

DERIVATION AND VALIDATION OF ALCOHOL PHENOTYPES
IN A COLLEGE POPULATION:
A MOTIVATIONAL/DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Numerous typologies of alcoholics have been proposed, dating back to the 1850s. However, many of these typologies have categorized alcoholics on distal and/or static etiological factors. In this study, longitudinal data collected on nine occasions over four years were used to derive and validate a typology based on a more proximal etiological factor (i.e., drinking motives) and change over time in heavy alcohol involvement. Data were taken from an incoming undergraduate sample ($N = 3,720$ at baseline). Mixture models of heavy alcohol involvement, coping motives, and enhancement motives, resulted in seven groups of individuals with distinct on patterns over time on these variables. Membership in any class other than the group characterized by the lowest levels of heavy alcohol use and drinking motives was predicted by several common risk factors (i.e., extraversion, symptoms of conduct disorder and drug dependence, Greek membership, and perceived peer alcohol involvement), as well as risk factors related specifically to levels of heavy drinking (i.e., male sex and parental education) or drinking motives (i.e., neuroticism and conscientiousness) in each class. 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.