# College Binge Drinking

## A Scouting Report

## Insights from Strategic Explorations

**Summary**

This scouting report is based on a strategic exploration on the "possible implications of college binge drinking." The exploration, conducted by over 200 college students, identified the possible implications, positive and negative, of binge drinking. The implications identified were scored for desirability and likelihood.

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# Scouting the Future

*Develop this new leadership skill.*

by Joel A. Barker

During my 30 years as a futurist, I have promoted the importance of visionary leadership because when leaders act without understanding the complexity within which they lead, they invite "unintended consequences," two words that have evolved into a phrase: "The Law of Unintended Consequences." The addition of the word *law* suggests that we should *expect* these unintended (bad) consequences. This creates a low-grade fear of the future, because it is full of nasty, unpredictable consequences.

Some argue that this fear is good, because it slows us down from making snap decisions and modulates reckless enthusiasm for trying anything new. I believe that because of our fear of those unknown consequences, we move slowly, prudently into the future. But that prudence means we leave open the pathway to new ideas and innovations for others more willing to move quickly.

As a leader, your key skill is to get your people to follow you to a place they would not go to by themselves. That "place" is located in the future. Finding that place and leading your team to it is your most important responsibility. If you are unsure of what is ahead and afraid of the unintended consequences, you will lead slowly. And that can put you at a competitive disadvantage. But what if you could identify those consequences before they happened and learn about the future so you could lead faster?

During the era of American wagon trains, the wagon master's role was to lead the pioneers through dangerous territory to a safe and fertile area in a given time. Before a good wagon master rolled the wagons, he would send out scouts to see what was over the horizon. This exploration provided him with crucial information that allowed him to make quicker decisions with higher confidence and move the wagons forward at a faster pace. What impact do you think it had on the rest of wagon train knowing their leader was scouting their future before making critical decisions that affected their well-being? Everyone's confidence was improved.

Four attributes of scouting must be met for scouts to be successful:

- ***Speed.*** Scouts have to ride out, make observations, and return quickly. If they linger, their information loses value.
- ***Qualitative information gathering.*** Scouts can't take the time to measure and analyze and record lots of details. Instead, they return with observations, impressions and images that are qualified by their past experience.
- ***Many directions.*** To get a broad a view, scouts have to scatter in many directions. Without a broad spectrum of exploration, they may miss the best pathways.
- ***Decision-enhancing information.*** The work of the scouts is used by the wagon master to enhance his decisions. No matter what the scouts report, the leader's job is to choose a wise course of action.

With the scout's input, the wagon master can now make decisions that reach farther into the future and make those decisions with confidence.

## 21st Century Scouting

Twenty-first century leaders need their own scouts to search the geography of time (the frontier of next five years), not the geography of place. To scout the future effectively, you and your scouts need to learn "cascade thinking."

The most important implications of any change are rarely those that spring immediately from the initiating event—be it an innovation, emerging trend, a competing product, or strategic objective; instead, they are usually found several orders out.

Shakespeare wrote: "For loss of a nail, the shoe was lost; for loss of the shoe, the horse was lost; for loss of the horse, the rider was lost; for loss of the rider, the battle was lost." This is a cause-effect chain of consequences. Time and again, an insignificant first-order implication can lead to catastrophic results. In the real world, the cascade runs in many directions, creating complexity. Good scouting must track those multiple pathways.

To generate a real-world cascade, you begin by asking a simple question. For instance, what implications might occur as a direct result of your company introducing a new product? You might generate many possible answers. Next, look at those implications and ask: what might happen as the direct result of each implication happening? This question triggers a branching cascade of implications.

I find that you must go out at least three orders of implications to scout far enough into the future to find the big surprises. To ignore this pattern of thinking is to invite unintended consequences. By using cascade thinking, leaders can better identify the "unintended consequences" of a new idea *before* they implement the new idea. That gives them the "lay of the land" well before they roll the wagons.

Here is short list of topics for this kind of exploration: emerging trends, innovations, policy changes, new laws, strategic objectives and goals, and big events.

