

## Adlerian Profiles of College Student Drinkers

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### Abstract:

The aim of this study was to identify Adlerian personality profiles that distinguish non-heavy episodic drinking college students from heavy, episodic drinking college students. The BASIS-A Inventory (Wheeler, Kern, & Curlette, 1993) and an anonymous alcohol use questionnaire were administered to 159 college students in a large public university in the midwestern United States. Logistic regression analysis confirmed that the Adlerian personality profiles of non-heavy and heavy, episodic drinking college students were distinct. In addition, after accounting for socioeconomic variables, Adlerian lifestyle themes accounted for a greater amount of variance in drinking intensity.

**Keywords:** Adlerian psychology | College students | Alcohol | Lifestyles | Personality

### Article:

Recent media coverage of heavy drinking, alcohol-related deaths, and alcohol-related accidents on the nation's campuses has increased public awareness and concern (e.g., Rivera, 2000). Initiatives by the federal government have increased public awareness and sensitivity to both the scope and consequences of heavy drinking. For example, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest (as cited in Thombs & Briddick, 2000), universities and colleges have the authority to contact parents when students under 21 violate campus alcohol and substance use policies. Additionally, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism recently highlighted data suggesting that the harm caused by alcohol abuse on college campuses may exceed previous estimates, prompting the institute to create a task force to examine the

prevalence of heavy college drinking as well as potential interventions from community and university resources (National Institutes of Health, 2005).

Nonetheless, the rates of consumption on campus remain quite high and relatively stable. Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt, and Lee (1998) found that from 1993 to 1997, drinking rates remained relatively stable, with 42.6% of college students meeting criteria for "binge drinking" and 20.7% meeting criteria for "frequent binge drinking." More recently, Wechsler et al. (2002) found "heavy, episodic alcohol use" (i.e., binge drinking) among 44% of a nationwide sample. These researchers defined binge drinking as a man's consuming five or more drinks in a row in one sitting within the previous two weeks or a woman's consuming four or more drinks in a row in one sitting within the previous two weeks.

Conclusions from both small-scale and large-scale studies affirm that heavy, episodic drinking is by far the most serious health problem currently facing the university scene (Wechsler et al., 1998; Wechsler et al., 2002). Although research has shed light on the scope of the problem, the correlates of drinking behavior, and the prevalence, patterns, and consequences of alcohol use, there is limited exploration through the framework of theory. Research grounded in psychological theory can offer a more wide-ranging depiction of drinking behavior among college students and offer a roadmap for effective intervention and prevention efforts. Quite simply, exploring college drinking through the lens of theory offers more explanatory power (Durkin, Wolfe, & Clark, 1999).

Some investigators have used theoretical frameworks as the foundation of research into college drinking, including social bond theory (Durkin et al., 1999), problem behavior theory (Lo, 1991), self-regulation theory (Miller, Toscova, Miller, & Sanchez, 2000), and gender role conflict theory (Korcuska & Thombs, 2003). In addition, Thombs (1999b) presented several theoretical perspectives on addictive behaviors, including psychodynamic theory, conditioning models, cognitive theory, and family systems theory. Each of these theoretical formulations has aided in the conceptualization of problematic substance using behaviors. However, there is a paucity of research on the comprehensive personality theory of Alfred Adler and its potential relationship to heavy, episodic drinking in college. We believe Adlerian theory could offer an additional and useful conceptualization of college drinking different from other theoretical models and from which prevention and intervention efforts can emerge. We base this belief on conclusions by Prinz (1993), who discussed the suitability and applicability of specific Adlerian counseling interventions for the problem drinker. Thus, we explore this phenomenon using Adlerian personality theory as our foundation.

