



For the Love of God: Contingencies of Self-Worth – God’s Love as a Mediator of the Association Between Social Desirability and Drinking

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Introduction

- Social influences often impact when, where, and how much people drink (e.g., Cullum, O’Grady, Armeli, & Tennen, 2012).
- Those who are motivated by social desirability (SD) may tend to censor their responses to alcohol measures due to the perceived unacceptability of some behaviors, especially as drinking behaviors become more extreme. This may lead to underreporting of alcohol use, such that people who are highly motivated by SD may not want to disclose their actual drinking.
- Feeling connected to God or to spirituality has been found to be a buffer against heavy drinking (e.g., Yonker, Schnabelrauch, & DeHaan, 2012).
- Examining Contingencies of Self-Worth based on God’s Love (CSW-G) may be helpful to clarify the relationship between SD and drinking frequency.
- Little research has studied the association between SD and drinking, and to our knowledge no study has examined the mediational role that CSW-G plays in this relationship. Thus, this study investigates the relationship between SD and drinking frequency as mediated by CSW-G.

Measures

Social Desirability. SD was assessed using the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The unidimensional 33-item scale ($\alpha = .88$) is answered with true/false responses.

Contingencies of Self-Worth – God’s Love. CSW – God’s Love was assessed using Crocker and colleagues’ measure of contingencies of self-worth (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). This 35-item measure scores seven dimensions (five items each) that may be important to sense of self, though the current study uses only the God’s Love scale ($\alpha = .96$). Respondents answer each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Drinking Frequency. The Quantity/Frequency/Peak Alcohol Use Index (Dimeff, Baer, Kivlahan, & Marlatt, 1999) measures three indexes of alcohol consumption (i.e., typical quantity of alcohol consumed, typical frequency of alcohol consumption in drinking days per week, and the most alcohol consumed on one occasion for the past three months). We used the participants’ reports of drinking frequency in our analysis.

Hypotheses

- H1:** SD would be negatively associated with CSW-G (*a* path).
- H2:** CSW-G would be negatively associated with drinking frequency (*b* path).
- H3:** CSW-G would mediate the association between SD and drinking frequency (*c* and *c’* path).

Method

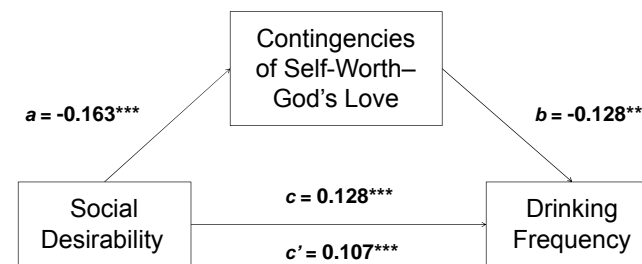
Participants & Procedures

- Participants were 455 undergraduate students (Mean age = 22.77, $SD = 5.97$, 81.1% female) from a large, southern university.
- The sample was racially and ethnically diverse (37.3% Caucasian, 21.2% African American, 20.7% Asian American, 1.1% Native American/American Indian, 0.6% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, and 5.3% Multiracial; Hispanic ethnicity was reported by 30.5%).
- All study materials were completed online in a single session, as part of a larger multi-part study.
- Mediational analyses were conducted on standardized variables using conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2013)

Results and Discussion

- Consistent with expectations, we found that SD was negatively associated with feeling a connection with God (*a* path, see Figure 1). This is perhaps due to the fact that people with a higher need to present themselves in a socially desirable way may feel less unconditional love from God.
- Additionally, a greater connection to God was associated with lower frequencies of drinking (*b* path). That is, people who feel a greater connection to God may feel less of a need to drink.
- As hypothesized, CSW-G mediates the relationship between SD and drinking frequency (*c* and *c’* path). As such, the association between social desirability and drinking frequency may be due to the extent to which individuals feel that a connection to God is an integral part of their identity.
- In sum, individuals who care a great deal about the impressions they make and what others think of them may feel less unconditional love from God, and may in turn drink more frequently.
- This study contributes to the drinking literature by seeking to understand how individual differences in SD and CSW-G influence drinking. Future drinking intervention programs might consider promoting greater honesty within oneself in conjunction with a spiritual component that emphasizes a higher connection to God, as opposed to focusing solely on the opinions of others.

Figure 1. Contingencies of self-worth-God’s love as a mediator of the association between social desirability and drinking



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