

ALCOHOL AND CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

FIU



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Background and aim

Many victims, witnesses, and suspects are intoxicated at the time of the crime and during the initial investigation. Over 80% of a U.S. law enforcement sample reported that contact with intoxicated suspects was common (Evans et al., 2009). In the U.S., intoxicated suspects are routinely interrogated using similar techniques to sober suspects (Evans et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013). However, very little is known about the effects of intoxication in legal contexts, including how intoxication impacts thinking about future consequences. The aim of the present study was to examine how alcohol-intoxication affects consideration of immediate and future concerns.

Method

After an extensive medical screening, 56 eligible U.S. participants were randomly assigned to:

- Alcohol group ($N = 16$)
- Placebo group ($N = 22$)
- Sober control group ($N = 18$)

The intoxicated group was expected to reach a breath alcohol concentration of .08%. One hour after the start of consumption, all participants completed the Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) scale (Strathman et al., 1994):

Immediate-oriented sub-scale:

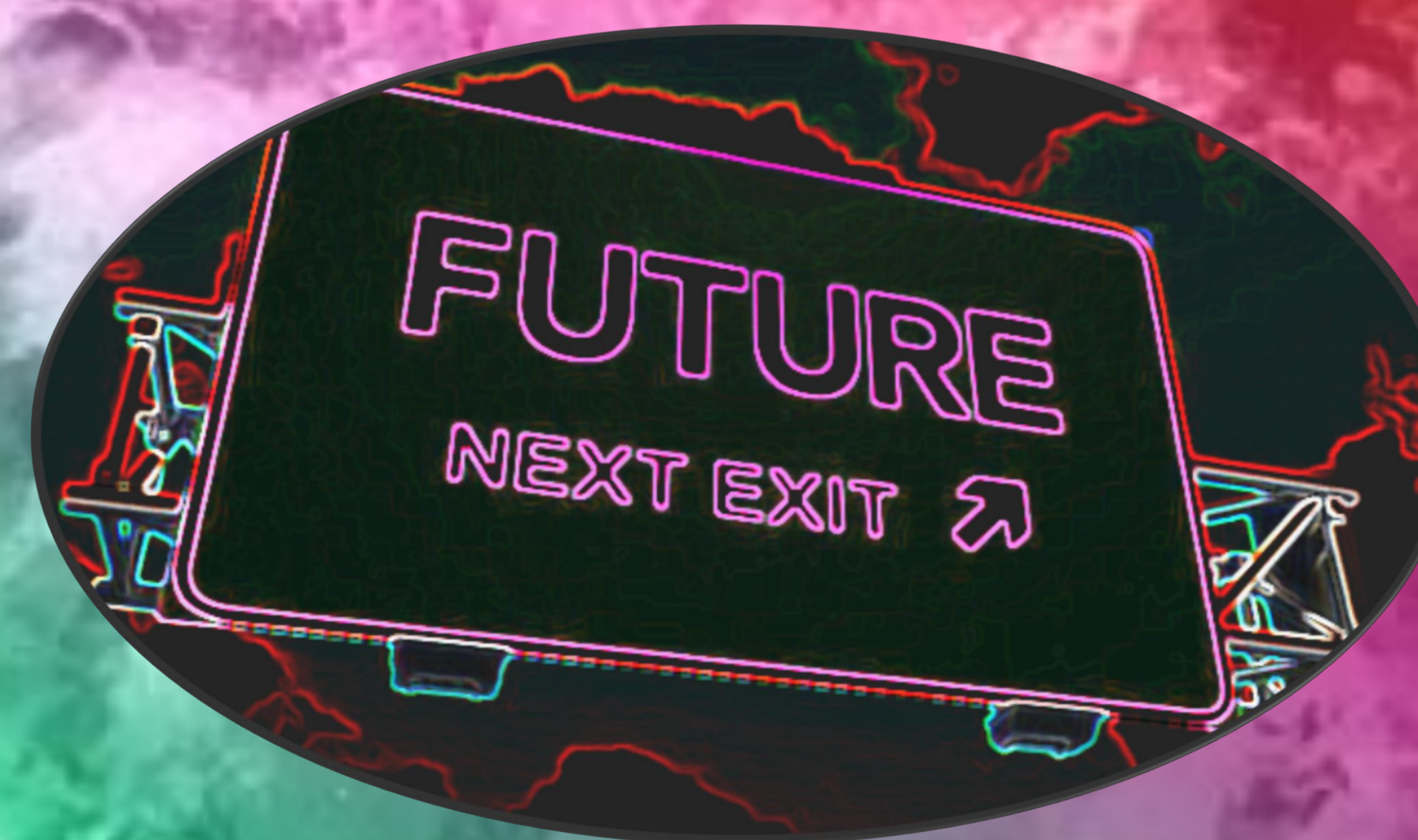
(*"I only act to satisfy immediate concerns.."* etc.)

Future-oriented sub-scale:

(*"I consider how things might be in the future.."* etc.)

Total CFC scores:

(*Reversed scores for the immediate-oriented sub-scale + scores for the future-oriented sub-scale*)



Main results

Immediate-oriented sub-scale:

The higher breath alcohol concentration level → the more focus on satisfying immediate concerns ($p = .031$).

Future-oriented sub-scale:

No sig. association between breath alcohol concentration and consideration of future consequences ($p = .211$).

Total CFC scores:

The higher breath alcohol concentration level → the less overall focus on future consequences and more focus on the present ($p = .039$)

Conclusions

"Intoxicated persons focus more on the present. This might put them at particular risk for carrying out criminal actions. It might also put them at risk during interrogations (e.g., waiving their *Miranda* rights or incriminating themselves)."



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