

# Development and Factor Structure of the Adlerian Personality Priority Assessment

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## Abstract

*This study aimed to explore the existence of the theoretical constructs of Adlerian personality priorities, a component in conceptualizing clients (Kefir, 1971). Researchers implemented a multi-step process for the development of the Adlerian Personality Priority Assessment (APPA), including a focus group, expert panel, pilot study, and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). For the EFA with the APPA (N = 393), researchers identified a four-factor structure, supporting the construct validity of the original four Adlerian personality priorities: (a) pleasing, (b) control, (c) comfort, and, (d) superiority. Professional counselors have used personality priorities since their inception in 1971 as a means to conceptualize clients' worldviews and to develop holistic treatment plans to initiate within the change process. The APPA can now be utilized as a tool to better assist professional counselors in this endeavor.*

## Introduction

Individual psychology, developed by Alfred Adler (1931), conceptualizes individuals as holistic, responsible, and creative. Individuals interpret experiences based on their own perceptions of events; therefore, individuals are considered meaning-makers. These perceived experiences are combined into a life style which is developed during early childhood, unique to that individual, usually non-conscious, and self-reinforcing (Carlson, Watts, & Maniacchi, 2006). Individuals develop worldviews and life styles according to biological factors, the degree of activity they use to adapt to challenges, psychosocial dynamics (i.e., family), and the degree to which these individuals fit into their given environment. Ashby, Kottman, and Rice (1998) proposed that understanding clients' life styles and helping clients acquire insight into their life styles are essential components to the therapeutic process for Adlerian counselors.

## Personality Priorities

Adlerian theory offers multiple concepts to help counselors develop and promote insight into their clients' life styles, including family constellations (Dreikurs, 1950), early recollections (Adler, 1931), life tasks (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964), and typologies (Kefir, 1971). Typologies refer to the grouping of individuals to make similarities of individuals more understandable (Adler, 1929). Although Adler proposed the concept of typology as a conceptual tool, he cautioned that each individual should still be seen as unique, not seen only as a label. Adler warned that individuals are unique beings and can vary in personality and perception. Therefore, neither theorists nor therapists should classify individuals as types but should use

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typologies as a device for conceptualizing individuals to find similarities and deepen one's knowledge of people (Kefir & Corsini, 1974).

The early Adlerian community embraced the concept of typology and began to build more specific constructs to explore its use (Adler, 1938). Kefir (1971) developed the construct of personality priorities as one method to understand a person's typology, leading to deeper understanding of one's life style. Personality priority is explained as a general dispositional set or central tendency of a person to act in behavioral patterns based on an individual's convictions (Britzman & Henkin, 1992; Kefir & Corsini, 1974). A personality priority develops from a mix of negative and positive learning. Kefir (1981) emphasized the impact of negative learning, or an impasse, as the primary motivator for the development of personality priorities. An impasse is defined as a fear-based, social behavior that an individual learns to avoid (Kefir, 1981). Personality priorities, therefore, are developed through individuals' abilities to organize chaos and human relations. This organization is unique to the individual, but typically follows a path that begins with the impasse. These priorities are developed by the individual not only as a preferred behavior, but also to overcome the impasse to find social acceptance.

Each personality priority outlines one's direction to obtain life goals, one's assets, and the outcome/impasse one tries to avoid. Kefir (1971) labeled the four priorities as: (a) avoider, (b) pleaser, (c) controller, and, (d) morally superior. Advancing Kefir's original definitions, Pew (1976) modified the names of the priorities to superiority, pleasing, comfort, and control, as they are most commonly found in the literature. Expanding upon the original priorities, Pew (1976) added the idea that individuals strive more *towards* specified goals to achieve significance and belonging. Dewey (1978) popularized personality priorities through capturing the basic tenets in chart form. The following definitions summarized Kefir's (1971) and Pew's (1976) contribution to the concept personality priorities.