By scouting the future of such issues, leaders will see over the "time horizon," gain insights into the pattern of implications, and understand the complexities ahead. This new pattern of thinking helps you to generate the cascade of consequences. Those who think this way will move more rapidly into the future with greater confidence. And that will make all the difference. EE

*Joel A. Barker, independent scholar and futurist, is known for his leading-edge work in paradigm shifts and vision. www.joelbarker.com. 919-417-4410*

***ACTION: Scout your future.***



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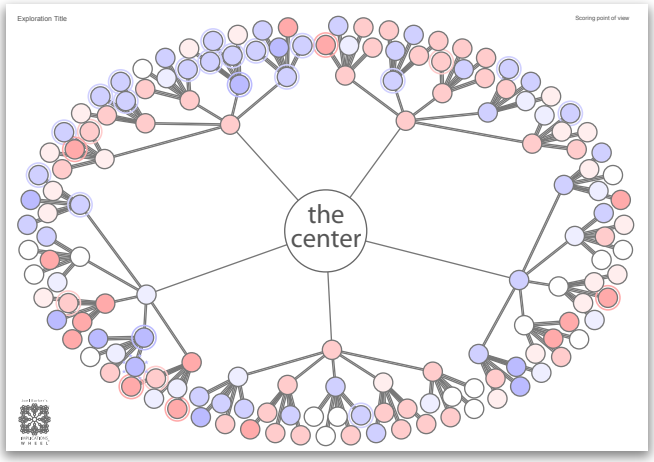
# The Implications Wheel®

## Reading an Exploration




Start by assuming that **the center** happens. The circles connected to the center are possible consequences of the center. These are called **1st order implications**.

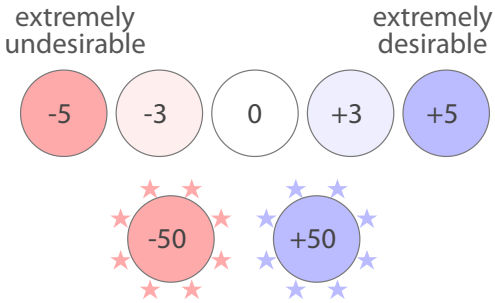
Then assume that the 1st order implications happen. The **2nd order implications** are possible implications of the 1st orders.

Finally, the **3rd order implications** are possible implications of the 2nd orders.

## Scoring for Desirability

The desirability or undesirability of an implication **depends on one's point of view**. The point of view from which these implications were scored is printed in the upper-right corner of the exploration.

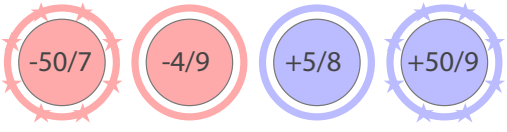
The desirability scale goes from -5 to +5, with two special scores (+/-50) for extraordinary situations.




## Scoring for Likelihood

Each likelihood score **assumes the occurrence of the preceding implication**. The likelihood scale is from 1 to 9.

If you see a red or a blue implication that is circled, the circle indicates that the implication received a 7, 8, or 9 likelihood.

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# College Binge Drinking

## Center:

What Are the Possible Implications of College Binge Drinking?

## Details of the Center:

This exploration of "college binge drinking" was created with contributions from over 200 college students. Here is a sampling of their comments following the exploration:

-- 90% - Increased learning about sexual harassment.

-- 99% - Learned and experienced “cascade thinking.”

-- 98% - Evaluated possible consequences.

-- 96% - Experienced input from multiple points of view

*******

67% described the process as significantly different from anything they'd experienced. 21% described it as "dramatically different."

There were frequent comments about seeing the dangers of binge drinking that they hadn't thought about. In interviews with several groups of students, they were overwhelming praising that the process allowed them to identify the consequences -- instead of programs that typically just "present them" with a point of view.

Background:

Parents and their children wait expectantly for word of their acceptance into the college of choice. It feels like the dawn of a new era: parents are thrilled to see their child so interested in continuing academic achievement and students look forward to independence and new friends. How many of these parents are aware of the risks that face their young adults as they move into dorms and discover that they can make decisions, both good and bad, about alcohol and drug use?

According to a study by CASA at Columbia University in New York, the number of college students binge drinking and abusing drugs has only gotten worse over the past decade. Here are just a few of the troubling statistics:

Almost half of full-time college students binge drink, abuse prescription drugs, or abuse illegal drugs.