### **Adlerian Personality Theory**

In Adlerian personality theory, all behavior is considered purposive and goal-directed (Mosak & Maniaci, 2000). Additionally, Adlerian theory posits that a striving from feelings of inferiority to feelings of superiority is the basic, dynamic force that energizes human behavior (Ansbacher

& Ansbacher, 1956). A person's lifestyle reflects how he or she addresses the tasks of life (Mosak & Maniacci). *Useful* lifestyles create energy and movement toward cooperation with others. They represent the common good. People with *useless* lifestyles to endorse social interest and move in ways inconsistent with cooperation, exhibiting selfish or overly competitive behaviors (Manaster & Corsini, 1982).

Although lifestyle is unique for each individual, Adlerians recognize the commonalities in personality among all human beings, often referred to as themes (Mosak & Maniacci, 2000). The development of such systems are important for clinical and research purposes. That is, lifestyle themes facilitate prediction of behavior for the practitioner (and researcher) and thus can serve as the foundation for clinical interventions.

Mosak (1979) proposed an original typology of 14 lifestyle themes; however, the research of Kern, Wheeler, and Curlette (1997) suggested a smaller number of themes, which comprise the BASIS-A Inventory (Wheeler, Kern, & Curlette, 1993). A brief description of each lifestyle theme is provided below.

1. *Belonging/Social Interest*. Individuals high in this theme are sociable, supportive, and respectful of others in social situations. They most likely had a comfortable upbringing in which they had a strong sense of belonging.
2. *Going Along*. Individuals high on this scale prefer to be followers rather than leaders and tend to abide by the rules. Conservative in nature, individuals high in this theme may not stand up for themselves in intimate relationships, thus potentially compromising their happiness and well-being if taken to extreme.
3. *Taking Charge*. Taking Charge individuals like to be in control. They are often seen as strong and forceful (Kern et al., 1997). With a tendency to be outgoing, these individuals can easily draw attention to themselves at social gatherings. In its extreme form, individuals high in "taking charge" may appear overly selfish and irritable.
4. *Wanting Recognition*. Individuals high in Wanting Recognition move toward (i.e., do things to obtain) admiration, attention, and appreciation. If recognition is not forthcoming, these individuals may grow restless, as the energy supporting their lifestyle pattern depends on the praise of others.
5. *Being Cautious*. These individuals can manifest their lifestyle pattern in one of two ways: (a) being overly sensitive, cautious, and mistrusting, or (b) being impulsive, reckless, and risk-taking, demonstrating unpredictable emotional reactions. These individuals most likely experienced stressful and tumultuous childhoods and did not feel as if they belonged.

Among the aforementioned lifestyle themes, Dreikurs (1990) suggested that the foundation of substance abuse problems develops in accord with selfish pleasure seeking behaviors without social interest. Similarly, in a survey of prominent Adlerians on the topic of problem drinking and alcoholism, a lack of social interest was the most frequently cited trait associated with problematic drinking (Prinz, 1993). Although these findings did not specifically relate to drinking among a college student population, they do suggest that limited community feeling may be implicated in excessive drinking behavior.

### **Research on Adlerian Lifestyle Themes and Alcohol Consumption**

Research on Adlerian personality theory and drinking behavior among college students is limited. Keene and Wheeler (1994) examined the relationships among substance use and lifestyle themes among beginning college students. "High risk" students were those who used marijuana, cocaine, or hallucinogens, whereas "low risk" students were those who used alcohol only. Keene and Wheeler found that a tendency to hurt others or to seek revenge correlated positively with high risk drug use and alcohol use.

Using the BASIS-A Inventory, Lewis and Osborn (2004) found that high Belonging/Social Interest and low Going Along were significantly related to alcohol use intensity (i.e., combined score of frequency of binge drinking, frequency of alcohol consumption, and quantity of alcohol consumption) among a sample of 273 undergraduate college students. Specific to college men, high Taking Charge emerged as a significant predictor for *total consequences* of alcohol use (Lewis & Osborn). In a similar study examining the predictability of Adlerian lifestyle themes compared to sociodemographic variables associated with college drinking, Lewis and Watts (2004) found that combinations of lifestyle themes were superior in predicting frequency of binge drinking and frequency of alcohol consumption compared to sociodemographic variables.

