



Alcohol intoxication and condom use self-efficacy effects on women's condom use intentions

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HIGHLIGHTS

- We investigated the effects of acute intoxication on women's sexual intentions.
- Alcohol intoxication decreased women's intentions to use condoms in the future.
- Intoxication moderated condom use self-efficacy effects on condom negotiation.

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ABSTRACT

Although research has consistently demonstrated that condom use self-efficacy significantly predicts condom use, there has been little investigation of whether acute alcohol intoxication moderates this relationship. Because alcohol intoxication is often associated with increased sexual risk taking, further examination of such moderating effects is warranted. Using a community sample of young heterosexual women ($n = 436$) with a history of heavy episodic drinking, this alcohol administration experiment examined the effects of intoxication and condom use self-efficacy on women's condom negotiation and future condom use intentions. After a questionnaire session, alcohol condition (control, .10% target peak BAL) was experimentally manipulated between subjects. Participants then read and responded to a hypothetical risky sexual decision-making scenario. SEM analyses revealed that alcohol intoxication directly decreased women's intentions to use condoms in the future. Women with greater condom use self-efficacy had stronger intentions to engage in condom negotiation; however, this effect was moderated by intoxication. Specifically, the association between condom use self-efficacy and condom negotiation intentions was stronger for intoxicated women than for sober women. These novel findings regarding the synergistic effects of alcohol intoxication and condom use self-efficacy support continued prevention efforts aimed at strengthening women's condom use self-efficacy, which may reduce even those sexual risk decisions made during states of intoxication.

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1. Introduction

Although condom use can decrease transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the majority of young adults aged 18–29 do not use condoms consistently (Reece et al., 2010). And while alcohol use is often considered a contributor to decreased condom use, extant findings suggest that alcohol does not increase sexual risk taking for all people or in all situations (Brown & Venable, 2007; Scott-Sheldon,

Carey, & Carey, 2010). Research elucidating factors that predict for whom, and in what circumstances, alcohol increases sexual risk taking could yield information for targeting and tailoring sexual risk reduction interventions.

Alcohol administration studies consistently report that intoxication reduces individuals' intentions to negotiate for and use condoms (Rehm, Shield, Joharchi, & Shuper, 2011). However, because risky sexual behavior typically results from the confluence of an individual, a situation, and a relationship (Cooper, 2010), alcohol intoxication may foster different sexual outcomes based on the individuals involved. For example, Morrison et al. (2003) found that while alcohol increased sexual risk taking in some individuals, for others it had no effect or even decreased sexual risk behavior. Predispositional factors may account for some of

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this variability, in that alcohol's attentional focusing effects may magnify the individual characteristics one brings into the situation (Davis, Hendershot, George, Norris, & Heiman, 2007; Morris & Albery, 2001).

Self-efficacy regarding condom use may be one such predisposing factor. Many theoretical models of health-related behaviors include a self-efficacy component (e.g., Bandura, 1990; Fisher & Fisher, 1992). Regarding sexual health, condom use self-efficacy – or confidence in one's ability to use condoms effectively both generally and situationally – has emerged as a significant predictor of condom use behavior (Bandura, 1990; Lescano, Brown, Miller, & Puster, 2007). Moreover, sexual risk reduction programs that target condom use self-efficacy have demonstrated that 1) intervention content is capable of enhancing condom use self-efficacy and 2) increased condom use self-efficacy is associated with increases in condom use behavior at follow-up (Brown et al., 2011; Schmiede, Broaddus, Levin, & Bryan, 2009).

Despite the importance of both alcohol and condom use self-efficacy to risky sexual behavior, their interactive effects in sexual situations have received limited empirical attention. In a cross-sectional survey of heterosexual college students, Abbey and colleagues found that lower self-efficacy regarding condom use while intoxicated was associated with less actual condom use behavior during intoxicated sexual situations (Abbey, Parkhill, Buck, & Saenz, 2007). Further, a daily diary study of HIV-positive men and women reported that with casual partners, very low condom use self-efficacy predicted less condom use on days involving high alcohol consumption and high negative affect, indicating that condom use self-efficacy fluctuates at the daily level and may be particularly influential on actual condom use in certain intoxicated sexual situations (Barta, Tennen, & Kiene, 2010). Finally, in a small alcohol administration laboratory study with young men from the community, Gordon and Carey (1996) found that intoxicated men reported less self-efficacy regarding initiating condom use discussions than did sober men. In sum, extant literature suggests that alcohol and self-efficacy to use condoms may be related at global levels (Abbey et al., 2007), at daily event levels (Barta et al., 2010), and in laboratory-based state-dependent levels for men (Gordon & Carey, 1996). To date however, no published research has examined women's condom use self-efficacy in relation to their in-the-moment intentions to engage in condom use negotiation and future intentions to use condoms, or whether these relationships vary by states of intoxication and sobriety. Because of the importance of women's condom use self-efficacy to their condom negotiation behavior (Farmer & Meston, 2006) and because – among drinkers – many of these negotiations likely occur during states of intoxication,

