Alcohol and Disinhibition

The effects of alcohol on human sexual behavior.
Wilson, G. Terence.
Advances in Substance Abuse, Vol 2, 1981. pp. 1-40.
Abstract:

Discusses the effects on the body, both arousing and suppressing, that are attributed to alcohol in the literature. Uncontrolled, correlational investigations on the effects of alcohol on sexual functioning have included questionnaires, clinical observations (such as the 1966 study by W. H. Masters and V. E. Johnson), and retrospective studies. Correlational studies have concentrated on the connection between alcohol and sex crimes, particularly rape and child molestation. Experimental investigations have included psychophysiological studies of alcohol's effects on male sexuality (measured as penile tumescence, ejaculatory response, and sexual arousal) and on female vaginal response and sexual arousal. Indirect measures of sexuality and the effect of alcohol on sex hormones have also been included in experimental investigations. Two theories of alcohol's effects on sexual behavior are discussed: The social disinhibition theory presumes that alcohol causes changes in social behavior that include increased arousal to sexual stimuli and sexual crimes. In terms of the social learning theory, the effect of alcohol on sexual and other social behavior is governed by several classes of psychological variables. Individual patterns of behavior are acquired and maintained on the basis of differential reinforcement, modeling experiences, and cognitive self-regulatory mechanisms.

Alcohol, sexual arousal, and the transfer of excitation.
McCarty, Dennis., Diamond, William, Kaye, Michael
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 42(6), Jun, 1982. pp. 977-988.
Abstract:

Investigations of the alcohol-related disinhibition of responses to deviant sexual stimuli suggest that the pharmacological actions of ethanol have little influence on the disinhibition process. The mere belief that alcohol is consumed is sufficient to induce increased sexual arousal. Studies with conventional stimuli, however, suggest that interactions occur between the pharmacological presence of ethanol and the psychological expectations of its presence. The present article examines the contribution of pharmacological, cognitive, and environmental variables to perceived sexual arousal. Pictures that elicited either a low or moderate level of self-reported sexual arousal were viewed and evaluated by 64 men and 64 women after completing their drinks. The evaluations and arousal measures suggested significant Instruction by Content by Arousal interactions. The strongest perceptions of arousal occurred among Ss who did not know they were drinking alcohol. When Ss were unaware of the alcohol intoxication, the pharmacological excitation induced by alcohol transferred to the perception and evaluation of the slides.

Alcohol and the disinhibition of sexual responsiveness.
Wilson, G. Terence., Niaura, Raymond
Journal of Studies on **Alcohol**, Vol 45(3), May, 1984. pp. 219-224.
Abstract:

In a balanced placebo design, in which the joint and separate effects of alcohol and expectations of intoxication were investigated, 22 male undergraduates who were social drinkers listened to an erotic audiotape while penile tumescence was continuously recorded. Intoxicated Ss showed significantly shorter latency to onset of tumescence and to peak level of tumescence than did their sober counterparts. In contrast to previous

research, no effect of expectations about drinking was obtained nor were responses related to scores on the Mosher Forced Choice Sex Guilt Scale. Findings indicate a specific effect of alcohol in impairing men's ability to inhibit sexual responsiveness. It appears that the sexual response threshold is lowered but that, once the process of arousal begins, tumescence reaches an average level that is unaffected by a small amount of alcohol.

Perceptions of post drinking female sexuality: Effects of gender, beverage choice, and drink payment.

George, William H.., Gournic, Susan J., McAfee, Mary P.

Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Vol 18(15, Pt 1), Dec, 1988. pp. 1295-1317.

Abstract:

In Study 1, 174 undergraduates completed an alcohol expectancy questionnaire to assess expected alcohol effects on either a young man or young woman. The woman was perceived as being more sexual after drinking than was the man. Perceptions were influenced by expected alcohol dosage, Ss' gender, and drinking experience. In Study 2, 176 undergraduates read a vignette depicting a woman having drinks with a man. Ss rated the woman drinking alcohol as significantly more aggressive, impaired, sexually available, likely to engage in foreplay and intercourse, but less attractive than the woman drinking cola. Perceptions of sexual disinhibition were significantly enhanced if the man bought the drinks.