The aforementioned studies empirically supported the relationships between certain Adlerian lifestyle themes and alcohol-related behaviors among college students. However, to date there has been little attempt to determine specifically which lifestyle profiles discriminate between college students who engage in heavy, episodic drinking (i.e., binge drinking) and those who do not. Thus, we sought to extend previous findings by determining the magnitude by which the presence of particular lifestyle themes increases the likelihood of a university student's becoming a heavy, episodic drinker. Adlerian counselors who work with college students could potentially use such information as a framework for counseling college students struggling with heavy drinking patterns and associated problems.

There is a noticeable gap in the literature related to understanding college drinking from an Adlerian model. This research fills this gap by addressing the following research question: Do Adlerian lifestyle patterns associated with non-heavy, episodic drinking differ from those associated with heavy, episodic drinking among college students? We predicted that (a) the Adlerian personality profiles of non-heavy episodic drinking college students and heavy,

episodic drinking college students would be substantially different from one another, and (b) Belonging/Social Interest would be lower among heavy, episodic drinkers compared to non-heavy, episodic drinkers.

## Methods

*Participants and procedures.* Participants were a convenience sample of undergraduate men and women ( $N = 159$ ) enrolled in a large public university in the midwestern United States. Lewis approached undergraduate classes from the departments of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education and in informal student gatherings (i.e., students gathered in dining halls, students gathered in residence halls) for potential participants. An effort was made to collect data from undergraduate classes ranging from freshman to senior level. Permission was secured by all instructors prior to entering classes. All participants were given packets of information containing an informed consent letter (which students had to sign and turn in to the researcher), a demographic sheet, the BASIS-A Inventory, and selected items from the Alcohol and Other Drug Survey (Thombs, 1999a). Participants were told that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. To ensure anonymity, no identifying information was solicited; packet items were numbered for organizational purposes only.

*Measures.* Participants were provided a packet of items containing measures in the following order: (a) demographic form, (b) selected items from the Alcohol and Other Drug Survey, and (c) the BASIS-A Inventory. The demographic form included questions assessing gender, age, ethnicity, year in school, place of residence, membership in a fraternity or sorority organization, and membership in a religious organization. Alcohol related questions assessed age of first alcohol use, frequency of heavy, episodic drinking, frequency of alcohol consumption, quantity of alcohol consumption, and consequences of use. In the current study, however, only the alcohol-related question assessing heavy, episodic drinking was used in the analyses.

The BASIS-A Inventory is a 65-item measure that assesses five lifestyle themes: Belonging/Social Interest, Going Along, Taking Charge, Wanting Recognition, and Being Cautious. All items are in the form of statements that follow a single sentence stem, "When I was a child, I , , , ." Responses range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with the midpoint (3) representing *indifferent*. Seventeen items were reverse scored because of negative phrasing.

In general, research has been supportive of the construct (Curlette, Wheeler, & Kern, 1997), convergent, and discriminant (Kern, Gfroerer, Summers, Curlette, & Matheny, 1996) validities of the BASIS-A Inventory. The instrument also appears to be internally consistent, with alpha reliabilities ranging from .82 to .87 across the five subscales (Curlette et al.). More recently, Peluso, Peluso, Buckner, Curlette, and Kern (2004) found scale reliabilities to range from .80 to

.89 among 329 undergraduate participants from the southeastern and northeastern parts of the United States. In our study, the alpha reliabilities were again acceptable, ranging from .83 to .86.

