

Predictors of Alcohol Use

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Introduction

- ▶ Alcoholic drinks are common in many countries
- ▶ The majority of people who drink, drink without any problems
- ▶ But why do some people develop alcohol problems, and who are they?

Introduction

- ▶ “An alcoholic is someone who drinks more than his doctor”
- ▶ “Oh, you hate your job? Why didn’t you say so? There’s a support group for that. It’s called everybody, and they meet at the bar.” — Drew Carey
- ▶ Can peoples’ occupations really predict their drinking?

Background

- ▶ Alcohol use can be influenced by two domains
 - ▶ Internal factors
 - ▶ Genes
 - ▶ Personality traits
 - ▶ External factors
 - ▶ Availability
 - ▶ Occupation

Background

- ▶ What is personality?
 - ▶ “the biopsychosocial forces that make people uniquely themselves”¹
- ▶ Agreeableness
 - ▶ Easy to get along with; avoid arguments
- ▶ Conscientiousness
 - ▶ Plan work in detail; not impulsive
- ▶ Extraversion
 - ▶ Enjoy social contacts; enliven dull parties
- ▶ Neuroticism
 - ▶ Often feel miserable; emotionally unstable



Background

▶ Sample

- ▶ Data came from the Terman Life Cycle study begun in 1921 by Lewis M. Terman
- ▶ 593 males participants
- ▶ IQ scores of at least 135
- ▶ Predominantly white, middle class
- ▶ Average year of birth was 1910



Background

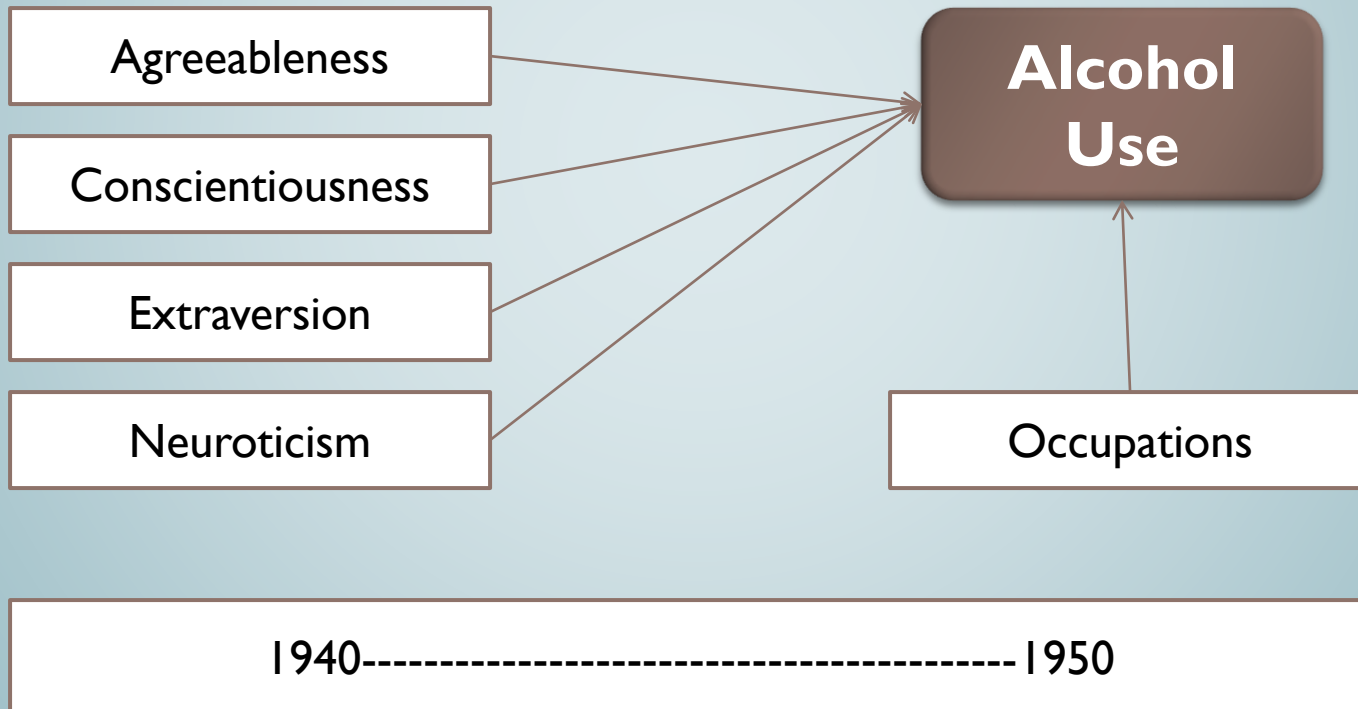
▶ Measures

- ▶ Personality traits were measured in the 1940s
- ▶ Occupations were coded and aggregated into 7 groups using the Standard Occupational Classification² from job titles and descriptions reported in the 1950s
- ▶ Alcohol use was classified as *light*, *moderate* or *heavy* based on self reported alcohol consumption in the 1950s



Design

Predictors of Alcohol Use



Personality

- ▶ Agreeableness

- ▶ Predicted significantly lower risk of heavy alcohol use
- ▶ This is interesting because prior literature has found inconsistent results with agreeableness

- ▶ Conscientiousness

- ▶ Also predicted significantly lower risk of heavy drinking
- ▶ Consonant with predictions and the literature



Personality

▶ Extraversion

- ▶ Predicted a slightly higher risk of heavy alcohol consumption
- ▶ This is consistent with literature, although the effect was not significant

▶ Neuroticism

- ▶ Unlike prior research, there was *no* effect of neuroticism on heavy alcohol use
- ▶ Perhaps because neuroticism was measured a decade before alcohol use?

