

MAIN QUESTION

Does stress have an effect on substance use behaviors?

SIGNIFICANCE

- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, **8%** of college students use marijuana, **10%** of college students have taken Adderall in the past year, and **41%** of college students have been intoxicated in the past month.
- Substance use is a common behavior that plagues college campuses nationwide and is among the top threats to college students' health in the United States.

METHODS

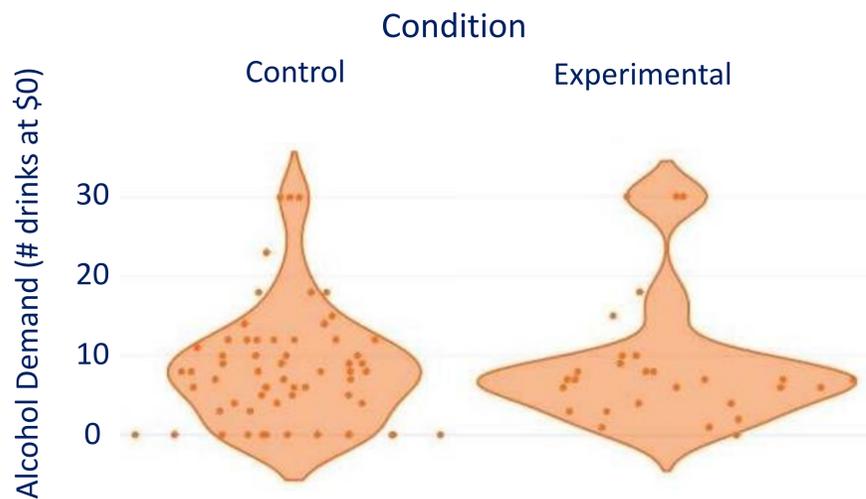
Participants

- 89= UW-Platteville Students; 67% Female; M age=20 years
- 27= Control, 28= Stress, N=34 Online Control

Procedure

- Demographics
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE) 
- Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) 
- Alcohol Purchase Task (APT) 
- Cognitive Appraisal of Risky Events-Revised Questionnaire (CARE-R) 

STRESS DOES NOT AFFECT SUBSTANCE USE



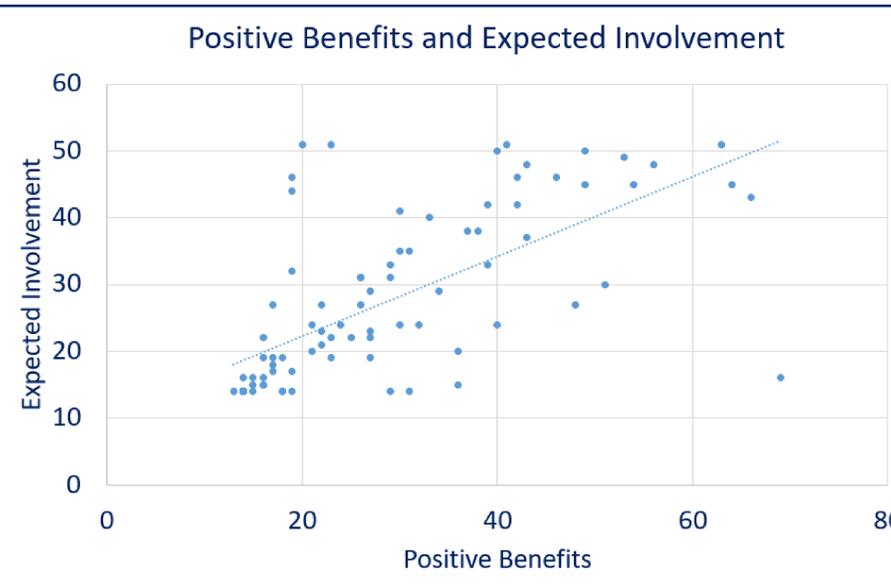
There was no statistically significant difference between conditions on substance use behaviors including alcohol demand, alcohol breakpoint, maximum expenditure, future involvement, and expected benefits and consequences.

The Effect of Psychosocial Stress on Substance Use

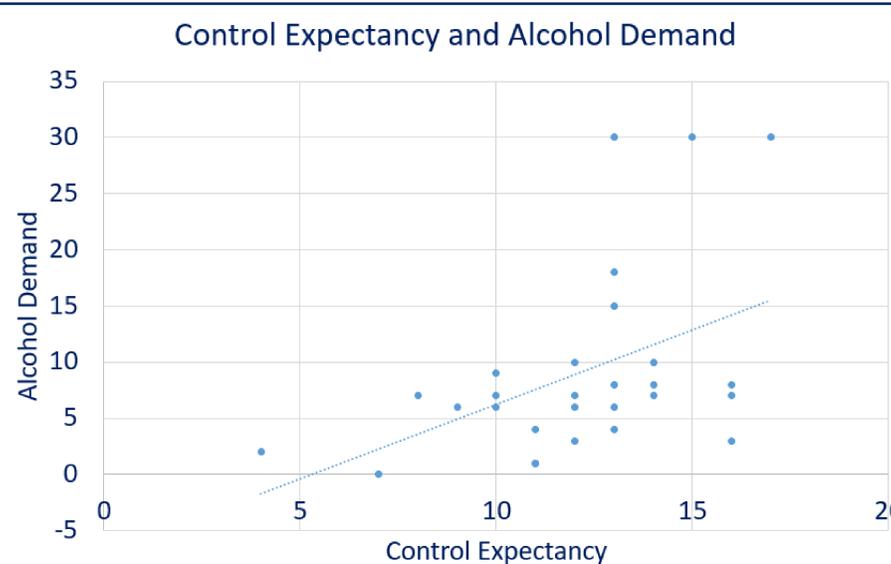
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IF STRESS HAS NO EFFECT, WHAT DOES?



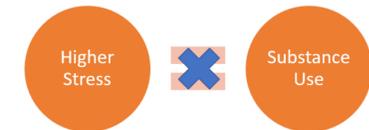
- There was a statistically significant association between positive benefits of substance use and expected future involvement with substances, $\rho(89)=0.76, p<.001$.
- There was only a weak association between negative consequences of substance use and expected future involvement with substances, $\rho(89)= -0.24, p=.03$.
- Positive benefits remained significant when controlling for age and past involvement, but negative consequences did not.



Participants in the stress condition with higher control expectancy tended to have higher alcohol demand, $\rho(28)=0.51, p=.003$

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ There was no significant effect of stress on substance use behaviors. Substance use behaviors as measured by the CARE-R and APT were the same across conditions and across categories of ACEs.



- ❖ Positive benefits of substance use were associated with expected future involvement. Negative consequences did not relate significantly with future involvement which implies that negative consequences are not deterring people from using substances.



- ❖ Participants who felt they had more control over a stressor indicated they would consume more alcoholic beverages in one sitting.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Our results suggest that the expectation of positive benefits are primarily what motivate students to engage in substance use behaviors, rather than the fear of negative consequences.
 - This offers insight into why DARE programs that focus on warning students of the dangers of substance use do not seem to be particularly effective. 
- Instead of focusing on the negative consequences, future work should focus on how the expectation of positive benefits of substance use can be reduced. 
- Based on our finding that control expectancy relates to alcohol demand, future research should examine the effect of personal control (or lack thereof) on alcohol demand. 