*Analytic strategy.* To address the research questions, we conducted a stepwise logistic regression analysis to predict non-heavy, episodic drinking patterns and heavy, episodic drinking patterns among college students. Dichotomous groups were formed based on responses to a questionnaire item that asked on how many occasions did the participant have five (for men) or four (for women) or more drinks in a row? Students were classified as either a non-heavy, episodic drinker (coded as 0) or heavy, episodic drinker (coded as 1). Non-heavy, episodic drinkers included students who had responded "none" or "once" to the above question. Heavy, episodic drinkers included those who reported engaging in this drinking pattern two or more occasions during the previous two weeks. Two blocks of predictor variables were used in the analysis. The first block included seven sociodemographic variables including gender, fraternity or sorority organizational membership, identification with a religious group, grade of first drinking experience, year in school, ethnicity, and place of residence. The second block consisted of the five lifestyle themes: Belonging/Social Interest, Going Along, Taking Charge, Wanting Recognition, and Being Cautious. Ultimately, all variables were assessed in the logistic regression. In addition to looking at the overall predictive pattern in this analysis, sociodemographic and lifestyle theme variables were entered as separate blocks to determine any additional variance in heavy, episodic drinking accounted for by Adlerian lifestyle themes, above and beyond that explained by sociodemographic variables.

## Results

Among the sample of 159 participants, 64% were female and 36% were male. The mean age was 21 years old. According to their responses, 86.2% of the participants were White, 7.5% were Black, 1.3% were Asian, 0.6% were Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, 0.6% were Pacific Islander, and 3.2% were Other. Because the sample consisted mostly of White participants, we coded ethnicity dichotomously as 0 (*White*) and 1 (*non-White*). Most students (60.4%) reported living in an off-campus apartment. A majority (85.5%) indicate that they did not belong to a fraternity or sorority organization, and 63.5% reported some identification with a religious organization.

**Table 1.** Stepwise Logistic Regression of Non-Heavy, Episodic vs. Heavy, Episodic Drinking College Students

	Light Drinking M(SD)	Heavy Drinking M(SD)	Odds Ratio (95% C.I.)	Wald	<i>p</i>
Block 1					
Variables in Model at Step 2					
Grade of first drinking experience	5.62(1.86)	4.56(1.83)	0.722(0.600-0.868)	12.00	.001
White or non-white (binary variable)	n.a.	n.a.	0.322(0.101-1.03)	3.65	.056

Block 2					
Variables in the Model at Step 3					
Grade of fist drinking experience	5.65(1.86)	4.65(1.83)	0.738(0.604-0.901)	8.85	.003
White or non-white (binary variable)	n.a.	n.a.	0.216(0.060-0.782)	5.45	.003
Belonging/Social Interest	34.09(5.36)	36.26(5.74)	1.13(1.05-1.22)	11.13	.001
Going Along	30.62(4.97)	29.35(5.04)	0.862(0.792-0.950)	8.98	.003
Taking Charge	20.91(5.85)	20.26(5.41)	0.879(0.812-0.951)	10.19	.001

Note. N=159 College Students. Possible range for grade of first drinking experience: 1-8. Possible range for Belonging/Social Interest scale: 9-45. Possible range for Going Along scale: 8-40. Possible range for Taking Charge scale 8-40. Model Chi-Square at Step 3 (second block) = 41.82,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Psuedo-R2 Statistics Step 2 (Block 1) Nagelkerke = .140. Step 3 (Block 2) Nagelkerke = .324. Change in Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> from Block 1 to Block 2 = .184.

*Non-heavy episodic drinking students and heavy, episodic drinking students.* As shown in Table 1, the overall predictor set had a significant effect on heavy, episodic drinking (model chi-square at step 3=41.82,  $df = 5$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). The Nagelkerke pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> statistic indicated an estimated 32.4% of the variance in heavy, episodic drinking could be explained by the predictor set.

The Wald statistic and odds ratio guided interpretation of the predictor variables. The best predictor for heavy, episodic drinking was whether or not one was a non-White minority, followed by grade of first drinking experience. Three lifestyle themes also were significant predictors: Belonging/Social Interest, Going Along, and Taking Charge.

