures

**2.2.1. Internet baseline assessment.** Usual quantity assessed the total number of standard drinks of any alcoholic beverage consumed on a typical drinking occasion. Descriptions were provided to inform participants about "standard" drink sizes. The six answer categories ranged from "less than 1 drink" (coded as 0.5) to "5 or more drinks" (coded as 5.5).

Items to assess drinking motives were taken from the Drinking Motive Questionnaire Revised (DMQ-R; Cooper, 1994; Kuntsche et al., 2006). Participants were instructed to consider every time they had drunk alcohol in the last 12 months and to indicate on how frequently they drank for each specific reason. The five answer categories ranged from "rarely or never" (coded as 1) to "almost always" (coded as 5).

**2.2.2. SMS assessment.** The participants received an SMS at 1 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays asking about the total number of drinks consumed in the last 24 h. Participants replied to this question in free text format (up to 160 characters), which is thought to be more accurate than pre-defined formats (Leigh, 2000). To examine the possibility that drinking motives differentially predicted drinking on Friday (coded as 0) vs. Saturday (coded as 1) evenings, a dummy code was created.

### 2.3. Statistical analyses

The multilevel modeling software HLM 6.02 (Raudenbush et al., 2004) was used to analyze weekend day assessments nested within individuals. Robust standard error estimations were chosen

to account for deviations from the normal distribution of the outcomes (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). First, we predicted weekend drinking based on gender, age, and usual quantity at the individual level, and weekend day (Friday vs. Saturday) at the daily level. Subsequently, the four drinking motive dimensions were added at the individual level. The equation is:

Number of consumed drinks<sub>ij</sub> =  $\beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{weekend day}) + r_{ij}$  with

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{gender}) + \gamma_{02}(\text{age}) + \gamma_{03}(\text{usual quantity})$$

$$+ \gamma_{04}(\text{enhancement motives}) + \gamma_{05}(\text{social motives})$$

$$+ \gamma_{06}(\text{coping motives}) + \gamma_{07}(\text{conformity motives}) + u_{0j}$$

where  $j$  indicates the individual and  $i$  the daily assessment.

In the last step, we additionally included the cross-level interaction to test whether the obtained results were consistent for both Friday and Saturday night drinking.

Due to the small sample size, we checked the results of the final model for outliers. We inspected the Q–Q plot of expected and observed values derived by means of the Mahalanobis distance (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). The regression line in this plot had an explained variance of  $R^2 = 97\%$ , which provided strong evidence for the normal distribution of residual effects. This provides evidence that results were not unduly influenced by outliers.

## 3. Results

As has been previously observed (Kuntsche et al., 2005, 2008), participants more strongly endorsed enhancement ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) and social ( $M = 2.6$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ) motives than either coping ( $M = 1.3$ ,  $SD = 0.4$ ) or conformity ( $M = 1.4$ ;  $SD = 0.6$ ) motives. Participants indicated that they had 3.0 drinks ( $SD = 1.5$ ) on 'typical' drinking occasions, and 3.2 drinks ( $SD = 3.8$ ) was the average across the 16-weekend day assessments.

Participants drank on average more on Saturday nights than on Friday nights (Table 1). In addition, the higher usual consumption assessed 2 weeks prior to the diary study, the higher number of drinks consumed on weekend days. No effects were found for gender or age. Of the total variance in weekend drinking, 78.3% was due to intra-individual variation over time and 21.7% was due to differences between the participants. More than 60% of the inter-individual variance was explained in the first model.

When drinking motives were added to this model, weekend day and usual quantity remained significant. However, the latter effect was reduced by more than one third. Results of the multilevel regression model showed that the higher the level of enhancement motives, but not social, coping or conformity motives, the more the individual drank on the weekend. Indeed, those who drank "almost always" for enhancement motives consumed nearly six drinks more on an average weekend day than those who "rarely" or "never" drank for enhancement motives. The inclusion of drinking motives led to a 17% increase in explained variance at the inter-individual level.

Finally, we included the cross-level interaction to test whether the relationships reported above held true for both weekend days. Results showed that none of the associations between drinking motives and amount consumed was moderated by assessment day. Thus, the results hold for drinking on both Friday and Saturday nights.

## 4. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate whether drinking motives predicted alcohol consumption on weekends. Prospective evidence from North America has already shown that

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