In 2005, almost one-quarter of those college students meet the medical definition of substance abuse or dependence – three times the rate in the general population.

The rate of excessive drinking jumped 16 percent from 1993 to 2005. Those college students who drink until drunk in the past month rose 26% over that decade. Even more alarming is this statistic: alcohol-related arrest per campus rose 21 percent from 2001 to 2005.

Alcohol is not the only problem. Prescription drug abuse rose an alarming 343% from 1993 to 2005 for painkillers such as Vicodin and OxyContin, highly addictive opioids. They are also abused stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall, known as “study drugs,” and sedatives such as Nembutal and Seconal. Daily marijuana use doubled. In 2005 4 percent of students reported they smoked marijuana daily. Illegal drug use (cocaine and heroin) almost doubled as well, with over 8 percent of students reporting they had used these drugs.

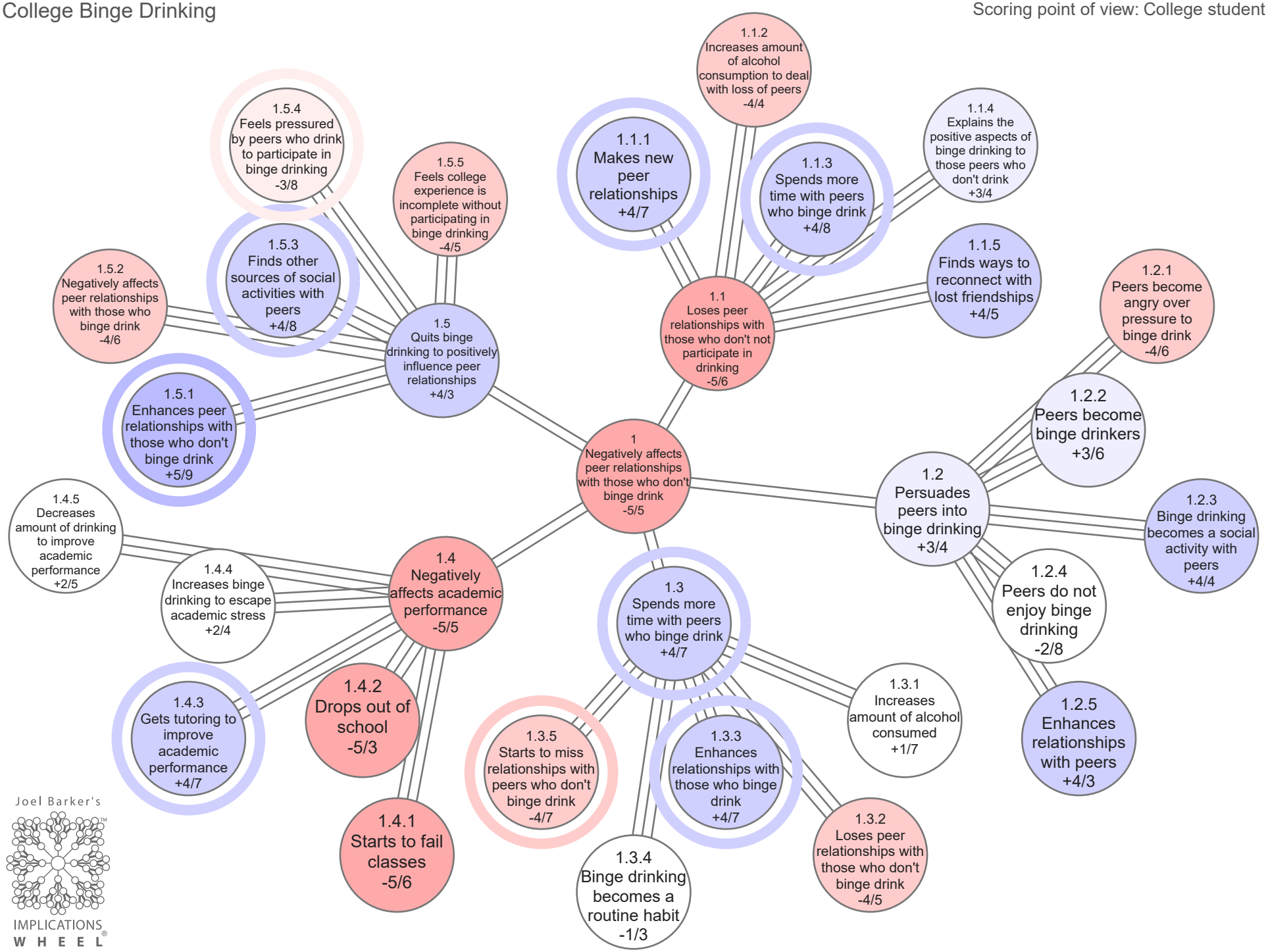
The consequences for this risky behavior goes beyond slipping grades and dropped classes. Student deaths from unintentional alcohol-related injuries rose 56 percent from 1998 to 2001. Over 1,700 students died in this way, and nonfatal injuries rose 38 percent in this same time period.

