

The Creation of an Alcohol-Intimacy Expectancy Scale

Scott T. Wolf & M. Lynne Cooper

Department of Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri

Introduction

Widespread belief that alcohol facilitates the initiation of sexual experience and intimacy.

Does Alcohol Facilitate Sexual Activity?

People report a freeing of sexual desire following moderate doses of alcohol (Edwards, 1969), and alcohol expectancies can explain these reported aphrodisiac qualities (Lang, 1985).

Expectancies of alcohol's aphrodisiac qualities also predict higher attractiveness ratings of faces following suboptimal alcohol primes (Friedman, McCarthy, & Denzler, 2005).

Does Alcohol Facilitate Intimacy?

Defining Intimacy:

"feelings of closeness and affection between interacting partners; the state of having revealed one's innermost thoughts and feelings to another person; relatively intense forms of nonverbal engagement (notably, touch, eye contact, and close physical proximity); particular types of relationships (especially marriage); sexual activity; and stages of psychological maturation." (Berscheid & Reis, 1998, p. 224, emphasis added)

"... the degree of closeness two people achieve. Closeness means both physical closeness (being together, touching) and psychological closeness ... Psychological closeness is based on personal self-disclosures between two people; the more they disclose and the greater the sanctity of topics discussed, the greater the intimacy." (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983, p. 18, emphasis added)

Intimacy and Alcohol

On first dates, intimacy expectations increase if alcohol is present (Morr & Mongeau, 2004).

Alcohol consumption appears to help committed partners express intimate feelings (Traaen & Lewin, 1999).

However, social intimacy and binge drinking are negatively correlated (Nezlek et al., 1994).

College women report that they drink as a way to be with others, seek acceptance from peers, and numb the pain from bad relationships (Gleeson, 1994).

After drinking, women have increased intentions to pursue relationship-enhancing behaviors and decreased intentions to resist sexual advances (Testa et al., 2006).

Alcohol expectancies account for increased levels of self-disclosure following placebo and actual alcohol consumption (Schippers et al., 1997).

Study Aims

We sought to create and test items assessing expectancies of intimacy as a first step in creating a new scale measuring alcohol intimacy expectancies.

Method

Newly created alcohol-intimacy expectancy items were administered to participants interspersed with items assessing social facilitation alcohol expectancy items.

Both constructs were assessed in order to differentiate social expectancies from intimacy expectancies.

Participants

283 University of Missouri undergraduate students self-identified as current drinkers (123 males, 160 females).

Alcohol Expectancy Items

Social Items (17)

- r15 When I drink alcohol, I find it easier to socialize with people I don't know well.
r03 A few drinks make it easier to talk to people I don't know.
r10 After a few drinks, I find it easier to carry on a casual conversation with someone I just met.
r01 I am more outgoing at parties after a few drinks of alcohol.
r14 When I am drinking, I am more outgoing and talkative at parties.
r05 It is easier to strike up a conversation with someone I don't know well after a few drinks.
r07 I am able to talk more freely after a few drinks.
r02 I am able to talk more freely with casual acquaintances after a few drinks.
r24 When I drink alcohol, it is easier for me to socialize.
r23 Having a few drinks helps me relax in a social situation where I don't know a lot of people.
r08 I am friendlier with strangers when I am drinking.
r12 I am more outgoing when I drink alcohol.
r20 It is easier for me to meet new people in large social settings if I've been drinking.
r18 When I drink alcohol, I feel more social.
r04 Drinking makes large get-togethers and parties more fun.
r11 I am friendlier when I am drinking.
r26 After a few drinks, I feel more accepted socially.

Intimacy Items (11)

- r16 I feel more affection for those who are close to me when I am drinking.
r17 It is easier for me to express love for those I care about after a few drinks.
r28 When I drink alcohol, it is easier to share my innermost thoughts and feelings with others.
r27 I feel emotionally close to a romantic partner or date when I am drinking.
r19 It is easier for me to say what is in my heart after a few drinks.
r21 Drinking with one other person creates a special sense of closeness.
r25 Sharing a drink with someone I care about makes me feel warm and cozy inside.
r06 Drinking helps me to feel closer to those I care about.
r22 After a few drinks, I am more comfortable having an intimate one-on-one conversation.
r13 I am more likely to reveal my "true self" after a few drinks.
r09 When I am drinking, I am more likely to share secrets about myself with others.

Items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results

Data were analyzed using a series of Exploratory Factor Analyses using oblique rotation type, the quartimax rotation criterion, and Kaiser weights.

A two factor solution provided suitable model fit and confirmed theoretical factor structure expectations ($RMSEA = .075$).

A social expectancy factor and an intimacy expectancy factor emerged (interfactor correlation: $r = .51$).

Two Factor EFA Solution

	SOCIAL	INTIMACY
r15	.865	-.012
r03	.862	-.120
r10	.861	-.107
r01	.858	-.064
r14	.838	.022
r05	.827	-.063
r07	.824	-.040
r02	.821	-.020
r24	.808	.079
r23	.792	-.002
r08	.758	.038
r12	.757	.078
r20	.727	.110
r18	.662	.205
r04	.474	.227
r11	.446	.264
r16	-.076	.840
r17	-.004	.819
r28	.025	.781
r27	-.022	.779
r19	-.006	.758
r21	-.067	.728
r25	-.099	.714
r06	.053	.699
r22	.161	.665
r13	.046	.622
r26	.238	.446
r09	.180	.423

After removing item r26, results were virtually identical.

Discussion

Results suggest related but separate constructs for alcohol social expectancies and alcohol intimacy expectancies.

Further refinement of the scale is necessary, as is validation of the scale through the assessment of intimacy drinking motivations and differential situational drinking by those high or low in alcohol intimacy expectancies (i.e., to see if those high in this construct are more likely to drink in intimate situations).

Contact

Scott T. Wolf, Department of Psychological Sciences, 200 S. 7th St., University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

wolfst@missouri.edu



University of Missouri
Department of Psychological Sciences