Relationship-Specific Alcohol Expectancies in Couples With Concordant and Discrepant Drinking Patterns*

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ABSTRACT. Objective: Despite growing evidence that the marital problems typically attributed to heavy drinking are stronger for couples in which only one partner is a heavy drinker than in couples in which both partners are heavy drinkers, relatively little research has examined factors that may serve to maintain particular drinking configurations. The current research examines the association between the configuration of partners' drinking and relationship-specific alcohol expectancies. **Method:** Data are from an ongoing prospective study examining the effect of alcohol on executive cognitive functioning. Participant couples ($n = 251$) represented one of four drinking groups: concordant heavy drinkers ($n = 68$), heavy drinking husband ($n = 79$), heavy drinking wife ($n = 35$), and concordant abstainers/light drinkers ($n = 69$). As part of the study, participant couples completed a measure of relationship-specific alcohol expectancies through the mail. **Results:** Analyses

reveal that wives demonstrate greater intimacy/openness expectancies in the concordant heavy drinking group than in the other three groups, as predicted. Unexpectedly, husbands demonstrate greater intimacy/openness expectancies if either member of the couple is a heavy drinker. Additionally, couples reported stronger sexual enhancement, power/assertion, and social pleasure/fun expectancies when the wife was a heavy drinker and stronger power/assertion expectancies when the husband was a heavy drinker. **Conclusions:** Relationship-specific alcohol expectancies are differentially associated with the configuration of partners' drinking patterns. Wives' drinking status appears to influence relationship-specific alcohol expectancies to a greater extent than husbands' drinking status. Additional research is needed to determine the long-term effect of these associations. (*J. Stud. Alcohol Drugs*, 71, 761-768, 2010)

HEAVY AND PROBLEMATIC DRINKING are associated with several harmful effects in marriage, such as conflictual interactions, marital dissatisfaction, and intimate partner violence (for reviews, see Foran and O'Leary, 2008; Marshal, 2003). More recent research has revealed that the configuration of partners' drinking patterns, rather than heavy drinking per se, may be a contributing factor in these problematic outcomes. Specifically, many of the problems attributed to heavy drinking may arise more often in couples in which only one partner is a heavy drinker (i.e., discrepant drinkers) than in couples in which both partners are heavy drinkers (i.e., concordant heavy drinkers).

Despite growing evidence that the configuration of partners' drinking patterns is associated with marital outcomes, relatively little research has examined factors that may serve to maintain these drinking patterns. The current research examines one set of variables that may contribute to the

configuration of partners' drinking patterns. Specifically, we examine the association between the configuration of partners' drinking patterns and relationship-specific alcohol expectancies.

Concordant and discrepant heavy drinking

Heavy drinking tends to decrease at the time of marriage (Leonard and Rothbard, 1999), but this is not always the case. Of those people who continue to drink heavily after the transition, there is a tendency for married partners to be concordant in terms of their heavy drinking (Labouvie, 1996; Leonard and Homish, 2008). This effect is not entirely surprising. Compatibility theories of relationship functioning suggest that partners in more harmonious relationships tend to have many similar characteristics (Levinger and Rands, 1985). For example, married partners tend to be similar in terms of sociodemographic characteristics (Bentler and Newcomb, 1978), age, height, weight (Price and Vandenberg, 1980), food preferences (Kolonel and Lee, 1981), health behaviors (Homish and Leonard, 2008), leisure interests (Houts et al., 1996), attitudes, religiosity, values (Luo and Klohnen, 2005), and personality (Buss, 1984; Price and Vandenberg, 1980). Indeed, greater similarity in demographics and personality is associated with better marital functioning (Bentler and Newcomb, 1978; Kurdek, 1991).

Although greater similarity contributes to better relationship functioning and partners tend to be more similar to

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each other than would be expected by chance, people do not always pair up with partners who provide the best, or even a decent, fit with their characteristics (Lykken and Tellegen, 1993). This is true in terms of heavy drinking as well. There is similarity in alcohol use between partners, but the extent of this association should not be overstated. Mudar et al. (2001) found that 79% of couples in a community sample were concordant abstinent or light drinkers. In an additional 12% of couples, only the husband drank heavily, and in 5% of couples, only the wife drank heavily. Partners were concordant for heavy drinking in only 4% of couples. Thus, the significant concordance rate observed for heavy drinking reflects the fact that partners are more likely to be concordant than would be expected from mere base rates of heavy drinking. In absolute terms, there are many more couples who have discrepant drinking patterns, and most couples are concordant for nonheavy drinking.