The lifestyle themes that did emerge as significant predictors each had a similar effect in terms of predictive power. First, for every one unit increase in Belonging/Social Interest, the odds of being a heavy, episodic drinker increased by 13%. Going Along had a negative association with heavy drinking, where participants who scored higher on this theme decreased their odds of being a heavy, episodic drinker by 13.8%. Similarly, a one unit increase in Taking Charge was associated with a 12.1% decrease in the odds of being a heavy, episodic drinker. The following variables were not associated with heavy, episodic alcohol use: gender, fraternity or sorority membership, identification with a religious organization, year in school, place of residence. Wanting Recognition, and Being Cautious.

*Variance accounted for by lifestyle themes.* After controlling for sociodemographic variables, three lifestyle themes, Belonging/Social Interest, Going Along, and Taking Charge, were superior in predicting style of drinking (i.e., non-heavy, episodic or heavy, episodic).

Specifically, the lifestyle themes explained an additional 18% of the variance above and beyond that accounted for by sociodemographic variables (14%).

## **Discussion**

The findings support the hypothesis that the Adlerian personality profiles of non-heavy, episodic drinking college students and heavy, episodic drinking college students are different from one another and did not support the hypothesis that Belonging/Social Interest would be lower among heavy, episodic drinkers compared to non-heavy, episodic drinkers. Thus, Adlerian personality profiles may not be consistent across differing levels of alcohol consumption, and low levels of Belonging/Social Interest may not play as large a role in heavy college drinking as expected.

Among the sociodemographic variables found to be significant predictors of drinking intensity, ethnicity proved to be the strongest predictor overall. Specifically, being a nonwhite participant was associated with a 78% *decrease* in the odds of being a heavy drinker. However, this finding must be tempered because of possible sample bias (i.e., the majority of participants' being White) and imbalance across the ethnic categories (i.e., all non-White ethnicities' being considered as a monolithic status). The other sociodemographic variable found to be predictive was grade of first drinking experience. Here, a one unit increase in grade of first drinking experience decreased the odds of being a heavy drinker by 26.2%. This finding suggests that the earlier one becomes indoctrinated in drinking behavior, the more intensely he or she will drink in the future. The inverse relationship between age of drinking onset and intensity of college drinking has been found in other research (Clapper, 1992; Gonzalez, 1989; Thombs, 2000).

Lewis and Watts (2004) demonstrated a positive relationship between Belonging/Social Interest and quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption. Our findings reveal that this lifestyle theme increases the odds of engaging in two or more heavy drinking episodes within a 2-week period. Given the central focus that Adler placed on social interest as a measure of psychological well-being, one might believe that higher social interest would not be positively associated with heavy drinking. Indeed, Dreikurs (1990) suggested that the basis for substance abuse problems is selfish, pleasure seeking behaviors inconsistent with social interest.

Lewis and Osborn (2004) argued that, among a college student population, the Belonging/Social Interest scale of the BASIS-A Inventory may capture elements of outgoingness more than other aspects of social interest. Extroversion and sociability have been found to be associated with alcohol consumption among college students (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986; Martish & Miller, 1997; Schall, Kemeny, & Maltzman, 1992; Stewart, Zeitlin, & Samoluk, 1996) and could explain this positive association. It seems plausible that within a university setting, interest in others and social life (often concomitant with alcohol use in college social environments) becomes connected with drinking to the point of discriminating between those who drink heavily and those who do not.



The findings related to Going Along suggest that heavy drinking college students may hold negative attitudes toward authority and that drinking alcohol represents a way to express their independence (Lewis, 2002). It is possible that heavy, episodic drinking college students strive in life by holding convictions that they are "above" or superior to authority and thus shunning campus standards and rules (Lewis). Adler (as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956) noted that problematic behavior in adolescence occurs in response to perceived control of those in power (e.g., parents, administration personnel, professors). From an Adlerian perspective, the goals of adolescence, including independence, equality, and achieving adult status, can provide the guideposts toward rebellious behaviors. Heavy drinking college students may hold faulty convictions that fuel opposition to perceived restrictions against their freedom. These convictions, as part of their lifestyle patterns, may lead to risky behaviors as a sign of protest and independence (Lewis & Watts, 2004).

