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Maria E. Niculete

*University of Missouri - Columbia*

Hayley R. Treloar

*University of Missouri - Columbia*

Sarah L. Pedersen

*University of Missouri - Columbia*

Denis M. McCarthy

*University of Missouri - Columbia*

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# Drinking and Driving Motives, Negative Consequences and Other Traffic Safety Behaviors

Maria E. Niculete, Hayley R. Treloar, Sarah L. Pedersen, & Denis M. McCarthy  
University of Missouri - Columbia



## Introduction

- 35.5% of college student drivers report drinking and driving in the past month (Wechsler, Lee, Nelson, & Lee, 2003).
- Young adults who drink and drive are more likely to engage in other unsafe driving behaviors, such as not wearing a seatbelt or speeding (Vassallo et al., 2007).
- The Positive Expectancies for Drinking and Driving for Youth (PEDD-Y) Questionnaire measures motives for drinking and driving.
  - **Convenience**
  - Control
  - **Avoiding Consequences**
  - Excitement Seeking
- The **Convenience** and **Avoiding Consequences** factors have been shown to predict engagement in drinking and driving behavior in youth and young adults (McCarthy, Pedersen, Thompsen, & Leuty, 2006).
- **The present study tested the PEDD-Y scales as predictors of:**
  - Experiencing negative consequences from drinking and driving.
  - Engaging in other unsafe behaviors while drinking and driving.

## Method

### Participants

- 1056 college student drinkers (mean age = 18.75).
- 88.6% Caucasian, 42.2% male.

### Measures

- *Demographics.*
- *Alcohol Use.* Drinker/nondrinker status and past month quantity and frequency of use.
- *Positive Expectancies for Drinking and Driving for Youth (PEDD-Y).* Self-reported motivations and perceived reinforcement associated with drinking and driving.
- *Driving after alcohol use.* Past year driving within 2 hours of drinking one drink, three drinks, or five drinks.
- *Risky traffic safety behaviors while drinking and driving.* Self-reported carefulness, seatbelt use, radio volume, and speeding concurrent with drinking and driving.
- *Drinking and Driving Consequences.* Lifetime history of trouble with police or car accidents after drinking.

### Procedure

- Participants were recruited from introductory psychology courses using an online sign-up system.
- Written consent was obtained and questionnaire forms were completed in a group setting.

## Results

- Logistic regression was used to test whether the PEDD-Y factors predicted:
  - Experiencing negative consequences from drinking and driving.
  - Engagement in other unsafe behaviors while drinking and driving.
- Controlling for drinking and driving attitudes and normative beliefs:
  - **Convenience** was associated with:
    - likelihood of getting in trouble with the police ( $OR = 1.54, p < .01$ ).
    - getting in a car accident ( $OR = 1.53, p < .05$ ) after drinking and driving.
  - **Excitement Seeking** was uniquely associated with likelihood of speeding while driving after drinking ( $OR = 1.92, p < .05$ ).
  - **Convenience** was associated with reporting an increased likelihood of wearing a seatbelt ( $OR = 1.18, p < .05$ ) and driving more carefully ( $OR = 1.23, p < .05$ ) when driving after drinking.
  - **Avoiding Consequences** was also associated with reporting an increased likelihood of driving more carefully ( $OR = 1.20, p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

- Results of this study suggest that drinking and driving motives, as assessed by the PEDD-Y, are associated with:
  - Engagement in drinking and driving behavior.
  - Likelihood of experiencing negative consequences (e.g., accidents, trouble with the police).
- These motives were uniquely associated with these behaviors over and above other risk factors (attitudes, normative beliefs).
- Motives for convenience and avoiding consequences were associated with perceiving oneself as driving more safely.
  - Despite this, these motives were associated with drinking and driving consequences.
- Those who view drinking and driving as exciting or thrilling are more likely to simultaneously engage in other unsafe behaviors (e.g., speeding).
- The cross sectional nature of the study means that the direction of influence is unclear.
  - An alternate hypothesis is that those who experience negative consequences adjust their perceptions to justify their behavior.
- Longitudinal studies are required to understand the influence of reciprocal influence of perceptions about drinking and driving and engagement in the behavior.

Table 1. Drinking and Driving Behaviors

	Wearing a Seatbelt	Driving more Carefully	Turning the Radio Down	Speeding
Convenience	1.18*	1.23*	0.86	1.35
Control	1.28*	1.13	0.85	1.61
Avoiding Consequences	0.96	1.20*	0.94	1.26
Excitement Seeking	1.34	0.96	0.84*	1.92*

\*  $p < .05$   
Note. Values are Odds Ratios.

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