Concordant heavy drinkers may have some protection against the relationship consequences experienced by discrepant heavy drinkers. Concordant heavy drinkers experience greater marital satisfaction than discrepant drinkers, both cross-sectionally (Mudar et al., 2001) and longitudinally (Homish and Leonard, 2007). Couples in which both partners have an alcohol-use disorder report greater marital satisfaction (McLeod, 1993) and demonstrate less conflictual marital interactions (Floyd et al., 2006; although see Haber and Jacob, 1997) than couples in which partners are discrepant for an alcohol-use disorder. Concordant heavy drinkers experience fewer relationship problems than discrepant drinkers (Leadley et al., 2000), and concordant heavy drinkers are less likely to experience intimate partner violence than discrepant couples in which the husband is the heavy drinker (Leadley et al., 2000; Quigley and Leonard, 2000). Over time, concordant drinkers are also less likely than discrepant drinkers to divorce (Ostermann et al., 2005). Thus, it appears that concordant heavy drinking may be less detrimental to marital functioning than discrepant heavy drinking.

Whereas a growing body of research has focused on concordant and discrepant drinking as they relate to marital outcomes, the current study sought to examine whether the configuration of couple's drinking patterns influenced their expectancies about the effects of alcohol on relationship-specific behaviors. If so, these relationship-specific alcohol expectancies might be related to subsequent maintenance and change in husbands' and wives' drinking behavior.

Relationship-specific alcohol expectancies

Previous research has documented that people hold certain general expectations for the positive effects of alcohol. For example, they may believe that alcohol contributes to social and physical pleasure, sexual enhancement, social assertiveness or expressiveness, relaxation, and positive global changes (Brown et al., 1980; Rohsenow, 1983). Such beliefs

may contribute to heavy drinking because people desire those experiences. For example, the expectancy that alcohol leads to social pleasure is associated with heavier drinking. In college students, expectancies regarding social experience correlate strongly with self-reported drinking for both men and women (Borjesson and Dunn, 2001; Del Boca et al., 2004). Similarly, husbands and wives in a newlywed sample who endorsed social and physical expectancies for alcohol use were more likely to drink over time (Leonard and Homish, 2008). The association between alcohol expectancies and drinking is extremely robust, and a full review is beyond the scope of this article (for reviews, see Goldman et al., 1991, 2006).

Current research suggests that some alcohol expectancies may be context-specific. That is, certain conditions must be met for a particular alcohol expectancy to surface. For example, tension-reduction expectancies are triggered for people in a stressed state but not for people in a neutral mood state (Read and Curtin, 2007). Similarly, social/sexual enhancement expectancies are strongest for women who have read a hypothetical vignette describing a sexual context (MacLachy-Gaudet and Stewart, 2001). People who drink primarily for coping or primarily for enhancement motivations demonstrate these context-specific expectancies more strongly. For example, coping-motivated drinkers demonstrate increased relief expectancies after a negative mood induction, whereas enhancement-motivated drinkers demonstrate increased reward expectancies after a positive mood induction (Birch et al., 2004). Context can even affect attentional bias. Coping-motivated drinkers demonstrate an attentional bias toward alcohol after an anxious mood induction, whereas enhancement-motivated drinkers demonstrate an attentional bias toward alcohol after a positive mood induction (Grant et al., 2007).

One context for which people may have particularly salient alcohol expectancies is within the romantic relationship. In other words, people may have expectations for the effect of alcohol within their romantic relationship that differ in nature or strength from their more general expectations regarding the effect of alcohol. Specifically, people may drink because they expect to experience more intimacy, sexual enhancement, power, or fun with their romantic partner in particular (Leonard and Mudar, 2004). Indeed, relationship-specific expectations have an effect on drinking. In a sample of newlyweds, husbands' influence on wives' drinking over the first year of marriage was stronger among women who had positive relationship-specific alcohol expectancies (Leonard and Mudar, 2004).