**Comfort.** Individuals with a comfort priority seek comfort, are easy-going, make few demands of others, are classified by others as peacemakers, and are mellow and more predictable. Individuals who identify with a comfort priority tend to avoid stress, responsibility, and expectations, and they may tend to be less productive. Others might view individuals with a comfort priority as irritating, boring, and annoying in their behaviors.

**Pleasing.** Individuals who identify with the pleasing priority seek to please others, are friendly, considerate, non-aggressive, likely to volunteer, do what others expect of them, and tend to avoid rejection. People with a pleasing priority have a reduction in growth of self, discrepancy between one's ideal self and self-appraisal, and loss of identity leading them to feel alienated. In the presence of pleasing individuals, others feel pleased as first, but later feel exasperated at demands for approval.

**Control.** The control priority represents individuals who seek control of self, others and situations. Individuals with a control priority also tend to possess leadership potential, are organized, productive, persistent, assertive, and law-abiding. People with a control priority tend to struggle with creativity, spontaneity, and tend to feel socially distanced from others. These individuals try to avoid humiliation, surprises, and tend to fear ridicule. Others tend to feel challenged, tense, resistant, and frustrated by individuals who identify with control.

**Superiority.** The goal of individuals with a superiority priority is to strive to be better than others, work to be more competent, good, right, and useful than others. These individuals are knowledgeable, precise, idealistic, and tend to seek perfectionism. Additionally, individuals tend to feel overburdened, over-responsible, over-involved and work hard to avoid

meaninglessness in life and one's tasks. Others may feel inadequate, inferior, and guilty when around individuals who identify as superiority.

Theoretically, individuals with superiority priority are perceived to exhibit a high degree of social interest given that a goal of this priority is to work towards the betterment of society (Pew, 1976). Social interest is defined as an interest in understanding and responding to "others' behaviors and attitudes that display a sense of fellow feeling, responsibility, and community with others, not just for today but for generations yet to come" (Carlson et al., 2006, p. 278). Although Adlerian theory asserts that *all* people are born to strive for superiority through social interest (Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2010), Pew (1976) theorized that social interest was positively correlated to those with a superiority priority.

Adlerian theorists (Kefir, 1971, 1981; Kefir & Corsini, 1974; Mosak, 1959; Pew, 1976) explored, defined, and explained priorities through defining goals, assets, others' reactions, the price one pays to achieve the number one priority, experiences to avoid, and movement within the priority. Furthermore, these theorists emphasized the importance of identifying an individual's personality priority in clinical work in order to fully understand and explore a client's life style. Many practitioners continue utilizing priorities to assess an individual's life style or to catch a glimpse into that individual's worldview early in his/her therapeutic work.

### **Assessment of Personality Priorities**

Several researchers and/or theorists attempted to create both informal and formal assessments to measure the construct of personality priorities. Kefir (1971) suggested that priorities could be detected through the identification of the impasse or what clients worked actively to avoid. Pew (1976) modified Kefir's model by suggesting that practitioners utilize the constructs of priorities in positive terms to show movement toward goals. Brown (1976) developed a qualitative process interview to help clinicians identify a client's personality priority and help the client gain insight into behavioral patterns. Aligned with Kefir's description of priorities, Brown emphasized the identification of a client's most avoided fear as a key to identifying a personality priority.

Langenfeld and Main (1983) created the first formal assessment to measure Adlerian personality priorities, the *Langenfeld Inventory for Personality Priorities* (LIPP). After developing items to reflect the four theorized personality priorities and piloting with a small sample, Langenfeld and Main conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using data from the 100-item instrument completed by 801 undergraduate participants. Final results indicated a 5-factor structure (pleasing, achieving, outdoing, detaching, and avoiding), which was contradictory to the theorized four priority constructs. As explained by the authors, achieving was described as similar to superiority but does *not* include the competitiveness theoretically associated with the superiority priority whereas outdoing was identified as a priority that combined both superiority and control into one priority. The detaching factor was described as representing elements of self-control but not control of others. Although Langenfeld and Main's findings were *not* aligned with the proposed priority structure, they concluded that the five factors expanded the theory, serving as a support for the constructs. However, no additional studies examining the construct validity of LIPP were conducted. In addition, Langenfeld and Main's investigation had methodological limitations such as the using of a low factor loading threshold of .30 for item inclusion, using of only a scree plot to determine the number of factors, and a low total variance explained by the factors' structure (21.91%).

