Booze and Sex: A Psychophysiological Examination of Explicit and Implicit Attitudes

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RESULTS

Explicit (self-report) condom attitudes were uniformly very positive

- $M = 5.52$, where 6 = very good
- All participants reported intentions to use condoms with casual partners.

Implicit (P300) condom attitudes appeared less positive:

- Condom images presented in a negative context produced a significantly smaller P3 ($M = 12.78$), than condom images presented in a positive context ($M = 16.62$), $F(1, 27) = 10.47, p < .01$.
- According to the logic of the oddball paradigm, this indicates smaller evaluative distinction between condoms and negative than between condoms and positive (i.e. implicit evaluations were more negative than positive).
- The Context x Sex interaction was not significant, $F(1, 27) = 1.26, p = .27$, indicating that this effect was generally similar for men and women.
- There was also a main effect of Target, in which condom images produced larger P3s overall ($M = 14.70$) than alcohol images ($M = 12.71$), $F(1, 27) = 5.32, p < .05$.

In contrast, P3 to erotic alcohol images and alcohol cues alone indicated positive implicit evaluations since alcohol images presented in a positive context produced a smaller P3 amplitude ($M = 11.79$), than condom images presented in a negative context ($M = 13.64$).

CONCLUSIONS

Our results replicate previous work by Marsh et al. indicating that explicit condom attitudes are generally positive, but extend those findings by showing that implicit attitudes appear less positive, seen here as a smaller difference in evaluative categorization of condoms when presented in a negative compared to a positive context.

In contrast, P300 to erotic alcohol images and alcohol cues alone indicated positive implicit evaluations, suggesting an evaluative dissociation between attitudes toward condoms attitudes toward sex or alcohol.

These preliminary data suggests ERPs may be a viable method for studying implicit attitudes, but more research is needed to determine if ERPs could predict condom use behavior prospectively. Implicit attitudes toward condom use, coupled with measures of alcohol expectancies, can be helpful in constructing theoretical models of risk behavior and informing future interventions.

It is also not clear whether these differences in P300 amplitude are due to attitudes toward condoms per se or if they are related to arousal. Current studies in our lab are testing this question.

REFERENCES