The relationship of sex-related alcohol expectancies to alcohol consumption and sexual behavior.

Leigh, Barbara C..

British Journal of Addiction, Vol 85(7), Jul, 1990. pp. 919-928.

Abstract:

Examined the relationship of beliefs about the effects of alcohol on sex to drinking in sexual situations and to the sexual behaviors and feelings resulting from those situations. 844 adults (aged 18–76 yrs) completed a survey of drinking habits, sexual behavior, sexual attitudes and beliefs, and alcohol expectancies. Ss of different gender and sexual orientation differed in their beliefs about the effects of alcohol on sexual responding. Expectations of sexual enhancement and disinhibition were related to the initiation of sexual activity and to the proportion of sexual encounters that took place while drinking; these expectations also interacted with feelings of guilt about sex to predict the amount drunk in the most recent sexual encounter.

Alcohol, disinhibition, sexual arousal, and deviant sexual behavior.

George, William H. and Norris, Jeanette

Alcohol Health & Research World, Vol 15(2), 1991. Special Issue: Alcohol and sexuality. pp.

Abstract:

Examines the relationship between alcohol consumption and responses to deviant erotica. The relationship between alcohol and sex is complex in part because the individual's responses to alcohol and to sexual stimuli involve complex psychological and physiological processes. Alcohol seems to have the paradoxical effects of enhancing and suppressing sexual responses, with the 2 effects reflecting the 2 processes. There is an inverse relationship between the amount of alcohol consumed and the level of physical sexual arousal. As the concentration of alcohol in the blood increases, sexual arousal diminishes. Alcohol can influence the expression of deviant and nondeviant sexual behavior. However, this influence is shaped by qualifying conditions, such as dosage, gender, and expectancy.

College students' high-risk sexual behavior following alcohol consumption.
Anderson, Peter B. and Mathieu, Debbie A.
Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, Vol 22(4), Win 1996. pp. 259-264.
Abstract:

Assessed the relationship of alcohol consumption as a disinhibitor to high-risk sexual behavior. Results are based on survey data from 1,902 students attending 12 colleges. Sexual behaviors occurring after people had 'let themselves drink more than normal in order to make it easier for them to have sex with someone' were assessed. At least once in the past year, 33.2% of the men and 17.4% of the women had met this criterion. In those instances, 76.3% of the men and 77.1% of the women initiated condom use for vaginal intercourse. Results are discussed in relation to partners' compliance following condom initiation and preventing the spread of HIV disease.

Intoxicated sexual risk taking: An expectancy or cognitive impairment explanation?
Fromme, Kim., D'Amico, Elizabeth J., Katz, Elizabeth C.
Journal of Studies on **Alcohol**, Vol 60(1), Jan, 1999. pp. 54-63.
Abstract:

Examined expectancy and impairment explanations for the association between alcohol consumption and unsafe sexual behaviors. In 2 studies, 296 young adults (mean age 23 yrs), who were administered either alcohol (blood alcohol concentration mean = .08 mg%), placebo, or water, rated the likelihood that potential consequences would result from risky sexual practices and listed potential consequences that could result from having sex without a condom. Results indicate that intoxicated participants reported lower perceptions of risk than those who received placebo or water. Intoxicated participants also listed fewer negative consequences than those who received placebo or water. Participants who expected alcohol to disinhibit their sexual behavior reported stronger post-drinking perceptions of benefit and indicated that they were more likely to engage in risky sexual practices than those who did not expect sexual disinhibition.