Although construct and methodological concerns emerged in the development of LIPP, researchers continued to utilize the LIPP to explore clinical issues and concepts. The LIPP was utilized to evaluate the relationship between priorities and attitudinal differences among undergraduate students (Ashby, Kottman, & Rice, 1998), multidimensional perfectionism (Ashby, Kottman, & Stoltz, 2006), wellness (Britzman & Henkin, 1992; Evans & Bozarth, 1990), marriage pairing (Evans & Bozarth, 1986; Holden, 1991), and teacher burnout (Forey, Christensen, & England, 1994). Additionally, Kutchins, Curlette, and Kern, (1997) explored the relationship between personality priorities utilizing the LIPP and life style themes utilizing the *Basic Adlerian Scales for Interpersonal Success – Adult Form (BASIS-A™) Inventory*. However, authors (Ashby et al., 1998; Ashby et al., 2006) have noted the limitation of the LIPP due to poor psychometrics and suggested further research based on the constructs of Adlerian personality priorities in order to establish empirical support for these constructs. The continued use of the LIPP to identify and discuss personality priorities in relationship to other clinical constructs is problematic.

Allen (2005) sought to create an instrument that would verify the originally theorized Adlerian personality priorities. However, due to a low sample size, lack of EFA, and methodological issues related to construct validity, the *Allen Assessment for Adlerian Personality Priorities (AAAPP)* has limited use for identification of individual personality priorities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The constructs of the proposed Kefir personality priorities are questionable given limited empirical evidence. A common theme across the literature appears to be confusion around the existence, the varied usage, and credibility of personality priorities. In addition, Sutton (1976) stated that “the theory allows for some types of clinical usage, but until more work is done in terms of expanding the theory itself and in terms of the development of more meaningful measuring techniques and instruments, its [personality priorities] great potentiality as an important expansion of Adlerian theory remains dormant” (p. 126). Accordingly, an empirically supported formal assessment to measure personality priorities appears needed in the literature. Ashby and colleagues (1998) explained that such an instrument could help the counselor understand the client’s life style goals in the early stages of the therapeutic relationship, clue into the client’s assets and areas of vulnerability, and encourage the client’s identified strengths from early on in the relationship.

The purpose of the present study was to respond to several of the above measurement-related concerns regarding the exploration of Kefir’s (1971) defined personality priorities. Specifically, we sought to develop a measure of personality priorities that may be utilized to identify a person’s primary pattern of behavior based on internal convictions regarding social behavior that leads to belonging and social behavior the person seeks to avoid. The goal of such an instrument is to help therapists and clients develop insight into life style for the purposes of modifying one’s beliefs about self, others, and the world to overcome inferiority, strive for superiority and significance, and increase one’s social interest and mental health. We examined the existence of the personality priority constructs and examined the obtained factor structure relative to theoretical expectations.

### **Method**

**Instrument Development.** Through a review of items used in previous assessments (Langenfeld & Main, 1983; Sutton, 1976) and theoretical literature on priorities, two of the research team members generated items for the initial development of the APPA. Based on Dimitrov's (2012) instrument development steps, we reviewed, edited, deleted, and added items concluding with a compilation of 172 items, with fairly equal number of items representing each of the four personality priorities. An additional two items focusing on social interest were developed to explore the relationship between social interest and superiority personality priority, a previously unexplored assertion of personality priority theory (Pew, 1976). Each item was designed to be answered on a five-point Likert scale for which participants were asked to mark how true a statement was for them with 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little bit, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Quite a bit, and 5 = Very much.

