

In mendlson, ladou,
and soloman, 1964)
have



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In response to the need for research that incorporates multiple aspects of theory into a testable framework, this study attempted to replicate and extend the results of Cooper, Russell, Skinner, Frone, and Mudar (1992). A modified stressor vulnerability model of stress-related drinking was tested in a homogeneous sample of 65 male and female undergraduate student drinkers. Total weekly consumption of alcohol was used as the criterion measure, whereas family history of alcoholism (Adapted SMAST: Sher & Descutner, 1986), alcohol outcome expectancies/valences (CEOA: Fromme, Stroot, & Kaplan, 1993), perceived stress (PSS: Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), and coping dispositions (COPE: Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) were used as the predictor variables. The proposed modified model postulates that expectancies play a proximal mediating role in stress-related drinking, whereas gender, family history of alcoholism, and coping all play a distal moderating role. Hierarchical multiple regression procedures were then performed to evaluate the model. The results failed to support the hypothesized model.

Specifically, expectancies emerged as a distal rather than proximal predictor of stress-related drinking, and family history of alcoholism did not moderate stress-related drinking. In contrast, gender and coping styles emerged as the most powerful predictors in the model. Despite the shortcomings of the proposed model, the present results offer an alternative interpretation as to what constitutes the stressor vulnerability model of stress-related drinking.

Stress as a Causal Factor in Drinking One of the common stereotypes about the effects of alcohol involves the drug's capacity to act as a stress antagonist. Conger (1956) has proposed a theory, known as the tension

reduction hypothesis (TRH) of drinking, to support this notion. Essentially the theory holds that alcohol's sedative action on the central nervous system serves to reduce tension, and because tension reduction is reinforcing, people drink to escape it (Marlatt & Rohsenow, 1980).

Strong evidence to support the validity of the theory comes from epidemiological findings which indicate that the prevalence of anxiety disorders in alcoholics ranges from 16 to 37%, compared to a rate of only 4-5% in the general population (Welte, 1985). Notwithstanding, there seems to be a subset of people for whom the predictions of the TRH do not hold. For instance, in a study conducted by Conway, Vickers, Ward, and Rahe (1981) it was found that the consumption of alcohol among Navy officers during periods of high job demands was actually lower than the consumption during low-demand periods. In addition, other studies (i. e., Mayfield, 1968; Mendlson, Ladou, & Soloman, 1964) have shown that some drinkers actually consider alcohol as a tension generator rather than a tension reducer. Overall, when taking into account these conflicting findings, it seems prudent to find some middle ground. The solution to this problem than is a modified version of the TRH, specifying the conditions under which stress will lead to an increase in drinking.

Moderating and Mediating Factors in Stress Induced Drinking. In addition to stress, several other variables have been shown to be crucial in determining an individual's drinking behavior. These variables include gender of drinker (gender), coping behavior of drinker (coping), and alcohol outcome expectancies of drinker (expectancies). In the following discussion, the importance of each of these variables to drinking will be considered first,

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followed by an evaluation of these as potential moderators or mediators of stress in drinking. Differential Gender Drinking Behavior It has been repeatedly demonstrated that significant differences exist between the drinking patterns of men and women (Hilton, 1988).

In a comprehensive survey of US drinking habits conducted by the US National Center for Health Statistics in 1988, significant gender differences were found in three areas as pointed out by Dawson and Archer (1992). The first significant difference pertained to the number of male and female current drinkers. Roughly 64% of all men were current drinkers in comparison to 41% of all women. The second and third significant differences concerned the quantity of alcohol consumed. Men were more likely to (a) consume alcohol on a daily basis and (b) be classified as heavy drinkers.

Men's daily average of ethanol intake (17.5 grams per day) was almost twice as high as women's (8.9 grams per day). Even when an adjustment for body weight was made (females require less