a greater understanding of the synergistic effects of condom use self-efficacy and alcohol intoxication in female drinkers is warranted.

The present study used an alcohol administration laboratory experiment to examine sober and intoxicated women's condom use self-efficacy in relation to their in-the-moment condom negotiation likelihood and future condom use intentions with a hypothetical casual sex partner. We were particularly interested in how sexual decisions made in one encounter with a partner would influence a woman's perceptions of her future condom use behavior with that same partner. Research indicates that rates of consistent condom use decline rapidly in newly developed sexual relationships and are likely to remain inconsistent as a relationship becomes more established or serious (Cooper, 2010; Fortenberry, Tu, Harezlak, Katz, & Orr, 2002). Thus, in-the-moment decisions to forgo condom negotiation or condom use may have not only short-term but also long-term risk implications. For these reasons, we examined the association between women's likelihood of condom negotiation in the present moment and their perceptions of their future condom use likelihood with the same partner.

Using a structural equation modeling approach (see Fig. 1), we predicted that alcohol intoxication would decrease intentions both to negotiate condom use and to use condoms in the future. Additionally, we predicted that greater condom use self-efficacy would predict stronger intentions to negotiate for condom use in-the-moment, but that intoxication would moderate this association. Because intoxication can focus one's attention towards stimuli consistent with pre-existing beliefs (Davis et al., 2007), we expected that the association between condom use self-efficacy and condom negotiation intentions would be stronger for intoxicated participants relative to sober participants. For example, if a woman enters a sexual situation with a weak sense of condom use self-efficacy, alcohol intoxication may enhance this belief by focusing her attention on elements of the situation that confirm her belief that she is ineffective at negotiating for and using condoms. Consequently, this woman would report a lower likelihood of negotiating for and using a condom. Finally, we predicted that greater condom negotiation intentions in-the-moment would predict greater future condom use intentions.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Women aged 21–30 were recruited from an urban community through online and print advertisements seeking single female drinkers to participate in a research study on male–female social interactions.

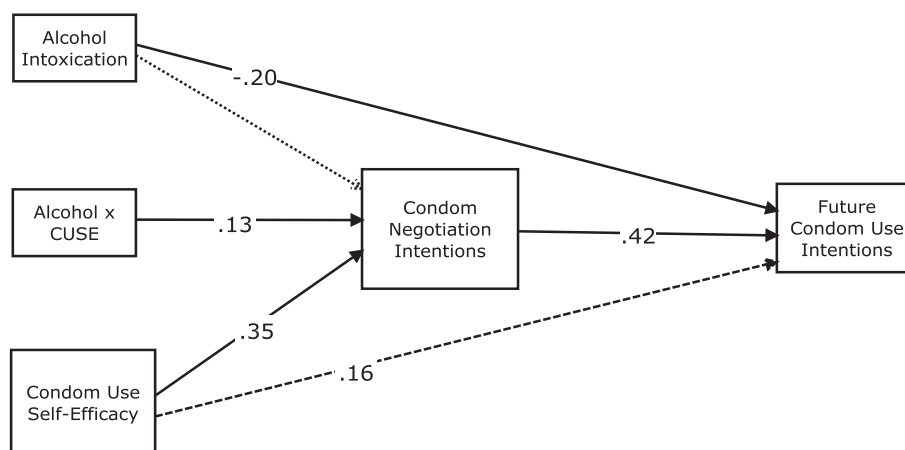


Fig. 1. Dotted line represents hypothesized path that was not significant in the final model. Solid lines represent hypothesized paths significant at $p < .05$ in the final model. Dashed line represents path added to final model based on modification indices. Standardized path values shown.

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