**Initial content validity procedures.** We explored the content validity of the initial draft of the APPA through two groups of Adlerian experts: doctoral students and field experts. We electronically distributed the draft of 172 items to 37 counseling doctoral students who had been educated in Adlerian theory and self-identified with one of the theoretical personality priorities (comfort,  $n = 11$ ; pleasing,  $n = 7$ ; control,  $n = 11$ ; superiority,  $n = 8$ ). Doctoral students identified their own personality priority and reviewed, commented, and critiqued that priority's items on the initial list. We convened a focus group of 12 counseling doctoral students that were trained in Adlerian theory and identified with one of the personality priorities. As an outcome of the doctoral student feedback and the focus group meeting, items were deleted, re-worded, or added, resulting in 116 items.

The second validating group consisted of three reviewers who were well known as Adlerian experts in the counseling field. All three reviewers held doctoral degrees in counseling and have written extensively on Adlerian theory. They were asked to review each item under its corresponding personality priority and provide feedback regarding the fit and wording of the item. The research team then conducted a field test of the 116-item APPA with 10 individuals identified as one of the four priorities. Based on the expert review and field test, we finalized the newly drafted 98-item APPA (comfort,  $n = 21$  items; pleasing,  $n = 19$  items; control,  $n = 25$  items; and superiority,  $n = 32$  items).

**Pilot data collection.** In order to reduce the number of items for practical administration and preliminarily explore the possible factor structure of the APPA draft, we distributed the 98-item APPA to 163 graduate students in a counseling program. Because the participant to item ratio was too low to judge a factor analysis conclusively, we used results only to explore the items further for initial instrument development. A preliminary common factor analysis (CFA) with varimax rotation was conducted. Using parallel analysis (Henson & Roberts, 2006; Horn, 1965) as the primary guide to determine the number of factors, six factors were retained which had eigenvalues larger than their 95<sup>th</sup> percentile counterparts from the parallel analysis, reproducing 49% of the variance in the correlation matrix.

We conceptualized the six factors using personality priority theory and original intention of item placement as superiority, control of others or situations, comfort, pleasing, control of self, and social interest. Based on preliminary data, we chose to delete items under the control of self factor due to theoretical (Kefir, 1971) and statistical weakness. Although social interest items fell on a separate and unique factor, we chose to retain the items based on historical theoretical conclusions that social interest was highly correlated with a superiority priority. Additional items were deleted due to weak statistical showing in the preliminary factor analysis. The findings of preliminary exploration of data resulted in a revised draft of a 64-item APPA.

## Participants

The primary evaluation of the APPA included 393 undergraduate students at a large public university in the United States solicited through academic courses and extracurricular organizations. In order to diversify the sample, students from all majors were recruited. The age range of participants was 17 to 55 years with a mean of 20.35 ( $SD = 3.72$ ). Of the sample, 249 were female and 140 were male with four unidentified. Regarding ethnic identification, 220 (56%) indicated white/non-Hispanic, 68 (17%) Hispanic, 61 (16%) African-American, 10 (3%) Asian, 28 (7%) biracial, and 7 (2%) Other. Undergraduate classification was as follows: 145 (37%) freshman, 77 (20%) sophomore, 98 (25%) junior, and 73 (19%) senior.

## Procedures

The APPA was delivered in both electronic and paper copy formats. Both formats included informed consent procedures approved by the university's institutional review board. Participation was solicited from the undergraduate dean's office, groups of faculty members, and co-curricular organizations. For faculty members, we explained the purpose of the study, asked for their help in solicitation, and distributed the website address for the assessment. For student organizations, we distributed paper copies at meetings for immediate administration. We also posted the electronic address on the university's research participation pool website where students volunteer to participate in research projects. In order to ensure that participants were *not* completing the APPA more than once, we tracked names and email addresses before coding as well as IP addresses if completed electronically. Solicitation for participation continued until we reached an adequate participant to variable ratio for the EFA.