Often parents inadvertently encourage this behavior. Giving students large allowances while at school funds the alcohol and drug use. Schools contribute by allowing beer companies to sell their merchandise at sporting events. Fraternity parties are rarely supervised by school officials and tend to be popular places to get extremely drunk. Hazing deaths continue to occur during fraternity rushing.

Many parents and college administrators have given up on controlling drug and alcohol use on campus. They take a kids-will-be-kids attitude. However, many of these universities need to sit up and take notice: more often than not, aggrieved parents of injured or dead children are suing colleges where there is a seeming look-the-other-way attitude, particularly toward underage drinking.

# College Binge Drinking

Scoring point of view: College student

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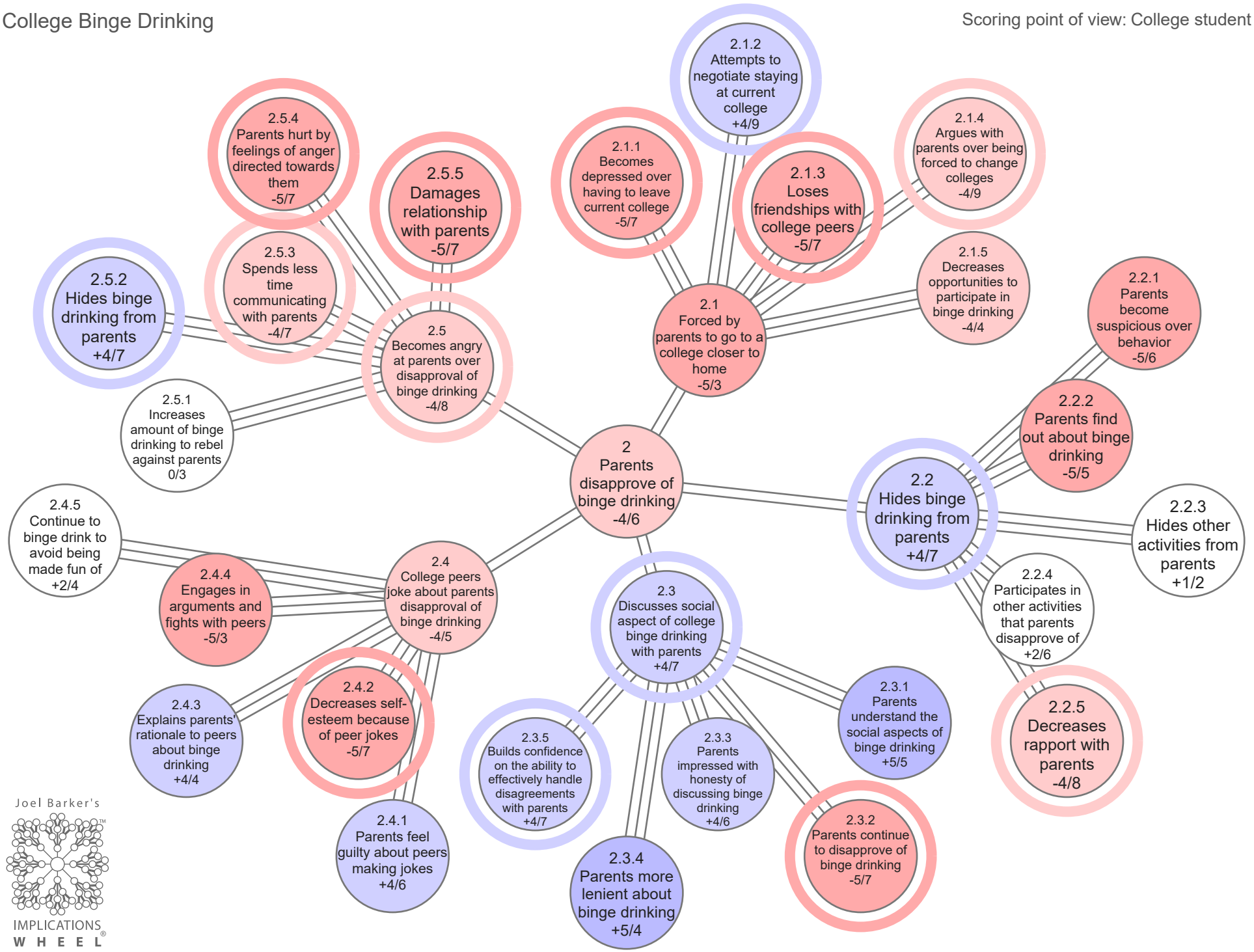


