

## Introduction

- ❖ A growing literature demonstrates that identification with being a drinker (i.e., drinking identity) is robustly related to alcohol-related outcomes (Montes & Pearson, 2021)
- ❖ A national survey of adults who resolved their drinking problem found that 45.5% identified as being “in recovery,” and mutual help group involvement was associated with identifying with recovery (Kelly et al., 2018)
- ❖ Paradoxically, 12-step groups (i.e., Alcoholics Anonymous, AA) encourages the adoption of both the “alcoholic” and “recovery” identities
- ❖ The present study sought to examine the relative strength of alcoholic and recovery identities among individuals attending AA, and examine their associations with AA-related constructs

## Method

### Participants & Procedures

- ❖ As part of an on-going study, participants (N=94) were recruited into a study about experiences in AA
- ❖ Eligibility criteria were: 1) attended AA in past 3 months, 2) attended AA for no longer than 9 months, and 3) an Alcohol Dependence Scale score of >8

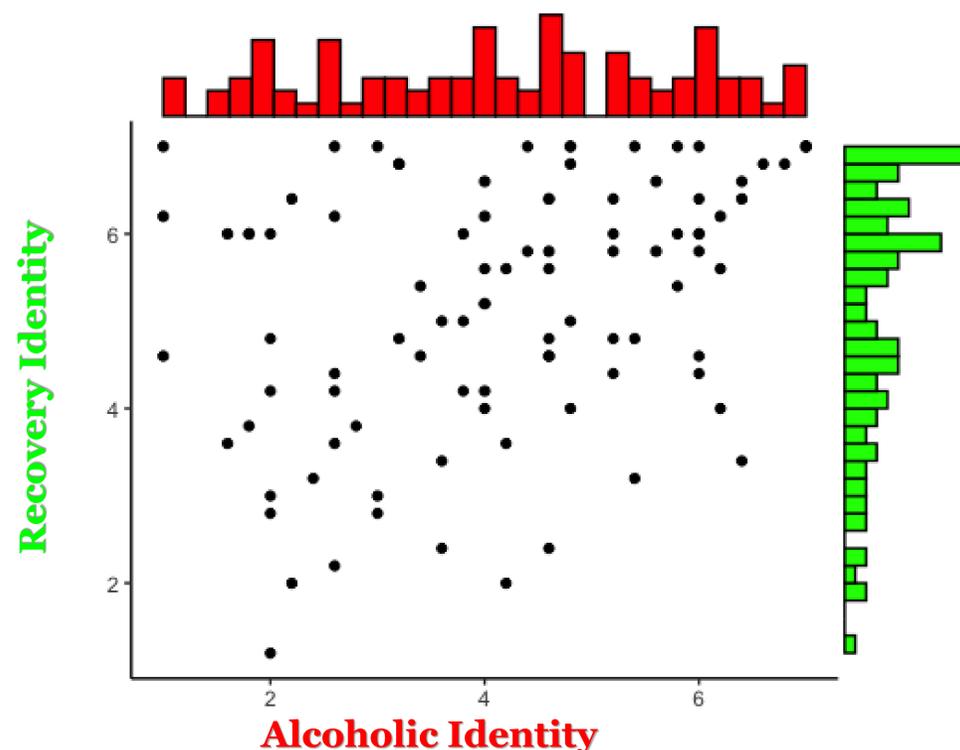
### Measures

- ❖ **Alcoholic Identity and Recovery Identity:** 5-item Smoker Self Concept Scale (Shadel & Mermelstein, 1996)
- ❖ **Alcohol Use Disorder Symptoms:** 10-item Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT, Saunders et al., 1993)
- ❖ **Alcohol Dependence Symptoms:** 25-item Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS, Skinner & Allen, 1982)
- ❖ **Percent Days Abstinent:** Form-90 (Miller, 1996)
- ❖ **Impulsivity-like Traits:** 59-item UPPS-P (Cyders & Smith, 2007; Whiteside & Lynam, 2001)
- ❖ **AA/Twelve-Step Involvement:** Twelve-Step Participation Questionnaire (TSPQ, Tonigan et al., 1996)
- ❖ **Step Work:** 24-item General Alcoholics Anonymous Tools of Recovery (GAATOR, Montgomery et al., 1995)
- ❖ **Alcohol Abstinence Self-Efficacy:** 40-item Alcohol Abstinence Self-Efficacy Scale (AASE, DiClemente et al., 1994)
- ❖ **Alcohol Craving:** 29-item Alcohol Craving Experience (ACE, Statham et al., 2011) and 14-item Obsessive Compulsive Drinking Scale (OCDS)

## Results

- ❖ An exploratory factor analysis demonstrated that alcoholic and recovery identities form two separable factors (Eigenvalues=4.514, 2.257, .834, .620), and found support for the expected factor structure with all five alcoholic identity items loading strongly on one factor (loadings .432 - .941) without any salient cross-loadings ( $\leq .111$ ), and all five recovery identity items loading strongly on one factor (loadings .697-.884) without any salient cross loadings ( $\leq .183$ )
- ❖ Each scale demonstrating high internal consistency (alcoholic identity  $\alpha = .844$ ; recovery identity  $\alpha = .901$ )
- ❖ Recovery identity ( $M = 5.18, SD = 1.47$ ) was significantly higher than alcoholic identity ( $M = 4.17, SD = 1.60$ ),  $t(93)=5.611, p < .001, d = .579$  (see Figure 1)
- ❖ Alcoholic identity was significantly positively associated with two scales that assess severity of alcohol use disorder (AUDIT total score, ADS total score) and two subscales from craving measures (i.e., craving strength from the ACE and obsessive drinking thoughts from the OCDS) (see Table 1)
- ❖ Recovery identity was significantly positively associated with engagement in behavioral and spiritual practices prescribed by AA (i.e. step work), percent days abstinent, and the number of AA meetings attended in the past 90 days (see Table 1)
- ❖ Alcoholic identity was not statistically associated with percent days abstinent and measures of AA/12-Step involvement
- ❖ Recovery identity was not statistically associated with AUDIT total score, alcohol dependence, or measures of putative mechanisms of behavioral change

Figure 1. Scatterplot and histograms of alcoholic identity and recovery identity



## Results

Table 1. Pearson correlations between baseline identity scales and other baseline factors

	Alcoholic Identity		Recovery Identity	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Alcohol Use (Disorder) Severity</b>				
AUDIT Total	.255*	.013	.057	.586
Alcohol Dependence Scale Total	.218*	.036	.126	.230
Percent Days Abstinent	-.025	.808	.210*	.042
<b>AA/12-Step Involvement</b>				
AA Meetings – Past 90 Days (TSPQ)	.133	.200	.212*	.041
GAATOR Behavioral Practices	-.134	.196	.371*	<.001
GAATOR Spiritual Practices	.047	.655	.448*	<.001
<b>Mechanisms of Behavior Change</b>				
Craving Strength (ACE Strength score)	.274*	.008	-.072	.498
Obsessive Drinking Thoughts (OCDS)	.292*	.004	-.065	.532

## Discussion

- ❖ We have support that alcoholic and recovery identities are distinct among individuals in AA and that recovery identity is more strongly tied to one’s level of step work
- ❖ Additional work is needed to examine how these identities change over time and relate prospectively to outcomes
- ❖ Most correlations between identities and putative mechanisms of behavior change were non-significant, likely due to the small sample size
- ❖ Given the limited sample size, our findings should be considered preliminary

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