## Results

Table 1

*Factor Pattern/Structure Coefficients for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of Personality Priorities*

| Item   | Factor 1<br>Pleasing | Factor 2<br>Control | Factor 3<br>Comfort | Factor 4<br>Superiority | $h^2$ |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| I will go to great lengths to keep from disappointing other people.      | <b>.788</b>          | .013                | -.033               | .075                    | .628  |
| I am very sensitive to others' expectations.                             | <b>.773</b>          | .021                | .057                | .143                    | .622  |
| I need to know that others are pleased with me.                          | <b>.758</b>          | .174                | .078                | .121                    | .625  |
| I look at people to see if they are pleased or displeased by my actions. | <b>.738</b>          | .169                | .155                | .166                    | .624  |
| I am generally eager to please others.                                   | <b>.734</b>          | .058                | -.009               | .063                    | .546  |
| I have a strong desire to  | <b>.729</b>          | .121                | -.098               | .066                    | .561  |

|  |             |             |             |             |      |
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| meet others' needs.  |             |             |             |             |      |
| I often feel anxious when someone does not like me.  | <b>.725</b> | -.057       | .121        | -.026       | .545 |
| I get exhausted trying to please everyone.   | <b>.672</b> | .011        | .079        | .043        | .460 |
| I work really hard to keep from offending others.  | <b>.604</b> | -.145       | -.116       | .111        | .412 |
| In most situations, I prefer to be in charge.  | .022        | <b>.769</b> | -.040       | .301        | .685 |
| I tend to take charge.   | .018        | <b>.737</b> | -.195       | .208        | .624 |
| I can make things happen by taking charge.   | .037        | <b>.723</b> | -.160       | .235        | .604 |
| I feel most comfortable when I am in charge.   | .027        | <b>.688</b> | -.088       | .349        | .604 |
| I like it when others do what I say.   | .151        | <b>.519</b> | .218        | .243        | .399 |
| Others may say that I am bossy.  | .028        | <b>.495</b> | .071        | .035        | .252 |
| I avoid projects that are stressful.   | .091        | -.038       | <b>.668</b> | -.072       | .461 |
| I tend to leave things undone, leave things handing over my head.  | .091        | -.015       | <b>.666</b> | -.048       | .455 |
| I would like to accomplish more than I do, but usually end up not getting as much done as I would like to. | .124        | -.026       | <b>.606</b> | .103        | .394 |
| I prefer not have a lot of work to do.   | -.183       | -.075       | <b>.596</b> | .035        | .396 |
| I tend to put things off until I have to do them.  | .038        | .006        | <b>.581</b> | -.060       | .343 |
| It is more important for me to enjoy life than to get things done.   | .009        | .118        | <b>.456</b> | -.110       | .234 |
| I tend to avoid committing to too many things.   | -.163       | -.101       | <b>.443</b> | .027        | .234 |
| If things are tough or difficulty, I move on to something else.  | .130        | .040        | <b>.436</b> | -.065       | .213 |
| I want to do better than others at school and work.  | .220        | .124        | -.130       | <b>.700</b> | .571 |
| I have a need to accomplish more than other people.  | .286        | .231        | -.084       | <b>.686</b> | .612 |
| My goal in life is to be the best.   | -.025       | .277        | -.101       | <b>.669</b> | .535 |
| When I do a project, I work  | .204        | .163        | -.079       | <b>.603</b> | .438 |

|  |       |       |              |             |      |
|--|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|------|
| for it to be better than others’.  |       |       |              |             |      |
| I have an internal drive that pushes me to achieve higher standards and goals than others. | .132  | .186  | <b>-.410</b> | <b>.463</b> | .435 |
| I often feel my ideas are better than others.  | .018  | .349  | .274         | <b>.452</b> | .402 |
| I need to be the winner in games.  | -.021 | .252  | .083         | <b>.451</b> | .274 |
| % Variance (post-rotation)   | 16.93 | 10.57 | 10.13        | 9.66        |      |
| Post-rotation trace  | 5.08  | 3.17  | 3.04         | 2.90        |      |
| M  | 3.12  | 2.90  | 2.67         | 2.98        |      |
| SD   | .950  | .823  | .737         | .858        |      |

