

Public Abstract

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Title:Derivation and Validation of Alcohol Phenoytpes in a College Population: A Motivational/
Developmental Approach

Identifying subtypes of individuals with alcohol use disorders is important in estimating the public health consequences of alcoholism and forming targeted prevention and treatment efforts. Typological approaches also are potentially useful in the study of causal factors of alcohol use disorders as well as course of alcohol involvement over time. In this study of 3,720 college student drinkers assessed on nine occasions over four years, distinct classes of participants were identified based on levels of heavy drinking and reasons for drinking, including coping motives (e.g., to cope with negative feelings, to forget about problems) and enhancement motives (e.g., to get drunk, to have fun). Mixture models suggested the presence of seven classes, ranging from a class characterized by consistently very low alcohol consumption (less than one heavy drinking episode in the past month) and low levels of coping and enhancement motives to a class characterized by frequent heavy drinking (approximately two to three heavy drinking episodes per week in the past month) over the course of the study and very high levels of both types of drinking motives. The remaining five classes varied in terms of heavy drinking involvement and motives, with some classes being distinguished independently by alcohol use and reasons for drinking. Examinations of risk factors for class membership showed that some variables were related to class membership through both alcohol involvement and drinking motives (i.e., extraversion, symptoms of conduct disorder and drug dependence, membership in the Greek system, and perceived peer alcohol involvement and attitudes), whereas others were related to class membership primarily through levels of heavy drinking (i.e., male sex and parental education) or drinking motives (i.e., neuroticism and conscientiousness). Use of typological approaches that incorporate both alcohol consumption as well as motivational factors may aid in the identification of at-risk drinkers and inform specialized prevention and treatment efforts for college students and other individuals with problematic alcohol patterns.