INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ALCOHOL SENSITIVITY AND THEIR EFFECTS ON SUBJECTIVE STATE AND CRAVING IN NATURALISTIC ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Sensitivity to the effects of alcohol has long been studied as a risk factor for developing an alcohol use disorder. Several theories exist regarding the profile of subjective responses that constitute the highest risk: Two of the most prominent are the Low Level of Response and Differentiator Models. A newer model focused on craving for alcohol, the Dual Process Model, suggests that craving may be correlated to the risky patterns of response predicted by the Low Level of Response and Differentiator Models. Relatively little research up to this point has focused on whether the responses predicted by these models generalize beyond the laboratory. The present study focuses on how individual differences in response to alcohol during the course of naturalistic drinking episodes map onto those laboratory-based theories. Participants from Project Six of the Midwest Alcoholism Research Center recorded their responses to alcohol and when randomly prompted by an electronic diary for 21 days. Three sets of analyses were conducted: examining responses following the first drink of an episode relative to a random prompt, as well as while estimated blood alcohol content was ascending and descending. The Low Level of Response Model enjoyed the highest degree of support in the data. The observed pattern of craving responses did not clearly match either the Low Level of Response or Differentiator Models