College students' self-reported reasons for playing drinking games.
Authors:
Johnson, Thomas J., Hamilton, Scott, Sheets, Virgil L.
Addictive Behaviors, Vol 24(2), Mar-Apr, 1999. pp. 279-286.
Abstract:

Two samples of college students who engage in drinking games completed questions about their drinking behavior, a set of items concerning their reasons for playing drinking games, and various self-report measures of personality. Principal components analysis, using the first sample (*N* = 189) yielded 4 factors: Relaxation and Disinhibition, Fun and Celebration, Conformity, and Sexual Manipulation. A similar factor structure was also obtained in the second sample (*N* = 143). In both samples, Fun and Celebration and Sexual Manipulation reasons were most strongly predictive of frequency of play and quantity of alcohol consumed while playing. In men, Sexual Manipulation reasons for play predicted frequency of taking sexual advantage of others during play. Endorsement of Conformity and Relaxation and Disinhibition reasons were associated with high social anxiety and low assertiveness. Reasons for play predicted consumption, both in drinking-game situations and overall, even after removing variance due to general reasons for drinking. Psychometric properties of the current measure are less than ideal, but the constructs identified appear to have important implications for prevention.

Understanding acute alcohol effects on sexual behavior.
George, William H. and Stoner, Susan A.
Annual Review of Sex Research, Vol 11, 2000. pp. 92-124.
Abstract:

Reviews nonexperimental research illustrating the nature of alcohol's association with sexuality. Methodological considerations limiting causal assertions permissible with nonexperimental data are discussed. The authors also review findings from experiments, mostly analogue paradigms, examining the effects of alcohol on genital arousal, sexual risk taking, and sexual assault. In each case, it is observed that alcohol can exert a causal effect on one or more of the constituent responses undergirding these phenomena. It is concluded that alcohol does appear to have a causal impact on many sexuality indices studied in laboratory conditions. Both alcohol expectancy and alcohol myopia models have been applied to explain these causal linkages. Expectancy models seem to account well for postdrinking sexual reactions and perceptions. Overall, myopia analyses seem to offer the most persuasive explanations of postdrinking expressions of sexual risk taking and sexual assault.

Alcohol and sexual disinhibition among college students.
Stoner, Susan Ann.
Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol 64(5-B), 2003. pp. 2407.
Abstract:

Alcohol-related sexual risk taking is a problem among American college students. Potential risks of intoxicated sex include sexual assault, STD/HIV transmission, and unplanned pregnancy. However, little is known about how alcohol may engender sexually risky behavior. Alcohol has long been popularly assumed to facilitate sexual expression, but the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon have not been rigorously examined. Current theory suggests that people become more sexualafter drinking because they expect such an effect; however, numerous studies have shown that cognitive functioning is impaired at higher doses of alcohol, such that expectancies may not be so influential over behavior. The present study considered several possible mechanism of post-drinking sexual interest: sexual disinhibition, alcohol expectancies, alcohol myopia, and deviance disavowal. The overarching hypotheses were as follows. In sober participants, interest in sexual images would be influenced primarily by traditional (explicit) sexual attitudes. In slightly intoxicated participants, alcohol expectancies would be the primary determinant of sexual interest. In highly intoxicated participants, sexual interest would be influenced primarily by implicit sexual attitudes. One hundred sixty undergraduate men and women participated in the study. Participants completed a number of measures of explicit sexual attitudes. Implicit sexual attitudes were measured using the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Participants were administered no alcohol or a low or high dose of alcohol. Executive cognitive function was measured before and after the beverage administration. After the beverage administration, participants were asked to look at sexually explicit images on a computer screen. The amount of time spent looking at each image ('sexual interest') was measured surreptitiously. In addition, participants rated their reactions to the images. Mood and sexual arousal were measured before and after the image-viewing task. The results suggested a complex interplay among implicit and explicit sexual attitudes and alcohol expectancies in relation to the reactions to the sexual images. Alcohol was associated with higher ratings of arousal to the sexual images. Path analyses suggested that the effects of alcohol and explicit sexual attitudes on interest in sexual material were largely mediated through affective responses, including subjective sexual arousal.

The Drinking-Induced Disinhibition Scale (DIDS): A measure of three types of disinhibiting effects.

Authors:

Leeman, Robert F., Toll, Benjamin A. and Volpicelli, Joseph R.

Addictive Behaviors, Vol 32(6), Jun, 2007. pp. 1200-1219.