The negative association between Taking Charge and drinking behavior is more difficult to interpret. One might conjecture that college students who display strong taking charge tendencies may hold convictions that they must take the lead in social situations, perhaps being the "life of the party." However, heavy drinking college students, although outgoing, did not seem to display leadership or overly aggressive tendencies in their behavior. When this finding is examined in conjunction with Going Along, some interesting patterns emerge. Whereas heavy drinking college students tend to rebel against authority (i.e., low on Going Along), they may not do the same against peers (i.e., low on Taking Charge). The combination of rejection of authority and following the lead of peers (and having a tendency toward extroversion) may set the stage for excessive alcohol involvement. This pattern suggests a larger faulty belief system where alcohol becomes an avenue for college students to "thumb their noses" at authority yet save face with peers. Unfortunately, the pervasive nature of such a personality, combined with heavy alcohol involvement, could set the stage for problems with intimate relationships, negative perceptions by others, and potential problems with college personnel.

Taken together, the results from this study offer insights into Adlerian personality profiles of heavy, episodic drinking college students. From an Adlerian perspective, students who engage in this drinking pattern could be described as generally outgoing and sociable, less rule-driven and less conservative in their behavior, and more apt to avoid conflict in social relationships by portraying themselves as compliant, preferring to let others control them. Furthermore, these students may have a propensity to avoid drawing attention to themselves by behaving in overly conspicuous ways. Thus, the idea that heavy drinkers are always the rabble rousers may be misguided, although future research is needed to confirm this finding.

The Adlerian profile for non-heavy, episodic drinking college students suggests a personality pattern described as being less sociable and outgoing than their heavy drinking peers. Not surprisingly, these students are more likely to follow directives of authority figures. They probably attend social gatherings but are likely to remain in control of their behavior, especially related to deleterious drinking episodes. Thus, both light and heavy drinking students appear to

be outgoing. The difference lies in their reaction to authoritative rules and standards and the amount of self-guidance they exert to control their own drinking.

*Implications for campus prevention, intervention, and counseling.* In the United States, policy development, enforcement of institutional regulations, and state laws have traditionally been at the center of substance use and abuse prevention on college campuses (Eigen, 1995; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2005; Schuh & Shore, 1997). Most campuses establish alcohol policies that regulate drinking behavior. In response to violations of these policies, most colleges and universities (a) develop stricter rules against substance use and (b) enforce mandatory, education-based substance use information sessions (Gadaletto & Anderson, 1986; Thombs & Briddick, 2000). However, little evidence suggests that policy development and enforcement reduce alcohol consumption on college campuses (Toomey & Wagenaar, 2002).

Thombs and Briddick (2000) summarized the questionable assumptions that conventional approaches to college drinking enforcement may rest upon: (a) College students poorly manage the risks associated with drinking alcohol; (b) campus interventions and cultural environment cannot influence internal traits; and (c) effectiveness of campus alcohol policies is evinced by student compliance. Missing from these assumptions is consideration of the student's personality characteristics or lifestyle. However, our results suggest that the motivation to drink heavily may emanate from faulty lifestyle convictions (e.g., "I must drink in order to fit in"). As Thombs and Briddick concluded, the assumptions behind current alcohol policies need to be questioned, and campus leaders should consider implementing programs that incorporate sensitivity to student motivations and personality.

The idea that interventions and campus environments cannot influence personality because it is an internal trait is inconsistent with Individual Psychology's assumption of *soft determinism* (i.e., personality influenced by biological *and* environmental processes). Behavioral tendencies of heavy drinking college students, including the tendency to rebel against authority, an outgoing, sociable nature, and a lack of assertiveness in social situations, could be addressed by campus-wide, environmental initiatives. For example, student resistance to campus-wide sanctions may be a reaction to how rules are presented from authority figures (i.e., residence hall directors, resident assistants, deans of students). Rules and regulations regarding alcohol consumption that are presented in a harsh and disrespectful manner would seem to elicit the very reactions that may lead to drinking behavior. To preclude negative reactions, university leaders should be cognizant of how drinking regulations and information are presented. For example, information about the dangers of drinking and regulations against drinking behavior that is presented in an educational, informative, and supportive way could raise awareness among college students to assist them in making healthy choices. Furthermore, alcohol sanctions may be more effective if they are used in conjunction with positive programs, including incentives for good behavior, challenging faulty social norms, and counseling. Campuses also could emphasize numerous activities for social involvement that de-emphasize alcohol. Student involvement in the creation of informational and alternative activities and the formation of appropriate sanctions may reduce

