Truth or D.A.R.E? The unforeseen effects of anti-drinking and driving ads

*Anti-drinking and driving advertisements may not be as effective as previously thought. Ana Carvallo reports.*

Drive sober or get pulled over. Americans are exposed to the dangers of drinking and driving from early age. However, with approximately one third of all automobile related deaths being caused by drunk drivers, many people are questioning the effectiveness of these warnings.

A new study published by [the American Psychological Association](file:///C:\Users\ana3177\Documents\ENGL%20105i\Unit1Article.pdf) suggests that exposure to anti-drinking and driving ads may unintentionally increase a person’s willingness to drink and drive. [Johnson, M. B., & Kopetz, C. E. (2017). The Unintended Effects of Providing Risk Information About Drinking and Driving. *Health Psychology*, doi:10.1037/hea0000526 ]

Researchers showed drivers ads that either contained scenes depicting the negative consequences of drinking and driving or scenes of unrelated images. Participants then received a series of scenarios and asked to report their likelihood of driving under the influence in each.

Surprisingly, people exposed to the anti-DUI ads reported the highest likelihood of engaging in drunk driving. Researchers suggest that our subconscious’ tendency to ignore information that interferes with our goals may make people wanting to get home after drinks unreceptive to the warnings. Another possible explanation is that bigger risks are often associated with a greater potential reward. Since the ads portray drinking and driving as a risky behavior, people might see it as more convenient or advantageous. So next time you’ve decided against the $7 Uber, remember, you don’t always gotta risk it to get the biscuit.

-Ana Carvallo

[*The above text is a transcript of this podcast*]

Spoken Transcript:

[theme music] This is English 105i 60-second social science, I’m Ana Carvallo. Got a minute? [swoosh][clock tick]

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