Abstract:

Links between trait disinhibition and high-risk drinking are well established. It is also known that alcohol has disinhibiting effects. Nonetheless, there is no measure in the literature devoted exclusively to assessing disinhibiting effects of alcohol. The multidimensional Drinking-Induced Disinhibition Scale (DIDS) was developed as part of Study I, a prospective survey conducted with undergraduates (N = 337). Study II, a cross-sectional survey (N = 260), allowed for a confirmatory factor analysis and further validation of the measure through comparisons with an expectancies scale. The nine-item DIDS is comprised of three subscales assessing euphoric/social, dysphoric and sexual disinhibition. All three subscales had good internal consistency and adequate test-retest reliability. Convergent and discriminant validity were established in both studies. The subscales had different associations with high-risk drinking: sexual disinhibition predicted heavy episodic drinking; dysphoric disinhibition predicted alcohol-related problems and euphoric/social had associations with both. A cluster analysis revealed four distinct disinhibition profiles (i.e., low effect drinker; high euphoric/social only; high euphoric social and dysphoric; high euphoric/social and sexual), which predicted likelihood of high-risk drinking.

Alcohol's effects on sexual decision making: An integration of alcohol myopia and individual differences.

Cue Davis, Kelly, et al.

Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Vol 68(6), Nov, 2007. pp. 843-851.

Abstract:

We conducted an experiment to test the applicability of integrating individual perceptions of unprotected sex consequences with alcohol's myopic effects as an explanatory framework for risky sexual decision making in young heterosexual men and women. Method: Male and female participants (N= 61) rated their perceptions of unprotected sex consequences, received alcoholic (target breath alcohol concentration = .10%) or nonalcoholic drinks, and completed a risky sexual decision-making task that included a quantitative measure of sexual decision-making cue attention. Results: Intoxicated participants were more attentive to impelling cues and reported greater sexual risk intentions than sober participants. Mediational analyses indicated that attention to cues fully mediated the alcohol-sexual risk intention relationship. Moderational analyses revealed that alcohol's focusing effect acts in conjunction with pre-existing individual perceptions to influence cue salience directly and sexual risk intentions indirectly. Conclusions: Findings demonstrate the importance of examining predispositional tendencies when investigating alcohol myopia as a mediating mechanism underlying the alcohol-risky sex relationship.

Gender differences in self-reported drinking-induced disinhibition of sexual behaviors.

Hesse, Morten, Tutenges, Sébastien.

Address:

The American Journal on Addictions, Vol 17(4), Jul-Aug, 2008. pp. 293-297.

Abstract:

Sex and drinking go hand-in-hand in Western societies. Men also tend to report more sexual disinhibition under the influence of alcohol and drugs than women. At a vacation resort,we conducted a survey of young men and women regarding self-reported alcohol-related sexual disinhibition (ARSD), and we administered the Drinking-Induced Disinhibition Scale (DIDS). We made several comparisons of behavioral patterns using the ARSD scale of the DIDS for each gender: kissing or having sex vs. no sexual contact, or having sex versus kissing or no contact. In general, men reported more ARSD than women. Men who reported either kissing or having sex the night before reported significantly more ARSD than men not reporting either kissing or having sex. Women who had had sex the night before reported more ARSD than women who had either kissed or not reported any sexual contact on the night before, but women who had kissed did not differ from women who had not had any sexual contact. We suggest that while the DIDS scale of alcohol-related sexual disinhibition is a valid instrument, gender bias exists. In conclusion, the DIDS does measure the constructs that it sets out to measure. However, significant gender differences do exist and appear to go beyond differences in actual behavior in terms of sexualdisinhibition. Men and women describe themselves differently when they describe sexual behavior in general, even when they report similar recent behavior, and we suggest that these differences at least partly reflect sexual stereotypes.

Predictors of risky sexual behavior with new and regular partners in a sample of women bar drinkers.

Authors:

Parks, Kathleen A., et al.

Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Vol 70(2), Mar, 2009. pp. 197-205.

