

Do NOT Underestimate the Power of Alcohol!

The Book Club has a once every two-month book selection, followed by a meeting to discuss the book. In the past, meetings have been at a restaurant appropriate for the book selected. During the Pandemic period, the discussion was held online via *Zoom*. The book was scheduled for discussion at 12:30 PM Pacific Standard Time on February 13, 2022. The book selected for this period was "*Drunk*". <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25033372-300-drunk-review-could-alcohol-induced-creativity-be-key-to-civilisation/>

Super Bowl Sunday

The book club is based in the Los Angeles area. At the time the discussion was scheduled, it was not known that the local football team, the Los Angeles Rams, would be in the Super Bowl. The number of responses saying that they would attend was 39. The actual number attending was 9. The Zoom meeting was over on schedule at 2:00 PM and the football game did not kickoff until after 3:30 PM. A detailed study would have asked the 30 non-participatory people: "Why did you not attend the Zoom meeting?". After all, it is the semi-isolation time of COVID, and there was plenty of time to get back to the Television or the Internet for the game. Did people change plans to attend a Super Bowl party with food and alcohol? Such gatherings have been discouraged. My opinion is that watching any televised sports contest is inherently boring unless it is with a group of alcohol fueled people to provide some entertainment and fellow cheer partners. Therefore, many of the group likely went to a Super Bowl party especially with the local team playing. However, that is speculation, especially for a book discussion group. Personally, I did not watch the game nor was I invited to any game watching party. I found out the game was over and the Rams had won by the huge thunderstorm echoing around the hills at about 7 PM. Whoops, that was just a large number of very loud fireworks explosions. I was happy looking at the 20-minute YouTube summary of the game with no ads.

Cruise Ships

During the COVID Pandemic, starting in March 2020, cruise ships became locales for large numbers of people to gather in a limited space, so many ships had to cease operations due to COVID. Ultimately, the cruise industry had to shut down completely. When the vaccines became more common, rules were put into place to allow cruising to take place starting in March 2022. Before COVID, only the higher-cost cruises included all the alcoholic drinks as a part of the fare. After COVID, many cruise lines included the drink package in the discounted fare. My preference is to avoid this amenity since I do not drink alcoholic or even carbonated beverages, and I would prefer not to be around people whose main form of entertainment is alcohol consumption. The now common free "benefit" of alcohol and Internet usage do not appeal to me on a cruise and therefore offer negative value. Among the mainly English-language cruise lines, it appears that only the family-oriented cruises of Disney and Carnival still have extra cost for alcoholic drinks.

Hotels and Resorts

For many years now, the "upper-echelon" hotels have offered free alcoholic beverages during the "happy hour" before dinner time. That appears as a negative resource to me and one that I end up paying for, but not using. Of course, all-inclusive resorts mean all the alcohol you want to drink, which again has negative value. I try to stay in locations that do not have this "benefit".

Caltech Interhouse Dance

Back before the time of COVID, Caltech used to sponsor the Interhouse dance on a Saturday before the Thanksgiving break. Since most students were younger than 21 years-old (the drinking age in California), it did not make any sense to serve alcohol especially since the servers had to be over 21, and they had to be hired from outside the school. Then there was the experiment of freely available alcohol. This policy was short-lived as the number of drunk underage students caused issues with the administration. The new policy was that everyone over 21 would get two drink tickets. When I inquired why alcohol was required, I was told that if there is no alcohol served, then fewer people would attend. Attendees were also more likely to donate to the university. I wish they had spent more time and budget on the type of elaborate decorations that used to be the norm for this event.

Class Reunions, Alumni Events, and Social Gatherings

It seems like all class reunions these days have to have an "open-bar" as a part of the activities. Also, all the dinners which are a part of such affairs seem to have mandatory cocktails and wine with dinner included with the festivities. Going back to the drinkables available for such events, the expectation is that bottled water, carbonated beverages, and alcohol are the appropriate selection. I could not even get orange juice at a Sunkist meeting or anything else at a recent Caltech seminar day or a Northwestern alumni event. My inquiry revealed that those are the beverages provided by the catering company. Our friends have a holiday party each year. They are excellent hosts. I counted 83 different bottles of liquid refreshment at their party, 82 of them were undrinkable by me since they were either alcoholic or carbonated. Aha, there was one bottle of orange juice for me; I appreciated their effort. In most groups of people, holding a party without alcohol is unthinkable.

Art, Music, and Writing

Creativity in these fields appears to be enhanced by various drug usage. Artists are well-known to use chemical inspiration or a changed state of consciousness to enhance their vision. I have heard many musicians state they can only play well after they have had some alcohol to "loosen up". That stipulation may not apply to a classical or marching band music concert. A major rock music composer stated that he could not write music unless he was high on marijuana. Many famous writers could be found consistently at the local bar. One premise of the book, *Drunk*, is that alcohol induces creativity as well as inspiration and is a hallmark of civilization.

Partnership Dissolution: Alcohol or Me?

Among the people that I know who have gotten a divorce, the most common reason that I encounter is: "My partner had an alcohol problem!". In many cases, the partner's relationship with alcohol becomes much more important to them than any other relationship. Perhaps this accounts for the large number of people who participate in support groups such as *Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon*. Alcoholism is a much larger health problem worldwide than most people realize. I know several people (even in my very science-oriented world) that have even been unable to cope with an alcoholic relative or friend. The actions of people who are alcohol abusers are difficult to predict, to deal with, and to live with. Another factor is the relative cost of alcohol consumption among the financially challenged. The alcoholism disease is very hard to treat, and if treatment or compromise is unsuccessful, it eventually leads to relationship termination in various ways.