defensiveness associated with mandates being "forced" on them by authority figures. Assertiveness training and refusal skills could also be infused into the freshman curriculum.

Counseling interventions are recognized as an important contribution in prevention and intervention efforts related to heavy drinking on college campuses. For example, the National Institute for Alcohol Awareness and Abuse noted, among other interventions, that wider implementation of counseling interventions is an important contribution to comprehensive programs addressing problematic alcohol use (National Institutes of Health, 2005). The results of the current study have implications for college counselors who practice from an Adlerian framework. College students who attend or are otherwise mandated to seek counseling for their alcohol issues may need to explore their underlying convictions about themselves, others, and their college environment. For example, counselors could challenge students to analyze their beliefs that they must follow the lead of peers at all times. They could be taught to strive for self-respect and assertiveness in healthy ways, such as doing well in school, developing a wellness plan, and meeting students with other interests. It also may be beneficial to challenge underlying convictions related to challenging authority. College students could explore how challenging authority in the absence of social interest may not represent maturity, but immaturity. Furthermore, the counselor could investigate how the student conceptualizes the ideas of freedom, independence, and equality. Here again, asserting these values in the absence of social interest, such as engaging in irresponsible and deleterious heavy drinking, moves the individual toward the socially useless end of the behavioral spectrum.

Prinz (1993) suggested that problem drinkers need help "to identify and modify any unrealistic beliefs and goals that may be supporting . . . the drinking habit" (p. 100). College counselors operating from an Adlerian framework could assess lifestyle themes and engage students in discussions about how the individual uses these unrealistic belief systems to solve life's problems (i.e., "I *owe* myself a night of binge drinking because of the week I had") or to motivate behavior. As Kern et al. (1997) noted, bringing themes into awareness helps clients expand the choices available to them in response to life tasks. If a college student, for example, becomes aware that he or she chooses heavy drinking based on faulty lifestyle convictions, he or she may then choose to challenge these convictions and hence change his or her behavior and move toward healthier life goals. Indeed, according to Prinz, a major task of counseling problem drinkers is to create prosocial goals to replace the alcohol-focused purpose around which all life activity has been organized.

Several limitations of the methods qualify the findings in this study. First, the measures relied on self-reports, increasing the risks of inaccurate reporting. However, research has demonstrated that two factors increase validity of self-report measures among adolescents: (a) when participants believe the research serves an important purpose and (b) when privacy is assured (Johnston & O'Malley, 1985, 1997). Second, the predominantly White, nonprobability sample of U.S. college students in this study raises concerns about external validity. Third, we examined how lifestyle variables increased or decreased the odds of heavy drinking within a 2-week

period, but we did not investigate the relative influence of the predictor variables on specific drinking related events. Fourth, the non-experimental design of the study makes any causal hypotheses uncertain at best.

In this study, we addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the Adlerian personality profiles of non-heavy, episodic and heavy, episodic drinking college students. The Adlerian lifestyle themes of Belonging/Social Interest, Going Along, and Taking Charge emerged as significant predictors in the analyses. Future research should examine the Adlerian model with a broader, more diverse sample of college students, which may reveal the same general profile of heavy drinking college students or provide additional insights.

### **Authors' Note**

An earlier, more detailed version of the literature review in this article was previously published by the first author and is available from him. See also Lewis and Osborn (2004) and Lewis and Watts (2004).

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