Given the context-specific nature of alcohol expectancies, couples with concordant drinking patterns may develop different relationship-specific alcohol expectancies than couples with discordant drinking patterns. Specifically, we would expect concordant heavy drinking couples to hold stronger relationship-specific alcohol expectancies than couples with

discrepant drinking configurations and concordant light/abstinent couples. We conducted the current research as a preliminary step toward elucidating any existing relationships between couples' expectancies and couples' drinking configurations.

Method

Participants

A community sample of couples ($N = 261$) was recruited via a mailed survey for a larger study of drinking, executive cognitive functioning, and intimate partner violence. Participants were screened for current psychoactive medication and a history of significant head injury, seizures, or neurological disorders. Same-sex couples and unmarried couples that had been living together less than a year were excluded from the study. In 10 couples, the husband ($n = 2$), the wife ($n = 6$), or both ($n = 2$) did not complete the questionnaire of interest, and those couples were excluded from analyses. Nine of those couples were concordant abstinent or light drinkers; in the one other case, the abstinent wife of a heavy drinking husband did not complete the questionnaire. The final sample for the current analyses consisted of 251 complete couples.

Participant couples represented one of four groups: heavy drinking couple (both met criteria for heavy episodic drinking; $n = 68$), heavy drinking husband (only the husband met criteria for heavy episodic drinking; $n = 79$), heavy drinking wife (only the wife met criteria for heavy episodic drinking; $n = 35$), and comparison couple (neither met criteria for heavy episodic drinking; $n = 69$). Heavy episodic drinking was defined as having at least one episode per week, on average, for each week during the past year in which the participant consumed five drinks at one time (four drinks for women; Wechsler et al., 1995) or became intoxicated (Homish and Leonard, 2005). Light drinkers included abstainers and people who did not meet heavy episodic drinking criteria. The average age of the men was 37.00 ($SD = 5.85$) and the average age of the women was 35.39 ($SD = 5.88$). The majority of men and women in the sample were White (90.0% of husbands and 90.4% of wives). They were fairly well educated (80.1% of husbands and 87.2% of wives had at least some college education), and most were employed at least part time (90.8% of husbands and 80.9% of wives). Couples reported living together (cohabiting and married) for an average of 10.84 ($SD = 5.89$) years. Approximately 82.5% of the sample had children. Those couples with children averaged 2.5 ($SD = 1.26$).

Procedure

A list of names, telephone numbers, and addresses of individuals residing in Erie County, NY, was purchased from

a commercial survey company (Survey Sampling International, Shelton, CT). Survey Sampling International is able to provide these listings based on targeted age ranges for the head of household. We targeted married or cohabiting couples in which the head of household was between ages 18 and 45. Approximately 21,000 individuals received a brief questionnaire assessing health behaviors, including alcohol use, and a letter describing the study. The envelope included a \$1 bill as an incentive to return the survey. Individuals were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it in a postage-paid envelope. Postage was directly metered onto the envelopes (i.e., business reply envelopes were not used) on both the outgoing and return questionnaires.

Some of the questionnaires ($n = 222$) were returned as undeliverable. Of the questionnaires that were delivered, 5,062 were returned with data, representing a return rate of approximately 24%. Of the questionnaires that were returned with data, 875 did not meet living-together criteria (17%), and 375 were excluded because of potential neurological injuries (8.7%). There were 3,741 couples who met initial inclusion criteria (some couples were excluded for both reasons). Of these, 422 had missing data that precluded classification of drinking status. The final 3,319 respondents were composed of couples in which both partners met criteria for heavy episodic drinking (7.8%), only the husband met criteria for heavy episodic drinking (12.1%), only the wife met criteria for heavy episodic drinking (4.2%), or neither partner met criteria for heavy episodic drinking (75.9%). Of the 3,319, 62.8% of the respondents were interested in participating in the larger study or wanted to hear more about it. There was no relationship between dyadic drinking pattern and interest in participating, $\chi^2(3) = 4.52, p > .20$.