Note. Coefficients  $>.40$  are italicized (or bolded or underlined).  $h^2$  = communality coefficient. The pre-rotation eigenvalue of the fifth unretained factor was 1.027.

### Factor Analysis

Data screening was conducted and statistical assumptions were met prior to conducting factor analysis. The initial internal consistency reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) for scores on the four theoretically expected scales were all in acceptable ranges (cf. Henson, 2001): pleasing  $\alpha = .908$  ( $k = 16$  items), comfort  $\alpha = .804$  ( $k = 12$  items), control  $\alpha = .808$  ( $k = 12$  items), and superiority  $\alpha = .881$  ( $k = 22$  items). The correlation matrix of the 64-item APPA was submitted to a common factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation ( $\delta = 0$ ) to evaluate whether the factors were correlated. Parallel analysis with O’Connor’s (2000) program was used as the primary guide to determine the number of factors. The 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the eigenvalues of over 100 random data sets was used as the criterion for factor retention. We also examined the magnitude of the obtained eigenvalues and examined scree plots for all analyses.

Six APPA factors were initially identified which explained 47.57% of the variance in the correlation matrix, error variance not included in this statistic. The factors were largely uncorrelated and all but two of the factor correlations were less than .30. The primary exception was the correlation between the fifth and sixth factors, which shared about 20% of their variance. Given the lack of factor intercorrelation, an orthogonal varimax rotation was conducted which can have the advantage of greater generalizability (Thompson, 2004). For this solution, and following the recommendation of Henson and Roberts (2006), we removed items with factor pattern/structure coefficients less than .40 resulting in 11 item deletions.

Because factor structure can easily change after item deletions, we then employed a series of factor analyses to refine the model. In all iterations, common factor analysis was employed and the number of factors was rechecked via additional parallel analyses, examination of the eigenvalues, and inspection of the scree plot. Direct oblimin rotation ( $\delta = 0$ ) was used to check for factor correlations. In all cases, however, the factor correlations were low and a varimax rotation was employed before interpretation. Items with pattern/structure coefficients less than .40 or with substantial cross-loadings in the orthogonal solution for each iteration were removed from the model, resulting in the deletion of 23 additional items. Through this item

reduction process, it became clear that the initial fifth and sixth APPA factors were poorly defined, and as such, they were dropped from the model.

The final solution (see Table 1) included 30 APPA items represented by four factors which were consistent with the original theoretical expectations: pleasing (9 items), control (6 items), comfort (8 items) and superiority (7 items). The full model reproduced 47.29% of the variance of the correlation matrix, not including error variance and the post-rotation variance explained for each factor was 16.93% for pleasing, 10.57% for control, 10.13% for comfort, and 9.66% for superiority. Final coefficient alpha reliabilities were acceptable at .909, .840, .782, and .816, respectively.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Using the APPA factor structure results, we were able to explore descriptive means for each factor, indicating the number of participants who identified with a specific priority through highest mean ratings for that priority. Of the 393 participants, 62 (16%) rated comfort items as their highest factor, 150 (38%) rated pleasing items as their highest factor, 79 (20%) rated control as their highest factor, and 92 (23%) rated superiority as their highest factor. Ten participants (2.5%) identified two priorities as their top personality priority. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for participants who rated that priority the highest. Descriptive statistics for scale scores across entire sample are reported in Table 1.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Scale Scores from Participants Rating that Scale Highest*

| <b>Priority</b>  | <b>N</b>  | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Comfort          | 62 (16%)  | 3.49        | .615      |
| Pleasing         | 150 (38%) | 3.89        | .627      |
| Control          | 79 (20%)  | 3.67        | .677      |
| Superiority      | 92 (23%)  | 3.70        | .622      |
| Equal Priorities | 10 (2.5%) | 3.87        | .613      |