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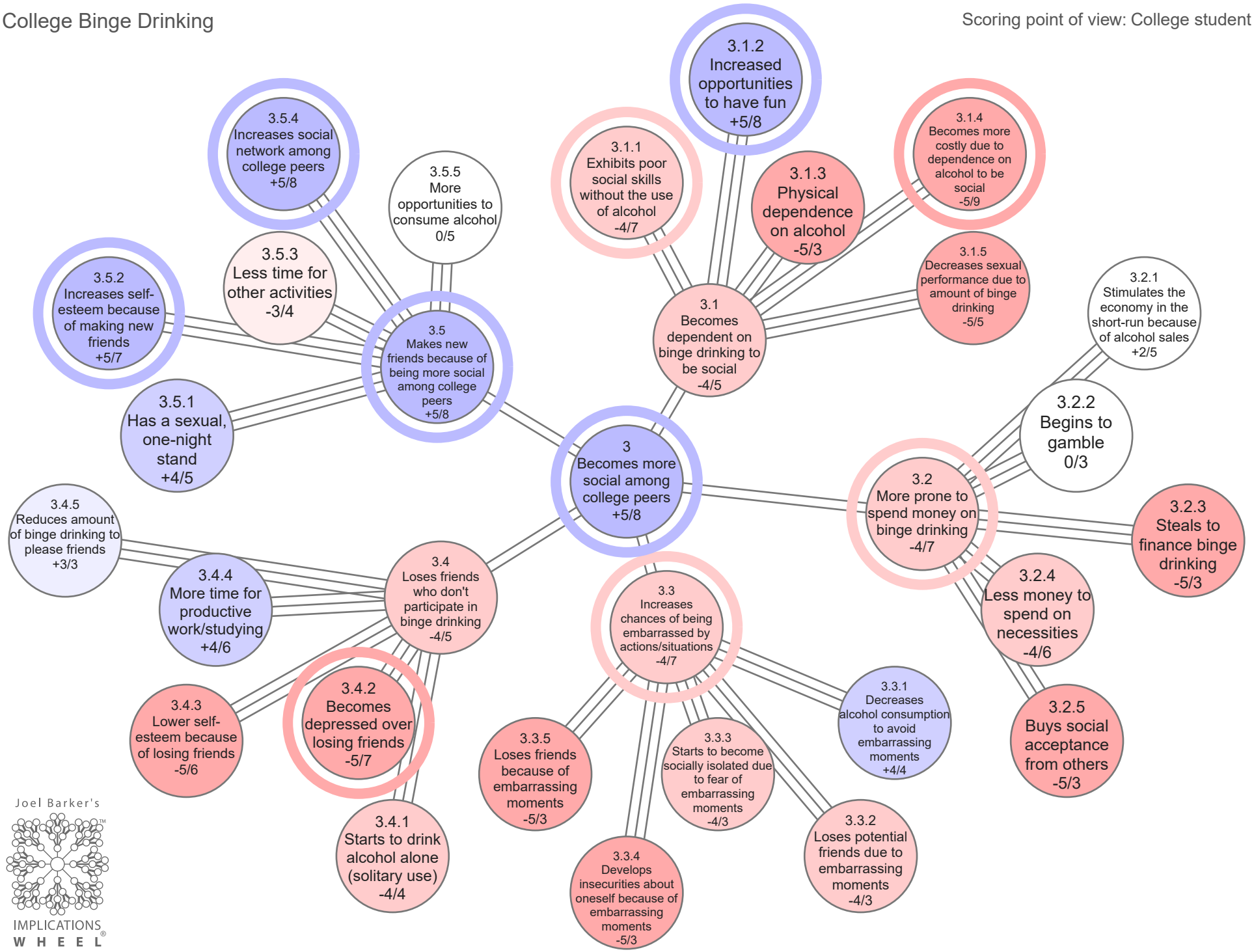