Interested couples who were eligible to participate were recontacted by phone to schedule a laboratory assessment. Specifically, we attempted to recruit 75 couples in each of the four groups. To accomplish this, all of the couples in which the wife or both the husband and wife met criteria for heavy episodic drinking were targeted for recruitment. Because of their relatively greater numbers, we recruited random samples of couples in which only the husband was a heavy episodic drinker and in which neither husband nor wife met heavy episodic drinking criteria. Participating couples were mailed additional questionnaires to complete and bring with them to their appointment. At the laboratory assessment, couples completed a series of measures of executive cognitive functioning, additional computerized questionnaires, and a conflict interview. Couples in all four drinking configurations completed the Relationship Alcohol Expectancies Scale (Leonard and Mudar, 2004), the measure of interest in the current analyses, as part of the mailed questionnaire packet. All couples gave their informed consent to participate in the research. Analyses are based on the drinking configuration each couple represented at the time of screening.

TABLE 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the relationship-specific alcohol expectancies of husbands and wives

	Husbands <i>M (SD)</i>	Wives <i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Intimacy/openness	3.53 (1.09)	3.64 (1.23)	.27 _{H_W} ***	.74 _W ***	.79 _W ***	.78 _W ***
2. Sexual enhancement	4.02 (1.14)	4.04 (1.28)	.69 _H ***	.34 _{H_W} ***	.68 _W ***	.84 _W ***
3. Power/assertion	3.28 (1.08)	3.40 (1.23)	.74 _H ***	.68 _H ***	.25 _W ***	.73 _W ***
4. Social pleasure/fun	4.29 (0.97)	4.38 (1.15)	.70 _H ***	.72 _H ***	.61 _H ***	.20 _{H_W} ***

Notes: The intercorrelations for wives are presented above the diagonal. The intercorrelations for husbands are presented below the diagonal. The correlation between husbands and wives for each subscale is presented on the diagonal. All correlations presented are based on 208 *df*. _H = husband; _W = wife.

****p* < .001

Measures

The Relationship Alcohol Expectancies Scale (Leonard and Mudar, 2004) is a 21-item measure that assesses participants' expectations about how they feel and act when drinking in their partner's presence. The measure consists of four subscales: intimacy/openness, sexual enhancement, power/assertion, and social pleasure/fun. Each item completes the sentence stem, "When you are drinking in your partner's presence, how likely is it that alcohol will affect you so that you..." Participants responded to each item on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 6 (very likely).

The intimacy/openness subscale ($\alpha = .88$ for husbands; $\alpha = .93$ for wives) contains six items that assess participants' expectations about how close they will feel to their partner after drinking (e.g., "Feel closer to your partner"; "Feel more loving and accepting of your partner"). The sexual enhancement subscale ($\alpha = .89$ for husbands; $\alpha = .93$ for wives) contains five items that assess participants' expectations about the enhancing effect of alcohol on sex (e.g., "Feel more desire for sex with your partner"; "Find your partner sexually attractive"). The power/assertion subscale ($\alpha = .84$ for husbands; $\alpha = .90$ for wives) contains five items that assess participants' expectations about the amount of power they will experience in their relationship as a result of using alcohol (e.g., "Feel confident, powerful, or in control with your partner"; "Feel capable of getting what you want with your partner"). The social pleasure/fun subscale ($\alpha = .87$ for husbands; $\alpha = .93$ for wives) contains five items that assess participants' expectations about how much fun they will have with their partner after drinking (e.g., "Behave in a playful or fun-loving way with your partner"; "Are fun for your partner to be around").

Confirmatory factor analyses revealed that a four-factor solution—in which the four subscales were treated as separate factors, $\chi^2(318) = 1130.28$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .06, Akaike's Information Criteria (AIC) = 1334.28—fit the data better than a one-factor solution, $\chi^2(330) = 1849.14$, CFI = .82, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .07, AIC = 2029.14. One item from the power/assertion subscale, "Express your wishes and desires even if they conflict with what your partner wants," was removed from both solutions to achieve better fit. Accordingly, this item was removed from the power/assertion subscale in all subsequent analyses (final $\alpha = .79$ for husbands and .89 for wives).

