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BACKGROUND

- People's perceptions of intoxicated sexual perpetrators and victims may be influenced by their beliefs about how alcohol affects thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (i.e., their alcohol expectancies; Goldman, Del Boca, & Darkes, 1999).
- Most existing alcohol expectancy measures assess expectancies with the target *self* (e.g., Drinking makes *me* bad tempered) and capture general expectancies (e.g., *aggression*).
- Expectancies about how alcohol affects *others* (rather than the *self*) and that are context-specific (*sexual aggression* rather than *aggression*) are, arguably, more relevant to examine the role of alcohol expectancies in rape perceptions.

AIM

- ... to develop an alcohol expectancy measure that assesses expectancy endorsement for the self and others for the specific purpose of understanding alcohol's perceived role in sexual violence.

METHOD

- A cross-sectional sample of young adults (N = 201; 38.3% males) between 18 and 25 years completed an online survey about "young adults' beliefs about alcohol" which included:
 - ... an initial pool of alcohol expectancy items framed in terms of three targets: self, men, and women (45 items per target). Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Items were written based on a qualitative rape-perception study and checked for face validity and readability prior to quantitative assessment.
 - ... the 40-item Paulhus Deception Scales (Paulhus, 1998) which measures both trait-like tendencies of exaggeration (Self-Deceptive Enhancement; SDS) and intentionally enhanced self-presentation (Impression Management; IM) to examine the influence of social desirability.

RESULTS

- Principal Axis Factoring (direct oblimin rotation) supported a 5-factor structure for the target self (explaining 56.93% of variance) and a 4-factor structure for targets men (explaining 46.89% of variance) and women (explaining 50.22% of variance). Based on communalities, factor loadings, and consistency across targets, 72 items (24 items per target) were retained in the final scale.
- For the target self (but not for targets men and women), SDS had significant negative but relatively weak correlations with Sexual Vulnerability ($r = -.17$), Self-Centeredness ($r = -.15$), and Negative Cognitive and Behavioural Changes ($r = -.18$). IM had significant negative weak to moderate correlations with Sexual Coercion ($r = -.32$), Sexual Vulnerability ($r = -.21$), Self-Centeredness ($r = -.14$), and Negative Cognitive and Behavioural Changes ($r = -.25$).

Table 1. Example items, means (standard deviations) and Cronbach's alphas for the sub-scales across targets self, men, and women.

Target	Sub-scale	Example item Stem: "Drinking alcohol makes..."	M (SD)	α
Self	1. Sexual Coercion	... me likely to be forceful to get sex.	2.42 (.76)	.81
	2. Sexual Vulnerability	... me at risk of being forced into sex.	2.38 (.89)	.81
	3. Confidence	... me sure of myself in social situations.	3.66 (.77)	.89
	4. Self-Centeredness	... me care about myself more than others.	2.75 (.80)	.82
	5. Negative Cognitive and Behavioural Changes	... me do things I later regret.	2.94 (.73)	.89
Men	1. Sexual Coercion	... men likely to be forceful to get sex.	3.52 (.70)	.82
	2. Sexual Vulnerability	... men at risk of being forced into sex.	2.83 (.73)	.70
	3. Confidence	... men sure of themselves in social situations.	3.93 (.54)	.76
	4. Self-Centeredness/ Negative Cognitive and Behavioural Changes	... men care about themselves more than others./ ... men do things they later regret.	3.61 (.58)	.89
Women	1. Sexual Coercion	... women likely to be forceful to get sex.	3.12 (.67)	.79
	2. Confidence	... women sure of themselves in social situations.	3.83 (.61)	.85
	3. Self-Centeredness	... women care about themselves more than others.	3.19 (.71)	.81
	4. Sexual Vulnerability/ Negative Cognitive and Behavioural Changes	... women at risk of being forced into sex./ ... women do things they later regret.	3.53 (.63)	.90

DISCUSSION

- This study devised the Sexual Coercion and Vulnerability Alcohol Expectancy Scale (SCVAES) to assess young adults' endorsement of beliefs that alcohol increases their own and others' risky cognitions and behaviours relevant to sexual assault experiences.
- EFA indicated a different factor structure for the targets self, men, and women, indicating that beliefs about how alcohol increases vulnerabilities for sexual assault may be gendered.
- Self-oriented assessment of alcohol expectancies relating to sexual assault risks may be somewhat obscured by social desirability; instead, other-oriented beliefs can be used as proxies to capture these beliefs.
- The SCVAES has the potential to elucidate the established tendency for perceivers to excuse intoxicated sexual aggression while blaming intoxicated victims. Although a purpose-specific instrument, SCVAES may also be used to improve the understanding of mediators of young adults' risk-taking behaviours and sexual assault experiences under the influence of alcohol.

References

- Goldman, M. S., Del Boca, F. K., Darkes, J. (1999). Alcohol expectancy theory: The application of cognitive neuroscience. In H. T. Blane & K. E. Leonard (Eds.), *Psychological theories of drinking and alcoholism* (2nd ed., pp. 203-246). New York: Guilford Press.
- Paulhus, D. L. (1998). *Paulhus Deception Scales: The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Version 7*. Toronto: Multi-Health Systems.