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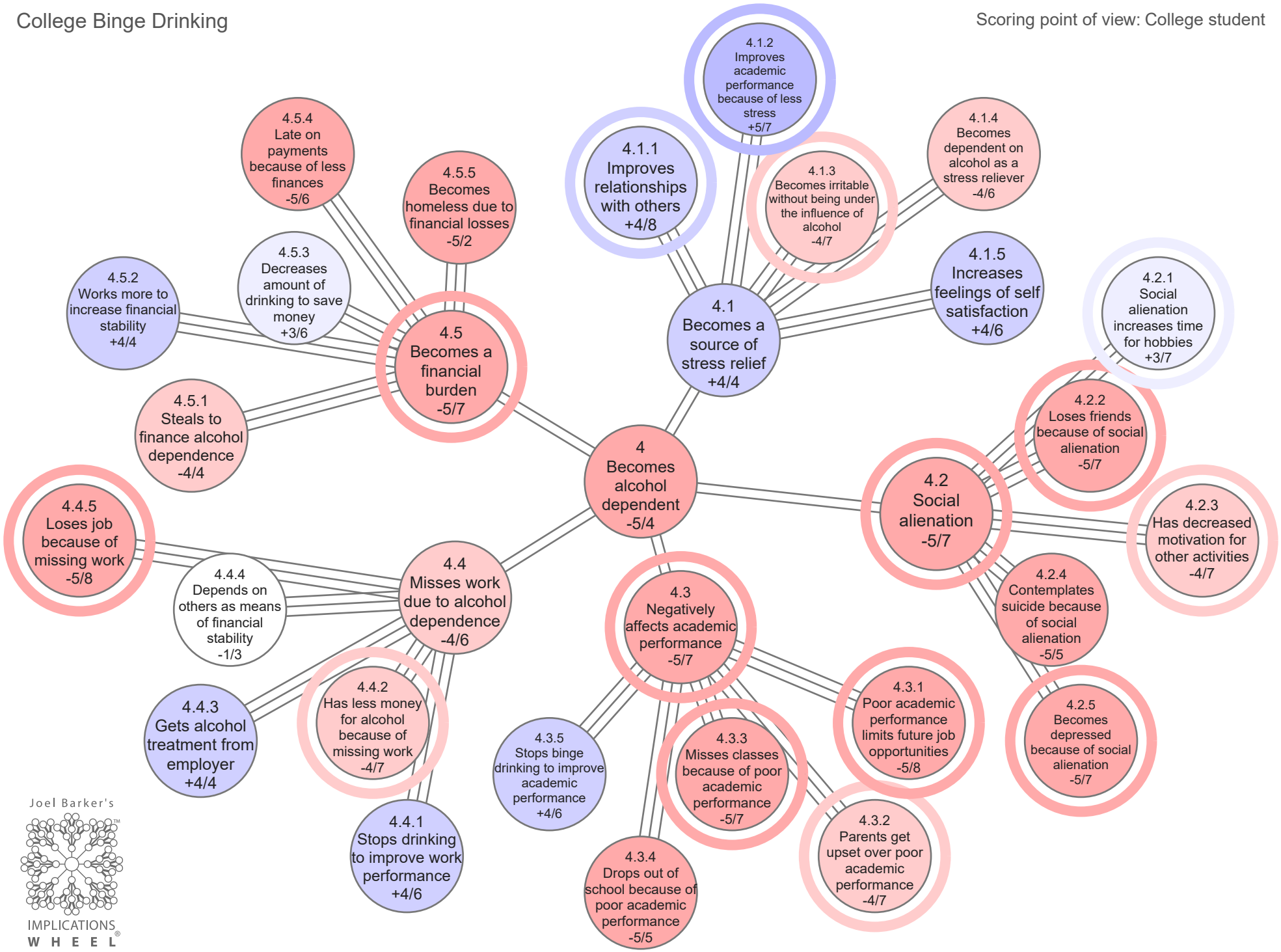


