

REPLICATIONS AND REFINEMENTS

Under this heading summaries of studies which, in 500 words or less, provide useful data substantiating, not substantiating, or refining what we think we know; additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the investigator or, when indicated, by requesting supplementary material from Microfiche Publications.

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THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSERVATISM*

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Recent research on the effects of alcohol has consistently found that belief or cognitive expectancy, rather than the absolute alcohol content of the drink, mediates subsequent changes in aggressive¹ and sexual² behavior. Such research, together with experimental evidence showing that alcohol consumption results in a dose-dependent decrease in cognitive, perceptual, and physiological functioning,³ and with anecdotal reports of subsequent changes in behavior, tends to lead to the expectation that attitudinal changes will follow alcohol absorption. Since psychological conservatism is considered to be of some importance in psychological functioning,⁴ and is anecdotally believed to fluctuate after alcohol intake, the present study investigated the effects of alcohol on conservatism in male social drinkers.

Forty-eight male volunteer students (\bar{X} age = 19.7 years; $SD = 2.7$) participated in a pretest-posttest experimental design. During the pretest, Ss individually completed Wilson's Conservatism Scale⁴ under identical

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¹ Lang, A. R., Goeckner, D. J., Adesso, V. J., & Marlatt, G. A. Effects of alcohol on aggression in male social drinkers. *J. Abn. Psychol.*, 1975, **84**, 508-518.

² Wilson, G. T., & Lawson, D. M. Expectancies, alcohol and sexual arousal in male social drinkers. *J. Abn. Psychol.*, 1975, **85**, 587-594.

³ Franks, H. M., Hensley, V. R., Starmer, G. A., & Teo, R. K. The relationship between alcohol dosage and performance decrement in humans. *J. Stud. in Alcohol*, 1976, **37**, 284-297.

⁴ Wilson, G. D., Ed. *The Psychology of Conservatism*. London: Academic Press, 1973.

conditions. On the posttest, conducted five weeks later, *Ss* again completed the Conservatism scale while under random assignment to one of five groups: (a) Control Group ($n = 10$), with conditions identical to those of the pretest; (b) Simulated Alcohol Group ($n = 9$), controlling for possible demand characteristics.⁵ *Ss* were now told to behave as if they had consumed sufficient alcohol to have an effect on them without causing them inebriation; (c) Placebo Group ($n = 9$), *Ss* received a quantity of Sprite, a soft drink, in a polystyrene cup that had been smeared with whisky, to which three drops of whisky had been added to enhance the credibility of the placebo; (d) Alcohol Group 1 ($n = 10$), .4 gms./kg. body weight of ethyl alcohol mixed with 5.6 parts Sprite forming a 15% solution; and (e) Alcohol Group 2 ($n = 10$), .8 gms./kg. body weight of ethyl alcohol, also mixed to form a 15% solution with 5.6 parts Sprite. A double-blind procedure was used in administering drinks to the latter three groups, who all received the same instructions. A covariance analysis with pretest scores as covariates was used to analyze the data. No significant differences ($df = 4/43$; $p < .05$ in all instances) emerged on either the total Conservatism score or any of the Conservative subfactors: viz., anti-Hedonism, religion, militarism or ethnocentrism, indicating that the five groups did not significantly differ in terms of these criteria.

The present results are consistent with findings demonstrating only physiological or behavioral changes following alcohol consumption. Indeed, the single paper-and-pencil measure on which significant changes have been shown to occur (viz., Eysenck's Personality Inventory) assesses emotional arousal, and hence autonomic excitation may have mediated this change.¹ Nonetheless, the possibility that social or expectancy factors mediate changes in psychological Conservatism cannot be discounted on the basis of the present study, since *Ss* were individually tested in an experimental situation. Conceivably, social role or expectancy factors may only become salient when alcohol is consumed in the presence of other individuals.

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⁵ Orne, M. T. On the social psychology of the psychological experiment. *Amer. Psychol.*, 1962, 17, 776-783.

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