### **Discussion**

The goal of the current study was to explore the presence and identification of four factors of theorized Adlerian personality priorities. Kefir (1971) first introduced the four personality priorities consisting of pleaser, controller, morally superior, and avoider. Terminology evolved over the years and each priority was re-named to represent movement, a status of becoming (Langenfeld & Main, 1983), resulting in labels of pleasing, control, superiority, and comfort. Yet, Adlerian theorists still utilized the same definitions of priorities despite lack of evidence or evidence to the contrary (Langenfeld & Main, 1983). We sought to develop an assessment instrument with credible construct validity for its scores based on previous research, expert review, and focus group feedback using Kefir's theory as a guide. Additionally, we used EFA with stringent criteria for identification and inclusion of items to examine the constructs closely. The current EFA resulted in the identification of four distinct factors: pleasing, superiority, control, and comfort. The four-factor structure accounted for

47.29% of variance, which is satisfactory for social sciences (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). This structure supports the original personality priorities identified by Kefir (1971). Each priority appears to be representative of a portion of the sample and distinct from other priorities given that only a small percentage of respondents (2.5 %) identified equally with two or more priorities. Furthermore, the EFA the APPA followed the guidelines as defined by Henson and Roberts (2006). Pattern coefficients of items were deleted if below .4 unlike previous studies that allowed for items above .3 to be retained (e.g. Curlette, Wheeler, & Kern, 1998; Langenfeld & Main, 1983). In addition, the APPA had a multi-phase process that allowed for item deletions prior to the EFA. Hence, the current results, and development of the APPA, represent the first empirical evidence to support the Adlerian use of personality priorities as a viable construct.

#### **Four Factors of Personality Priorities**

Similarly to Langenfeld and Main (1983), we defined the current factors in terms of movement, i.e., “pleasing” as opposed to “pleaser.” The slight change in wording aligns more with Adler’s view of individual’s law of movement. Adler (1929) warned practitioners to be cautious and avoid forcing individuals into categories. Theoretically, individuals are seen as forward-moving or striving towards goals. Items within each factor appear to support Kefir’s original descriptions of the four priorities.

Pleasing priority was identified as the first and most identifiable factor. Items within this factor represented a need to please others, doing what others expect, and being considerate. Examples include “I need to know that others are pleased with me” and “I work really hard to keep from offending others.” Given that the pleasing priority was the easiest construct to measure throughout statistical procedures, this construct appeared over-identified by this sample (38%) and the easiest to capture by the items (pattern coefficients  $\geq .60$ ). Our results on pleasing were similar to Langenfeld and Main’s (1983) claim that the pleasing priority appeared to be the easiest to identify as a construct and the most identified priority by participants.

Additionally, some Adlerian authors (Ashby et al., 1998; Dewey, 1991) have suggested that low self-esteem correlates with the priority pleasing, potentially clouding construct definition. However, all items related to self-esteem were deleted due to low pattern coefficients ( $< .3$ ). Therefore, in the current sample, individuals with a personality priority of pleasing did *not* tend to correlate with low self-esteem more than any other priority.

The second factor of control consisted of items that represented a person’s striving to take charge of situations and control others. Example items under this factor included “I tend to take charge” and “I like it when others say what I do.” Although some descriptions of the control priority have included a description of controlling self and its possible distinction from controlling others (Langenfeld & Main, 1983), we were unable to support the control of self as a separate and distinct factor. Items that were developed intentionally to address control of self loaded on a separate factor than the general control factor. Additionally, the separate control of self factor was empirically weak and could not be retained.

