Expectancies and Valuations of Alcohol, and Their Role with Social Anxiety

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Introduction

- Increased positive alcohol expectancies (e.g., acting sociable, increased courage) have been shown to be related to increased rates of drinking and drinking problems in White European American (e.g., Brown, 1985) and Hispanic college students (Zamboanga, 2003).

- Studies including a predominantly Caucasian sample have demonstrated a positive relationship between alcohol consumption and social enhancement alcohol expectancies for women (e.g., Read et al., 2004).

- Though studies have shown that self-identified "Latinos" place great importance on pleasant social relationships (Velez-Blasini et al., 1997), there is little research on Latinas and alcohol expectancies related to social outcomes.

- If a woman expects alcohol to decrease the anxiety that she is experiencing in the stressful situation (e.g., social fears), and perceives this outcome as desirable (i.e., highly valued), she may intentionally use the alcohol to self-medicate. Over time, learning may occur, and thus alcohol becomes a negative reinforcer (Thomas et al., 2003).

  - The ability to engage in self-medication of anxiety in social situations is often achievable due to the fact that alcohol is easily obtained and socially acceptable in many social situations. Problem drinking and social anxiety commonly co-occur in social situations (Abrams et al., 2003).

  - The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship among sociability alcohol expectancies, valuations of expected effects, social anxiety, alcohol problems, and drinking in specific social contexts among a primarily Hispanic/Latina sample of female college students. This study builds on the limited research conducted in primarily Caucasian samples which also lacked measures of drinking in social situations (e.g., Eggleston et al., 2004; Ham & Hope, 2005).

Methods

- 224 female student volunteers were administered a questionnaire battery and a "standard drink" definition handout that were part of a larger multi-site college drinking study (See Table 1).

Comprehensive Effects of Alcohol (CEOA)

- The CEOA (Fromme et al., 1993) is a 37-item self-report questionnaire that measures both alcohol outcome expectancies (1 =Disagree ; 5 =Agree) and the subjective evaluation (1 =Bad ; 4 =Good) of those effects

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)

- The AUDIT (Babor et al., 1992) is a 10-item measure that assesses hazardous drinking.

Social Activities Scale (SAS)

- The SAS (Mendez et al., 2006) is a 30 item self-report questionnaire that measures activity participation with the occurrence of drinking. The current research focused on three social contexts questions (i.e., a "club or bar", "house party," or "small gathering of friends at a house or dorm") to assess drinking in a social context.

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)

- The SIAS is a 19 item self-report questionnaire designed to measure fears associated with social interactions

- The current sample was split into a high expectancy/high valuations group (N = 37) and a low expectancy/low valuations (N = 24) based upon quartiles (i.e., low = first quartile on CEOA sociability expectancies and valuations, high = fourth quartile on CEOA sociability expectancies and valuations).

- 27 Hispanics were found in the High Expectancy High Valuation Grou,p and only 14 in the Low/Low group; whereas in the other ethnicities 5 were in the High/High group and 9 in the Low/Low group as shown in Figure 1.

Table 1.
Summary of Sample Demographics (N = 224)

Ethnicity
Black Hispanic/ Latino	10 (5%)
White Hispanic/ Latino	118 (53%)
Caucasian	43 (14 %)
African-American	25 (11%)
Asian / Pacific Islander	8 (4%)
Mixed Parents	31 (14%)
Other	7 (3%)

Age
18	84 (38%)
19	68 (31%)
20	22 (10%)
21	17 (8%)
22	7 (3%)
23-25	14 (6%)
26-30	6 (3%)
30+	5 (2%)

Figure 1. Number of participants in the CEOA's low expectancy and low valuation quartile to high expectancy and high valuation quartile.
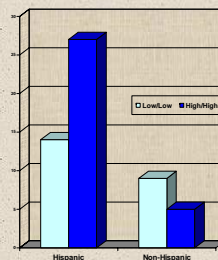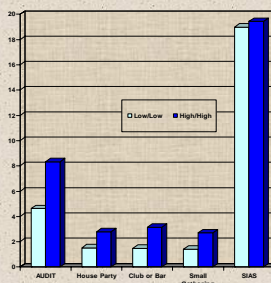

Figure 2. Means of the Low/Low and High/High expectancy and valuation quartiles on the AUDIT, Three questions assessing drinking in a social situation and SIAS.

Results

- A series of Pearson's Correlations indicated that the CEOA's Expectancy and Valuation Sociability scales were positively correlated with hazardous drinking (AUDIT) and frequency of drinking in the three SAS social situations. The CEOA Sociability scales were unrelated to social anxiety (SIAS) (See Table 2).

- A one-way ANOVA supported the hypothesis that those in the High Social Expectancy/High Social Valuation group had significantly higher AUDIT scores (see Figure 2) than the Low Expectancy/Low Valuation group ($F (1, 51) = 8.51$, $p =.005$).

- Drinking while "Going to a House Party" ($F (59) = 10.237$, $p =.002$), "Going to a Club or Bar" ($F (59) = 20.61$, $p <.001$), and at a "Small Gathering of Friends/Acquaintances' at a House/Dorm" ($F (57)= 13.04$, $p =.001$) was significantly more frequent for students in the High Expectancy/High Social Valuation group than the Low Expectancy/Low Valuation group as the hypothesis suggested. Means are shown in Figure 2.

- Contrary to expectations, social anxiety (as assessed by the SIAS) did not differ across the two CEOA expectancy-valuation groups ($F (56)= .01$, $p =.914$).

Table 2

	AUDIT	Going to a House Party (SAS)	Going to a Club or Bar (SAS)	A Small Gathering of Friends/ Acquaintances/At A House/Dorm (SAS)	SIAS
Sociability Expectancies	.31***	.28***	.34***	.30***	-.03
Sociability Valuations	.23**	.33***	.33***	.35***	.02

Note: p<.01 **p<.001***. AUDIT = Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. SAS=Social Activities Scale. SIAS = Social Interaction Anxiety Scale.

Discussion

- The goal of the current study was to examine the relationship of Social Alcohol Outcome Expectancies, Social Anxiety, and Hazardous Drinking among a sample of predominantly Hispanic female college students .

- The results indicate that women who value and endorse alcohol expectancies for the sociability scale in the CEOA had a strong significant relationship with self-reported frequency of drinking in three social contexts (i.e., a "club or bar", "house party," or "small gathering of friends at a house or dorm) as well as hazardous drinking.

  - Given that those Hispanic females who expect and value their expectancies of alcohol are drinking more often in social situations and have higher rates of hazardous drinking, this supports the notion that expectancies and the value ones places on expectancies plays a role in determining alcohol use, specifically problematic drinking (Brown et al., 1985).

- It is also interesting that Hazardous drinking was high, on average, for an all female student sample ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 3.47$) in the Low/Low group, as some researchers recommend the cutoff for potential alcohol problems among female college students should be lowered to 4 (Wechsler et al., 1994). Further, the hazardous drinking means ($M =8.34$, $SD=5.12$) for the High/High group exceeded the recommended clinical cutoffs for the AUDIT.

- Social anxiety was not significantly correlated to the CEOA's sociability expectancy or valuation scales in this sample. Further research should examine Social Anxious (SA) individuals and the possibility of a "double-sided" Expectancy scale, meaning those with SA may have low or high expectancies, with few socially anxious individuals in the moderate range.

- Future research should address the higher rates of social expectancies and valuations of alcohol specific to female Hispanics, and the relation to hazardous drinking. As well as, the need for more comprehensive measure of valuations placed on expectancies.