Results

Did heavy drinking couples experience stronger relationship-specific alcohol expectancies than couples with the other three drinking configurations? As a preliminary step toward answering this question, we computed descriptive statistics and correlations for all four subscales (see Table 1). The four subscales were highly intercorrelated for husbands (all *rs* > .60) and for wives (all *rs* > .67). Additionally, husband and wife responses were modestly, but significantly, correlated (all *ps* < .001). Descriptive statistics for each subscale by drinking configuration are presented in Table 2.

The correlation between husbands and wives on the dependent measures suggests that their responses are interdependent. Accordingly, to control for the interdependence of responses from two members of a dyad, we submitted each expectancy subscale to a 2 (Husband Status: light drinker vs. heavy drinker) $\times$ 2 (Wife Status: light drinker vs. heavy

TABLE 2. Means and standard deviations for each subscale, by group

Variable	Intimacy/openness		Sexual enhancement		Power/assertion		Fun/social pleasure	
	<i>M (SD)</i> _H	<i>M (SD)</i> _W	<i>M (SD)</i> _H	<i>M (SD)</i> _W	<i>M (SD)</i> _H	<i>M (SD)</i> _W	<i>M (SD)</i> _H	<i>M (SD)</i> _W
Heavy drinking couple	3.74 (1.13)	4.06 (1.12)	4.28 (1.06)	4.41 (1.20)	3.61 (1.04)	3.76 (1.14)	4.40 (0.91)	4.64 (0.95)
Heavy drinking husband	3.62 (1.06)	3.48 (1.24)	3.98 (1.23)	3.80 (1.31)	3.36 (1.07)	3.29 (1.27)	4.22 (1.03)	4.22 (1.19)
Heavy drinking wife	3.71 (0.92)	3.59 (1.18)	4.13 (0.88)	4.19 (1.21)	3.13 (1.06)	3.33 (1.22)	4.58 (0.85)	4.46 (1.01)
Comparison couple	3.14 (1.09)	3.44 (1.26)	3.75 (1.18)	3.88 (1.29)	2.95 (1.07)	3.19 (1.22)	4.13 (0.97)	4.27 (1.33)

Notes: _H = husband; _W = wife.

drinker) $\times$ 2 (Respondent: husband vs. wife) mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on the last factor. A main effect of husband drinking status would indicate that the responses of couples in which the husband is a heavy drinker differ from the responses of couples in which the husband is a light drinker (pooled across wife drinking status and respondent). A main effect of wife drinking status would indicate that the responses of couples in which the wife is a heavy drinker differ from the responses of couples in which the wife is a light drinker (pooled across husband drinking status and respondent). A main effect of respondent would indicate that the responses of husbands differ from the responses of wives (pooled across husband drinking status and wife drinking status). Our specific hypothesis, that heavy drinking couples hold stronger expectancies than couples with the other three drinking configurations, would be supported by a two-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status interaction. Specifically, we expected to find that the expectancies of couples (pooled across respondent) would be strongest when both the husband and the wife were heavy drinkers.

Intimacy/openness

The ANOVA examining intimacy/openness expectancies revealed a significant main effect of husband drinking status,

$F(1, 247) = 4.58, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .02$, and of wife drinking status, $F(1, 247) = 8.76, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Couples reported significantly stronger expectations for intimacy when the husband was a heavy drinker ($M = 3.72, SE = .08$) than when the husband was a light drinker ($M = 3.47, SE = .09$). Couples also reported significantly stronger expectations for intimacy when the wife was a heavy drinker ($M = 3.77, SE = .09$) than when the wife was a light drinker ($M = 3.42, SE = .07$). Unexpectedly, the predicted two-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status interaction was not significant, $F(1, 247) < 0.01, p = .96, \eta_p^2 < .01$. None of the other main effects or two-way interactions were significant (all $ps > .34$), but the three-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status $\times$ Respondent interaction was significant, $F(1, 247) = 5.80, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .02$. The interaction is depicted in Figure 1.

