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Title – Need for control and alcohol problem recognition among college students

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Overall Significance/Relevance – This study seeks to understand factors that contribute to college student's recognizing that their alcohol consumption has become problematic. Specifically, the applicant is proposing to examine the role of desire for control in predicting evaluations and expectancies regarding alcohol-related problems, hypothesizing that high desire for control will make it more likely that students will recognize problems developing with their alcohol use.

interesting

Does Study Test the Multidimensional Aspects of Control Theory & Research? – Yes (see above), although the applicant is only proposing to look at scales 1-4 of the Shapiro Control Inventory (SCI).

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Methodology – Participants (N = 500) will be recruited from students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at the University of South Dakota. The following variables will be assessed via web-based survey: alcohol use, alcohol-related problems, attitudes/expectancies regarding alcohol-related problems, sense of control/desire for control, and alcohol problem recognition. Regression analyses will be carried out to examine the relationship between gender, alcohol use and need for control (and the interaction between alcohol use and control) and alcohol problem recognition. With respect to control theory, the study proposes to test the hypothesis that need/desire for control may discourage hazardous drinking (or foster safer drinking) by increasing the likelihood that alcohol-related problems will be acknowledged.

of Daniel
too high too low

Specific Comments/Suggestions –

1. My primary question concerns the central hypothesis that the applicant is proposing to test in this study. Specifically, statements regarding the hypothesized relationship between desire/need for control and alcohol problem recognition are made in the introduction that appear contradictory. As an example, the applicant states "that people high in need for control will see problems as more negative and as being less likely to happen to them." This statement by itself seems on the surface to be self-contradictory (though I confess I may not have understand what the applicant was pointing to in it). If I understand the statement, it is suggesting that someone high in desire for control will see problems as more negative and hence be (presumably) more likely to do something about them before they become more problematic. However, the sentence goes on to suggest that someone high in control need would also feel that problems were *less* likely to happen to them which would seem to imply that they would be less (rather than more) likely to identify problems (i.e., they wouldn't be on the lookout for them, imagining they were somehow immune to them). This same paragraph in the application closes with a hypothesis statement which also needs further clarification: "the relationship between alcohol use and problem recognition will be stronger among people who are high in need to control

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their environment.” For example, does this mean that among those students who use alcohol, high need for control individuals will be *more* likely to recognize problems when they arise owing to their need to maintain control over their environment (i.e., they will more quickly recognize that their drinking has become uncontrollable because of their high control needs?).

- need
2. With respect to a hypothesized relationship between desire for control and problem drinking, another possibility is that those with high control needs may be more likely to develop alcohol-related problems (i.e., their problem drinking reflects an attempt to regain – albeit in a dysfunctional way – a sense of control, most likely emotional control). An example of this dynamic would be the tendency people have to drink in social settings where they would typically experience feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness, in which case the behavior (drinking) is engaged in, in an effort to regain a sense of control. Conversely, those who feel a high sense of psychological control would feel less need to use alcohol to cope with uncomfortable emotional states or social situations.
 3. In the section on “Attitudes and expectancies...”, there is an entire section/paragraph that is repeated. This should be corrected.
 4. It is not clear from the data analysis section exactly how the different dimensions of control (sense of control, both positive and negative, and desire for control) will be treated in the regression analyses. For example, will both desire and sense of control be examined as predictors of alcohol problem recognition?
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summary