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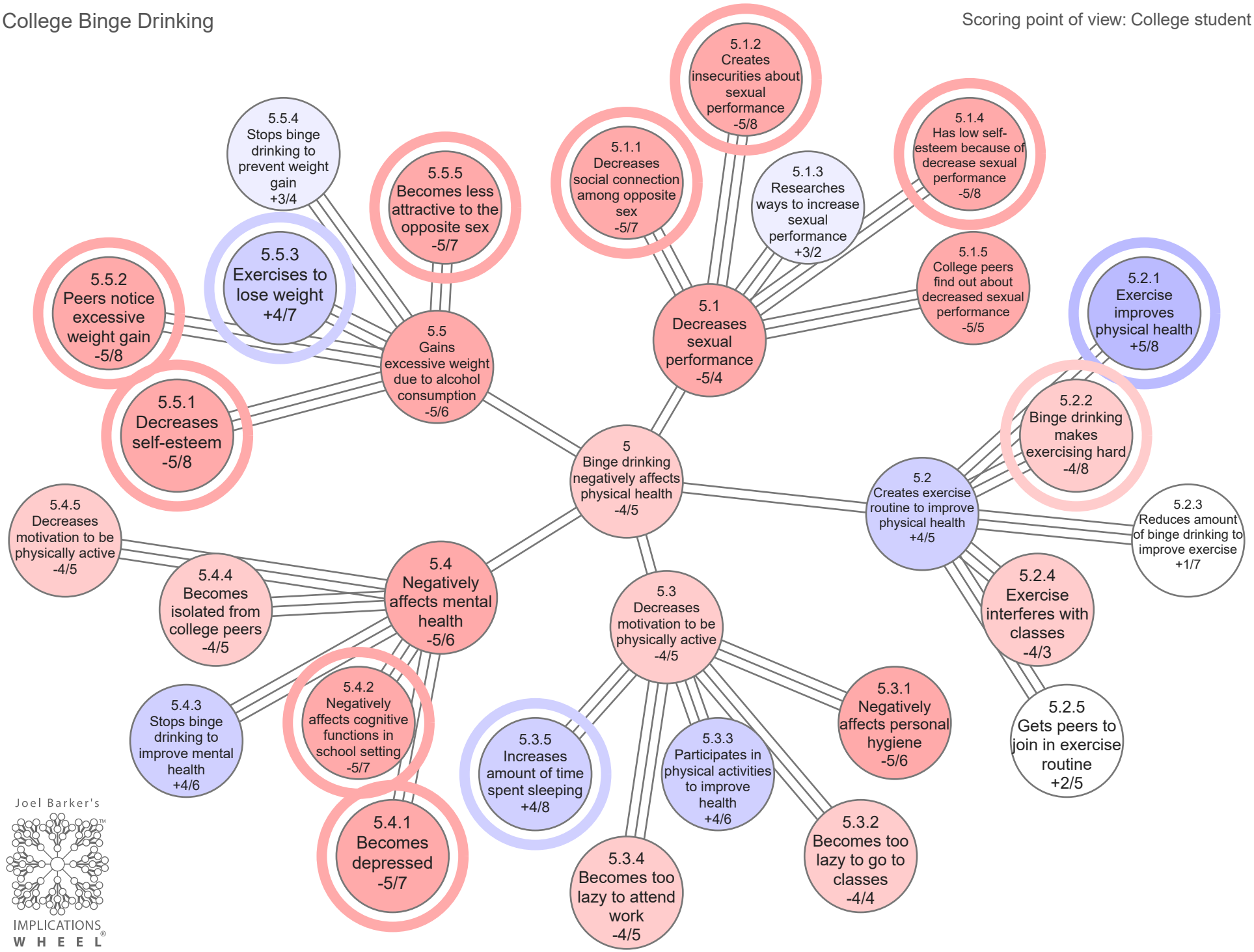