To determine the nature of the interaction, we separately probed the husbands' and the wives' intimacy/openness expectancies using a contrast that compared the heavy drinking couple with the other three groups. This contrast was not significant for husbands, $t(247) = 1.61, p = .11$. However, in line with predictions, this contrast was significant for wives, $t(247) = 3.19, p < .01$. Wives had significantly greater expectations for intimacy after alcohol use in the heavy drinking couple than in the other three groups.

To better understand the intimacy expectancies of husbands, we first visually inspected the means of their

FIGURE 1. Effect of the configuration of partners' drinking within the couple on husbands' and wives' intimacy/openness alcohol expectancies

responses by drinking configuration. As can be seen in the white bars of Figure 1, the responses of husbands in the comparison couple appear to differ from the responses of the other three groups. Accordingly, we probed the husbands' intimacy/openness expectancies using a contrast that compared the comparison couple with all other drinking groups. This analysis revealed that husbands had significantly weaker expectations for intimacy after alcohol use in the comparison couples than in the other three groups, $t(247) = -3.60, p < .001$. We conducted the same analysis for wives' intimacy/openness expectancies, and it was not significant, $t(247) = -1.50, p = .14$.

Thus, our hypothesis was supported for wives but not for husbands. Wives held stronger intimacy expectancies in the heavy drinking couples than in the other three groups. Husbands, on the other hand, held stronger intimacy expectancies in couples in which either or both partners were heavy drinkers than in the comparison couples.

Sexual enhancement

The ANOVA examining sexual enhancement expectancies revealed a significant main effect of wife drinking status, $F(1, 247) = 9.52, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$. Couples reported significantly stronger expectations for sexual enhancement when the wife was a heavy drinker ($M = 4.25, SE = .10$) than when the wife was a light drinker ($M = 3.85, SE = .08$). The predicted two-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status interaction was not significant, $F(1, 247) = 0.18, p = .67, \eta_p^2 < .01$. No other effects reached significance, all $ps > .29$.

Power/assertion

The ANOVA examining power/assertion expectancies revealed a significant main effect of husband drinking status, $F(1, 247) = 9.06, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$, and of wife drinking status, $F(1, 247) = 4.69, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Couples reported significantly stronger expectations for power when the husband was a heavy drinker ($M = 3.51, SE = .07$) than when the husband was a light drinker ($M = 3.15, SE = .09$). Couples also reported significantly stronger expectations for power when the wife was a heavy drinker ($M = 3.46, SE = .09$) than when the wife was a light drinker ($M = 3.20, SE = .07$). The predicted two-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status interaction was not significant, $F(1, 247) = 0.68, p = .41, \eta_p^2 < .01$. No other effects reached significance, all $ps > .16$.

Social pleasure/fun

The ANOVA examining social pleasure/fun expectancies revealed a significant main effect of wife drinking status, $F(1, 247) = 8.31, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Couples reported significantly stronger expectations for fun when the wife was a heavy drinker ($M = 4.52, SE = .09$) than when the wife was

a light drinker ($M = 4.21, SE = .07$). The predicted two-way Husband Status $\times$ Wife Status interaction was not significant, $F(1, 247) < 0.01, p = .95, \eta_p^2 < .01$. No other effects reached significance, all $ps > .17$.

Discussion

We hypothesized that concordant heavy drinkers would have stronger relationship-specific alcohol expectancies than couples with other drinking configurations. Our hypothesis was partially supported. Our analyses revealed a significant three-way interaction for intimacy/openness expectancies. Wives in the heavy drinking couples reported stronger expectations for intimacy after alcohol use than wives in the other three groups, as predicted. Unexpectedly, husbands in couples in which either or both partners were heavy drinkers reported stronger expectations for intimacy than husbands in the comparison couples. Thus, our predictions for intimacy/openness expectancies were borne out for wives but not for husbands. The pattern of these results suggests that wives' intimacy/openness expectancies may indeed reflect heavy drinking when their husband is also a heavy drinker. Husbands' intimacy expectancies, however, do not appear to reflect their own heavy drinking. Rather, husbands' expectancies appear to reflect the drinking of either partner.

