

The Effects of Alcohol and Cue Salience on Young Men's Acceptance of Sexual Aggression

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The purpose of this experiment was to investigate the effects of acute alcohol administration and individual differences (acceptance of interpersonal violence, need for sexual dominance and alcohol expectations) on young men's acceptance of sexual aggression in a laboratory analogue situation. The experiment was designed to test an alcohol myopia explanation of sexual aggression. Participants were 338 young adult heterosexual males who attended two laboratory sessions. In the first session, participants completed a set of screening and individual differences measures. In the second session they were assigned randomly to one of four beverage conditions: Control, Placebo, Low Dose (.33ml alcohol/kg body weight) or Moderate Dose (.75 ml/kg) and one of two video-delivered scenario conditions: "Cues" (scenario of a man and woman on a date with embedded explicit cues mitigating against forced sex) and "No Cues" (Identical scenario with no Anti Force cues). Following beverage consumption and viewing the scenario, participants were asked to judge 1) if the man should continue to force the woman to have clearly unwanted sex, 2) if they would force the woman in the same situation, and 3) who was responsible for the interaction's outcome. The results did not support the alcohol myopia model; participants who consumed alcohol were more likely to accept sexual aggression, regardless of cue salience. Further, when Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) scores were entered into the analysis model, men with higher scores were more likely to accept the use of force, but only if they consumed the placebo or low dose alcohol beverages. These unexpected results were hypothesized to be due to arousal levels and require further investigation. Overall, the findings show that key individual difference factors developed from Malamuth's Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression enhance the ability to predict increased sexual aggression risk by young men under the influence of alcohol.