



# Revenge Isn't Always so Sweet: Priming Moderates the Relationship Between Revenge Planning and State Hostility

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## INTRODUCTION

### Revenge Planning (RP):

- Revenge planning is the tendency to hold a grudge for a prior provocation and plan for retaliation (Denson, Pedersen, Miller, 2006).
- Previous research has shown that focusing on angry thoughts and feelings and planning revenge results in increased anger, aggressive cognitions, and aggressive behavior (Denson, 2009).

### Alcohol Priming

- Priming is a technique used to trigger associations in an individual's mind
- Previous research has shown that priming with alcohol increases aggressive behavior (Denson et al., 2011)

## CURRENT STUDY

- The current study is the first to investigate the moderating effect of type of prime on the relationship between revenge planning (RP) and state hostility.
- It is hypothesized that revenge planning will have a stronger positive relationship to state hostility in the context of alcohol priming relative to neutral priming.
- Factors that may mediate the relationship between RP and state hostility will also be explored.

## METHOD

### Participants:

- Undergraduate students (n= 107) (73.8% Female,  $M_{age} = 18.64$ ) enrolled in an Introductory Psychology course

**Measure of Revenge Planning**

- 11 items;  $\alpha = .897$ ; e.g., "if a person hurts you on purpose, you deserve to get whatever revenge you can" (Denson, Pedersen, & Miller, 2006)

**Provocation**

- The experimenter insults the participant on their performance on a difficult anagram task.

**Priming Manipulation**

- Participants are primed with either neutral (i.e., coffee, lemonade) or alcohol-related (i.e., beer, vodka) words during a word identification task on the computer.

**Measures of Negative Affective Reaction and State Hostility**

- Negative Affective Reaction to the Provocation: 8 items;  $\alpha = .703$ ; e.g., angered, irritated, furious
- State Hostility: 8 items;  $\alpha = .922$ ; e.g., I feel angry, annoyed, frustrated

## RESULTS

- A multiple regression analysis revealed that type of prime moderated the effect of revenge planning (RP) on state hostility,  $\Delta R^2 = .0380$ ,  $F(1, 103) = 4.42$ ,  $p = .038$ .
- Contrary to our hypothesis, simple slopes analysis indicated a positive relationship between RP and state hostility for those primed with neutral words,  $t = +3.53$ ,  $b = +0.42$ ,  $p = .001$  but not those primed with alcohol words,  $t = +0.87$ ,  $b = +0.09$ ,  $p = .388$ .
- A mediation analysis determined that for those in the neutral prime condition, the effect of revenge planning on state hostility was mediated by negative affective reaction to the provocation,  $b = +0.10$ , 95% CI:  $+0.0001$ ,  $+0.2334$ .
- Specifically, revenge planning increased negative affective reaction to the provocation,  $b = +0.49$ ,  $p = .006$ , which in turn lead to increased state hostility,  $b = +0.20$ ,  $p = .058$ .

## RESULTS

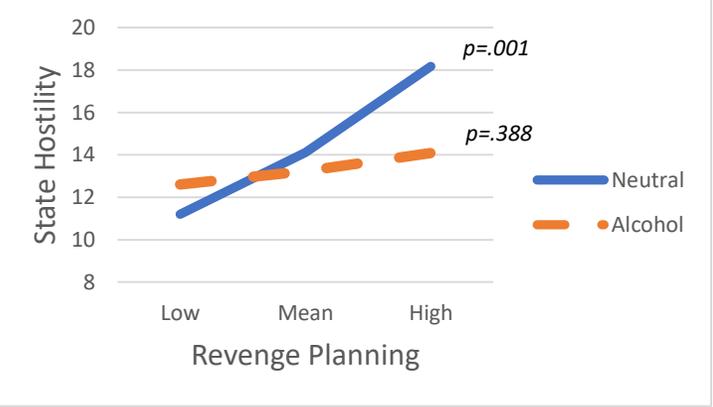


Figure 1. The moderating effect of priming type on the relationship between revenge planning and state hostility.

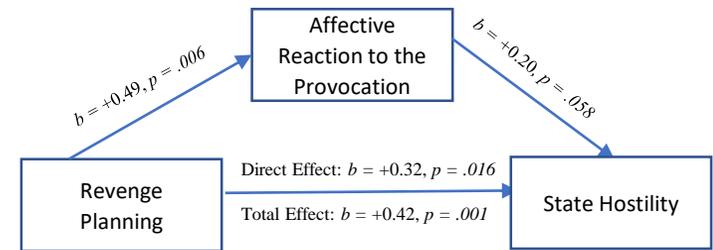


Figure 2. Negative affective reaction to the provocation mediated the relationship between revenge planning and state hostility among those primed with neutral words.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Contrary to expectations, RP only predicted state hostility when participants received a neutral prime, not an alcohol prime.
- Some participants might expect drinking to reduce tension (Friedman, McCarthy, Bartholow, & Hicks, 2007), and this in turn could attenuate the relationship between revenge planning and state hostility in the context of alcohol priming.
- Future research should directly investigate the impact of tension-reduction alcohol expectancies on the relationship between aggressive personality traits and both anger and aggression when people have been primed with alcohol.