Our initial predictions regarding the other expectancy subscales were not supported. Yet, the fact that sexual enhancement, power/assertion, and social pleasure/fun expectancies are not associated with the configuration of partners' drinking in the same manner as intimacy/openness expectancies is interesting in its own right. This finding is consistent with our confirmatory factor analysis results showing that, despite their high intercorrelations, the separate relationship-specific alcohol expectancies are not isomorphic.

Additionally, analyses of these other subscales revealed effects that are potentially theoretically meaningful. For example, couples' expectancies appeared more influenced overall by the wife's drinking status than by the husband's drinking status. Specifically, we found main effects of wife drinking status on sexual enhancement expectancies, power/assertion expectancies, and social pleasure/fun expectancies. In other words, both husbands and wives had higher relationship-specific alcohol expectancies when the wife was a heavy drinker than when she was a light/abstinent drinker. However, we found a main effect of husband drinking status only for power/assertion expectancies. Thus, wives' drinking status may have a stronger influence on relationship-specific alcohol expectancies than husbands' drinking status.

This potentially stronger influence of wife drinking status on relationship-specific alcohol expectancies fits with previous research demonstrating that, although husbands' drinking influences wives' drinking across the first year of marriage (Leonard and Mudar, 2003), wives' drinking influences their husbands' drinking more in the latter stages of marriage

(e.g., Cronkite and Moos, 1984; Leonard and Mudar, 2004). Thus, the configuration of partners' drinking may influence initial relationship-specific alcohol expectancies. Because more general alcohol expectancies are associated with and tend to precede heavy alcohol use (see Goldman et al., 1991), it may also be the case that these initial relationship-specific alcohol expectancies then influence both one's own and the partner's drinking longitudinally. Additional longitudinal research is needed to examine these influences.

A few limitations of the current research deserve mention. First, it is possible that one of the cells in our sample is underpowered: that for the heavy drinking wife ($n = 35$). The rarity of this drinking configuration (4.2% of respondents to our initial questionnaire) makes the task of recruiting couples into this cell of the study comparatively difficult. With more power in this cell, it is possible we might have observed an interaction effect for one of the other expectancy subscales.

Second, the cross-sectional and correlational nature of this research does not allow us to determine the causal nature of the relationship between the configuration of partners' drinking and relationship-specific alcohol expectancies. Our purpose in the current research was merely to demonstrate that these constructs are associated. We believe that these variables are likely associated in a reciprocal fashion over the course of the relationship. When the anticipated outcome of alcohol use occurs, alcohol expectancies would be confirmed, likely strengthening them. Yet, when the anticipated outcome of alcohol use does not occur, alcohol expectancies would be disconfirmed, likely weakening them. We hope to better delineate the causal pathway of these constructs and their possible association with marital outcomes in future, longitudinal research.

Finally, our sample was predominantly White, highly educated, and mostly employed, and it is possible that our findings would not generalize to a more representative sample of the United States population. Some might blame our recruitment method for the relative lack of diversity in our sample. However, there are many problems with the methods that researchers have historically used to recruit community samples. For example, newspaper advertisements are restricted to people who continue to read a physical newspaper. With the continued growth of Internet-based news outlets, this subset of the population may be shrinking. Similarly, random digit dialing is restricted to people with a home telephone. With the increasing popularity of cellular telephones, many households no longer maintain a home telephone. Given the difficulties in recruiting a community sample, a direct-mailing campaign seemed to be the most cost-effective method of reaching a broad population of people who are potentially of interest in our research.

Notwithstanding these limitations, our current research provides a provocative and enticing first look at a possible antecedent of the configuration of partners' drinking pat-

terns. Couples' sexual enhancement, power/assertion, and social pleasure/fun expectancies are associated with wives' drinking, and couples' power/assertion expectancies are associated with husbands' drinking in the current sample. Additionally, wives held stronger intimacy/openness expectancies in concordant heavy drinking couples than wives in other couples, but husbands held stronger intimacy/openness expectancies if either member of the couple was a heavy drinker than if neither partner was. Determining the extent to which alcohol expectancies are an antecedent or outcome of the configuration of partners' drinking is an important area for future research.

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