Another complication in the identification of factors was the initial correlations between items intended to measure control and superiority items. A similar outcome was encountered by Langenfeld and Main (1983). In early rotations, the control and superiority factors were difficult to uniquely define due to a moderate correlation ( $r^2 = .20$ ). After deletion of items with weak coefficients, the results indicated two unique constructs falling under control and superiority.

The third identified factor was the comfort priority and represented the individual’s need for comfort by putting things off or avoiding stressful situations. Examples of comfort items

included “I tend to avoid projects that are stressful” and “I tend to put things off until I have to do them.” The priority of comfort appeared under-identified by participants (16%); however, the priority still appeared strong (eigenvalue = 10.57) and distinct given that almost one fifth of the sample identified with this priority.

The fourth factor was the superiority priority. Items factored as superiority represented a strong desire to achieve and accomplish, do better than others. Example items included “I want to do better than others at school and work” and “My goal in life is to be the best.” In an effort to explore the theorized positive correlation between social interest and superiority priority (Pew, 1976), we included two items specifically related to social interest: “I want to engage in work that will benefit society” and “I want to make a difference in my community.” The items identified as social interest questions resulted in a separate, unique factor, demonstrating social interest did not appear correlated with the priority superiority more than any other priority. This factor was eliminated given that the eigenvalue did not meet the factor retention standards.

### **Implications for Adlerian Counselors**

Our results provide *preliminary* evidence for the four-factor structure of Adlerian personality priorities. Since Adler’s (1931) initial development of his personality theory, Adlerian counselors have shown interest in typologies and classifications of human behaviors. Despite lack of previous well-designed research, Adlerians have utilized personality priorities as a popular tool as a way to conceptualize individuals’ life styles – their beliefs about self, others, and the world (Adler, 1956). The intended purpose of the APPA is to provide the Adlerian therapist and client with deeper insight into the client’s phenomenological world, not to categorize the individual. Consistent with Adler’s (1931) view of individuals, it is our intention that counselors utilize this instrument as a means for gaining greater understanding of their clients and in turn, the client may also gain greater insight into their own worldview and motivations.

### **Limitations**

Although the sample size met the recommendation for a five participant to one item ratio, the sample for the EFA consisted only of undergraduate students at a large public university. Hence, the sample was young and educated overall. Regarding diversity, the sample is likely generalizable to the undergraduate community yet still limited in generalizability to broader populations. Ethnic distribution among the sample was consistent with the undergraduate population at the university: white (56% sample, 54% university; African American (16% sample, 13.8% university); Hispanic, non-white (17% sample, 17.9% university); and Asian (3% sample, 6.9% university).

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of the current study are promising for the affirmation of constructs originally defined by Kefir (1971). However, this study is only the first step in confirming that the theoretical constructs of personality priorities exist and can be identified (Dimitrov, 2012). Specifically, the instrument should be piloted with a sample of people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, educational levels, and age. Further exploration is necessary to continue the development of the APPA. The next step in instrument development is conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with a similar sample in order to assess the accuracy and reliability of EFA initial results. Additionally, construct validity would be enhanced by divergent

and convergent validity methods. Exploration of demographics across priorities would provide information regarding the make-up of the larger population.

### Conclusion

Professional counselors have used personality priorities as a means to holistically assess and understand their clients' life style, defined as an individual's approach to finding significance in life (Kottman, 2003) since the 1970s. We developed the APPA, stringently following instrument development guidelines (e.g., Dimitrov, 2012) in response to the lack of a valid and reliable measure of personality priorities. These preliminary findings support the APPA as a potential tool for assessing individuals' personality priorities, the window to their life style – the foundation understanding personality development through an Adlerian theory lens (Kefir, 1981). Nonetheless, future and continued instrument development would benefit contemporary counselors and psychologists in their application of Adlerian constructs with clients.

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