

Schenk and the personality of smokers

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In his recent book, Schenk (1979) has analysed the personality of smokers (as well as other drug consumers) in a novel manner which suggests that his results may be of interest to psychologists working in this area. Most students of the problem compare smokers and non-smokers on various scales, assuming that differing smoking categories may be placed along a single continuum, ranging from non-smokers, through occasional and ex-smokers, to moderate and heavy smokers. Using discriminant function analysis, Schenk showed clearly that such an assumption is not justified, but that two orthogonal discriminants are needed to describe the personality make-up of different types of smokers. In addition to this innovation in method of analysis, Schenk added certain measures to the usual extraversion and neuroticism scales, which proved that social and political attitudes could be used very profitably to characterize different types of smokers.

Schenk divided his subjects, all of whom were recruits into the German army, aged 19–20 years of age, into five groups. 'Abstinenzlers' were 287 recruits who had never smoked; 'Probierers' were 352 recruits who had tried smoking for a short time, but had given it up; 'Ex-Raucher' were 108 recruits who had smoked for a time, but had then given it up; 'Gemässigte Raucher' were 179 moderate smokers; and finally 'Starke Raucher' were 400 heavy smokers. These groups were administered seven different questionnaires (as well as others not used in the analysis reproduced). The FPI (Freiburger Persönlichkeits Inventar) is a measure of extraversion and neuroticism, adapted from the EPI. The *Wüagg 1* is the Würzburger Aggression Skala, Factor 1, a measure of general aggressiveness. The *Kons* is a measure of political conservatism and antisocialist attitude. The IOPA is a measure of individual political activity, and the *POEN* a measure of political alienation. Finally, the *ES* is a measure of experience seeking, akin to the Zuckerman sensation-seeking scales.

Table 1 adapted from Schenk (1979, pp. 115) shows the two significant discriminant functions, which are also shown in Fig. 1 (Schenk, 1979, p. 116). It will be clear that the various groups do not lie along a single continuum, but that two such continua are required to explain the inter-group variation on these personality scales. Discriminant 1 correlates with extraversion and experience seeking, as expected of a dimension which arranges individuals roughly along the smoker vs non-smoker dimension, with ex-smokers and 'Probierers' intermediate. Correlations are also found for aggressivity (probably close to the psychoticism dimension of Eysenck) and neuroticism, again very much in line with previous findings (Eysenck, 1981). The first discriminant also, and perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, correlates with conservatism and political alienation. As Schenk puts it,

"this is a dimension in which the need for stimulation and social contact is associated with an unpolitical, conservative attitude, and with aggressive and (less importantly) neurotic traits."
(p. 115)

Discriminant 2 opposes ex-smokers to all the other groups; in the analysis of the tests, experience seeking opposes neuroticism and aggression. This distinction resembles that between the two major types of smoking motivation (Eysenck, 1981), namely smoking to increase arousal and avoid boredom, and smoking to reduce anxiety. Ex-smokers, on this showing, were motivated to start smoking by a need for stimulation (reduction of boredom).

Schenk reports several further analyses, taking into account: (1) precise amount smoked (instead of simply differentiating moderate and heavy smokers); (2) intention to give up, smoke less, or continue as before; and (3) estimated ease with which the smoker could give up smoking. Intention for future consumption was found to be important only for the intermediate consumption group, those who wanted to reduce their consumption or give up smoking altogether resembling those with only small consumption, and those who wanted to continue as before resembling those with heavy consumption. As regards dependency, those who felt that it would be hard to give up smoking had high scores on neuroticism and aggression, while those who felt they would have little difficulty had high scores on experience seeking and particularly extraversion. This agrees with the findings for ex-smokers, who also seemed motivated most by social and stimulation-seeking needs.

This brief account does scant justice to a very carefully designed and analysed experiment, and it does not allow comparisons with the results of questions regarding consumption of other drugs (e.g. cannabis, alcohol). As far as it goes it gives results not dissimilar to those of other studies relating smoking to personality (Eysenck, 1981), but it extends these findings in several interesting and potentially important directions. One important

Table 1. ANOVA analysis of seven personality tests for 5 groups of smokers, giving two discriminants and correlations between tests and discriminants

Variable	P	Stand. Disc. I	Stand. Disc. II	Corr. I	Corr. II
FPI-E	0.001	0.419	-0.036	0.521	-0.053
FPI-N	0.006	0.166	0.338	0.322	0.321
Wüagg 1	0.001	0.101	0.358	0.498	0.304
Kons	0.001	0.424	0.286	0.545	0.417
IOPA	0.468	0.043	0.154	-0.067	-0.117
POEN	0.001	0.370	0.115	0.564	0.255
ES	0.001	0.447	-0.888	0.539	-0.733

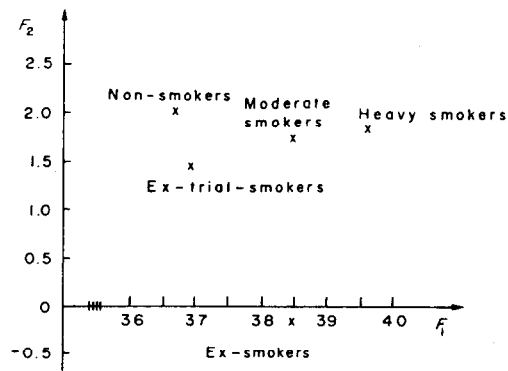


Fig. 1. Scores of five groups of smokers on two discriminants.

conclusion which emerges is that personality variables are most important where the drug in question is socially unacceptable (cannabis), least so where the drug in question is acceptable (nicotine, alcohol). This suggests that as smoking becomes socially less acceptable (a trend clearly documented over the past few years), personality variables will become more important than they have been in the past. It is also possible that the actual contribution to the variance made by different personality variables may change over time, dependent on such factors as social acceptability. This possibility suggests that regular replications of a standard investigation every three years or so would be needed to document any such changes as may occur.

REFERENCES

- EYSENCK H. J. (1981) *The Causes and Effects of Smoking*. Temple Smith, London.
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