Abstract:

Objective: We designed the current study to assess the rates of risky sexual behavior among women bar drinkers, as well as differences in predictors of risky sexual behavior, based on partner type—new or regular. Method: We conducted comprehensive, in-person interviews with 241 young women who reported weekly drinking in bars. Several constructs (e.g., individual characteristics, social and sexual behavior, substance use) that we hypothesized would predict risky sexual behavior were assessed in two separate hierarchical regression models for new and regular sexual partners. Results: Rates of risky sexual behavior were significantly higher with regular partners compared with new partners. Increased risky sexual behavior with new partners was significantly associated with having had a riskier regular partner in the past 6 months, lower sexually transmitted disease (STD)/pregnancy prevention assertiveness, increased expectations of sexual disinhibition when drinking, a greater history of prior sexual risk taking, and more frequent drinking in bars. Increased risky sexual behavior with a regular partner was significantly associated with being older, the use of oral contraceptives, lower assertiveness for STD/pregnancy prevention, a greater history of prior sexual risk taking, and increased drug use. Conclusions: Among young women who regularly drink in bars, sexual risk taking was significantly higher with regular partners than with new partners. The predictors of risky sexual behavior differed based on partner type. These findings have implications for including information about the role of alcohol, drinking context, and drug use, as well as individual difference characteristics and partner type in targeted prevention strategies to reduce sexual risk taking.

The effects of acute ethanol consumption on sexual response and sexual risk-taking intent.

Prause, Nicole., Staley, Cameron and Finn, Peter.

Archives of **Sexual** Behavior, Vol 40(2), Apr, 2011. pp. 373-384.

Abstract:

Two theories of sexual risk taking (disinhibition and alcohol myopia) were tested using genital measures of sexual response and computer measures of sexual risk propensity. A total of 44 men and women completed two sessions comparing responses to erotic films while consuming alcohol (breath alcohol doses were .025 g/kg and .08 g/kg) or juice alone. After consuming alcohol, more sexual arousal was reported in response to neutral films and at a breath alcohol level of .08 g/kg as compared to no alcohol. Genital responses for men and women increased during sexual films, but men did not respond as strongly when breath alcohol level was .08 g/kg. Intentions to have intercourse with a new partner at baseline predicted the level of sexual arousal reported. As self-reported sexual arousal increased in response to sexual films and higher alcohol dose, the intent to engage in intercourse with a new partner increased. Alcohol dose was *not* related to later sexual intercourse intentions. With no direct relationship of alcohol and intercourse intentions, results appear more consistent with a disinhibition model of sexual arousal.

Alcohol drinking patterns in young people: A survey-based study.
Martinotti, Giovanni., et al.
Journal of Health Psychology, Vol 22(14), Dec, 2017. pp. 1889-1896.
Abstract:

Binge drinking represents a major clinical and public health concern. Here, we investigated the prevalence of binge drinking and its related consequences, in a population of young adults. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 4275 healthy subjects. In the overall sample, the percentage of binge drinkers was 67.6 per cent; among regular alcohol users, 79.5 per cent reported episodes of binge drinking. Among binge drinkers, several serious consequences were identified (staggering and stuttering, amnesia, loss of control, aggressiveness, sexual disinhibition). Raising awareness about the seriousness of binge drinking may help health care providers to identify cases early on and provide appropriate treatments.

Alcohol-related sex expectancies explain the relation between alcohol use and sexting among college students.
Florimbio, Autumn Rae, et al.
Computers in Human Behavior, Vol 88, Nov, 2018. pp. 205-209.
Abstract:

Alcohol use and sexual behavior are prevalent among college students. Sexting, defined as the sending and/or receiving of sexually explicit content via electronic methods, is also associated with college students' alcohol use. Alcohol-related expectancies (i.e., beliefs one has regarding the cognitive and behavioral effects of alcohol) partially explain the association between alcohol use and sexual behavior. Specifically, college students perceive that alcohol relates to sexual activities through increases in sexual arousal and disinhibition. Based on prior research, the relation between alcohol use and sexting may be explained by alcohol-sex expectancies. We hypothesized that alcohol use and problems would relate to sexting indirectly through sexual drive and sexual affect expectancies. We tested this hypothesis using cross-sectional, self-report methodology in a sample of undergraduate students ($N = 534$). Results indicated that alcohol use and problems related to sexting through sexual drive, but not sexual affect, expectancies. Findings highlight the importance of expectancies in the relationship between alcohol use and the understudied sexual behavior of sexting.