A behavioral economic reward index predicts drinking resolutions: moderation revisited and compared with other outcomes.

Data were pooled from 3 studies of recently resolved community-dwelling problem drinkers to determine whether a behavioral economic index of the value of rewards available over different time horizons distinguished among moderation (n = 30), abstinent (n = 95), and unresolved (n = 77) outcomes. Moderation over 1- to 2-year prospective follow-up intervals was hypothesized to involve longer term behavior regulation processes than abstinence or relapse and to be predicted by more balanced preresolution monetary allocations between short-term and longer term objectives (i.e., drinking and saving for the future). Standardized odds ratios (ORs) based on changes in standard deviation units from a multinomial logistic regression indicated that increases on this "Alcohol-Savings Discretionary Expenditure" index predicted higher rates of abstinence (OR = 1.93, p = .004) and relapse (OR = 2.89, p < .0001) compared with moderation outcomes. The index had incremental utility in predicting moderation in complex models that included other established predictors. The study adds to evidence supporting a behavioral economic analysis of drinking resolutions and shows that a systematic analysis of preresolution spending patterns aids in predicting moderation.