

Meagan Collins

Abstract

Intoxicated witnesses are a pretty common occurrence in legal contexts, yet there have not been many studies done to show the effect of intoxication on witness recall and reliability. The few studies that have been done have conflicting results/conclusions. The I-Lab would like to research how intoxication effects witness recall for a live, staged event, with the hypothesis being that the effect of intoxication on witness recall will not be significant compared to sober and placebo participants. The intoxicated participants will be compared to sober participants and placebo participants; placebo participants will believe they are given an alcoholic drink, but are not actually drinking any alcohol. A confederate will enter the lab and act out an event for the participant to witness. The event will most likely involve some aggression towards the other confederate. After the staged event, participants will be interviewed to determine the amount of accurate information they can recall. The three groups will be compared through statistical analyses. The results can help clear up the conflicting information of previous studies, because the statistical analyses will look at effect sizes; we will know not only if there was an effect but how large of an effect intoxication has. Also, the results of this study can be applied to real world settings, since the witnesses are recalling a live, staged event. This research can help set guidelines for interviewing intoxicated witnesses, and it can also help determine the credibility of intoxicated witnesses in court or legal settings.