

The Effects of Alcohol Use on Creative Problem Solving

Andrew Jarosz

University of Illinois at Chicago

Gregory Colflesh

Georgia Tech

Jennifer Wiley

University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract: Though creativity is highly valued in many disciplines, ranging from the fine arts to the natural sciences, little is known concerning its underlying causes and mechanisms. In particular, the problem solving literature has long sought an explanation for the processes underlying creative problem solving. The present study tested the commonly held notion that alcohol use increases an individual's creativity, using a problem solving paradigm. Participants completed the Remote Associates Task (RAT), while either sober or intoxicated to a blood alcohol content of approximately .07. It was found that intoxicated individuals outperformed their sober counterparts. These results are interpreted as evidence that alcohol use leads to a diffuse attentional state, which in turn can benefit creative problem solving.