Occupation

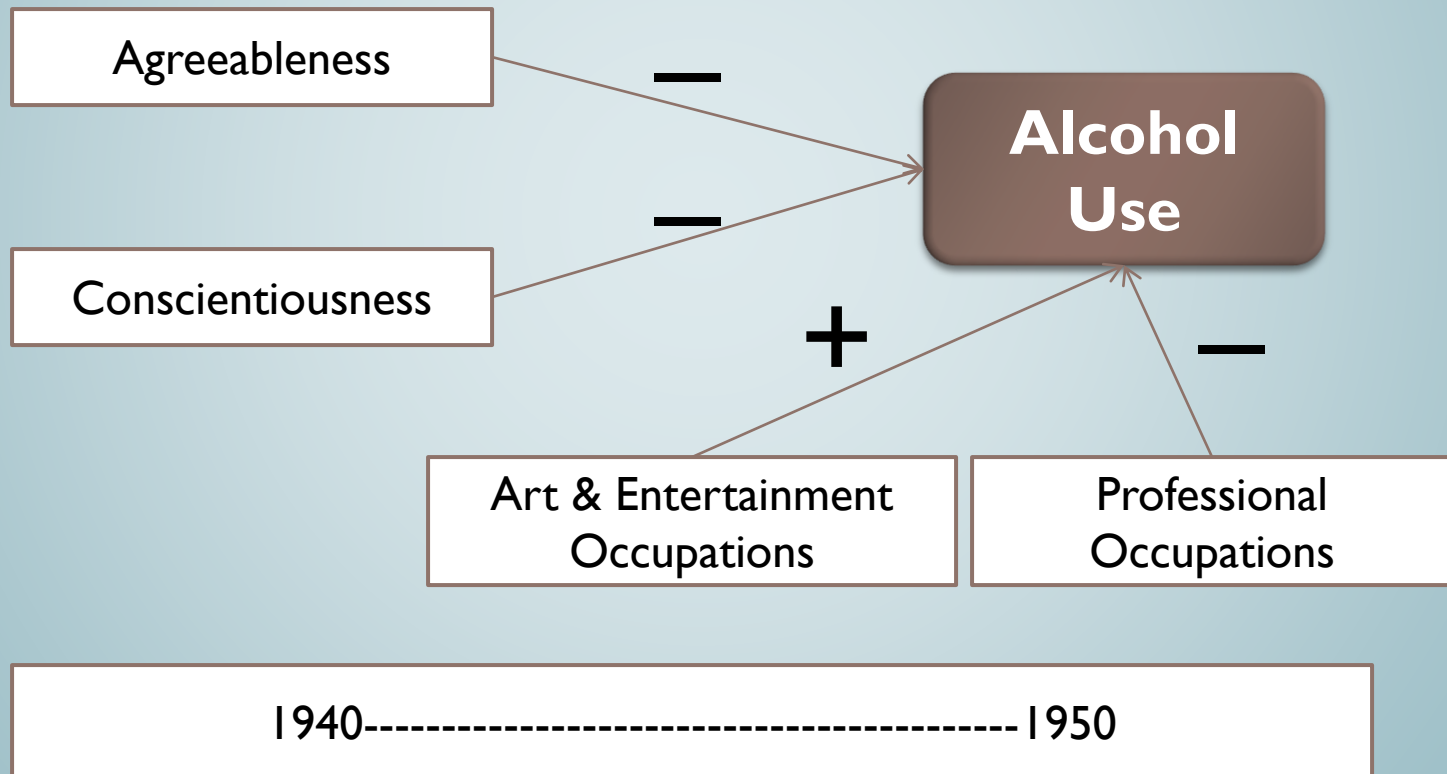
- ▶ Arts and Entertainment Occupations
 - ▶ E.g., Artists, Actors, Designers, Athletes
- ▶ Related to a significantly higher risk of heavy alcohol use
- ▶ *But* the effect attenuated when personality was accounted for, and was no longer significant

Occupation

- ▶ Professional Occupations
 - ▶ E.g., Engineers, Professors, Architects, Computer Scientists
- ▶ Related to a significantly lower risk of heavy alcohol use
- ▶ The effect remained relatively unchanged when personality was accounted for

Results

Significant Predictors of Alcohol Use



Conclusions

- ▶ Can peoples' occupations really predict their drinking?
 - ▶ **Yes**
- ▶ Both personality and occupation appear to be important predictors of alcohol use
- ▶ These effects appear to be unique

References

- ¹ Friedman, H.S. (2007). Personality, disease, and self-healing. In H. S. Friedman & R. C. Silver (Eds.), *Foundations of health psychology* (pp. 172–199). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- ² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000). Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Manual (2000 ed.) [CD]. Washington, DC.

Drawing significantly from:

Wiley, J. F. (2010). *Relations of Personality and Occupation with Alcohol Consumption* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). University of California, Riverside.