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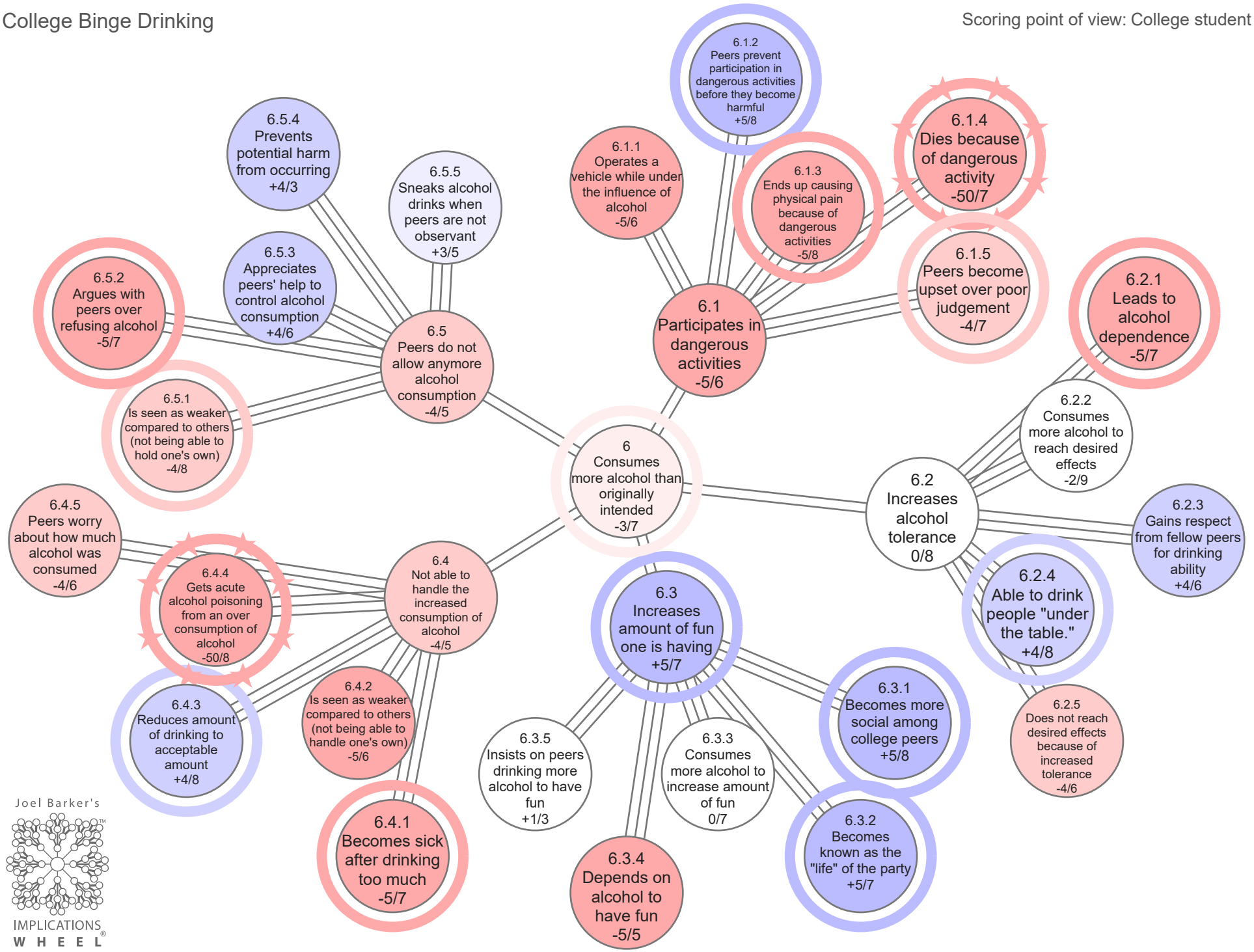


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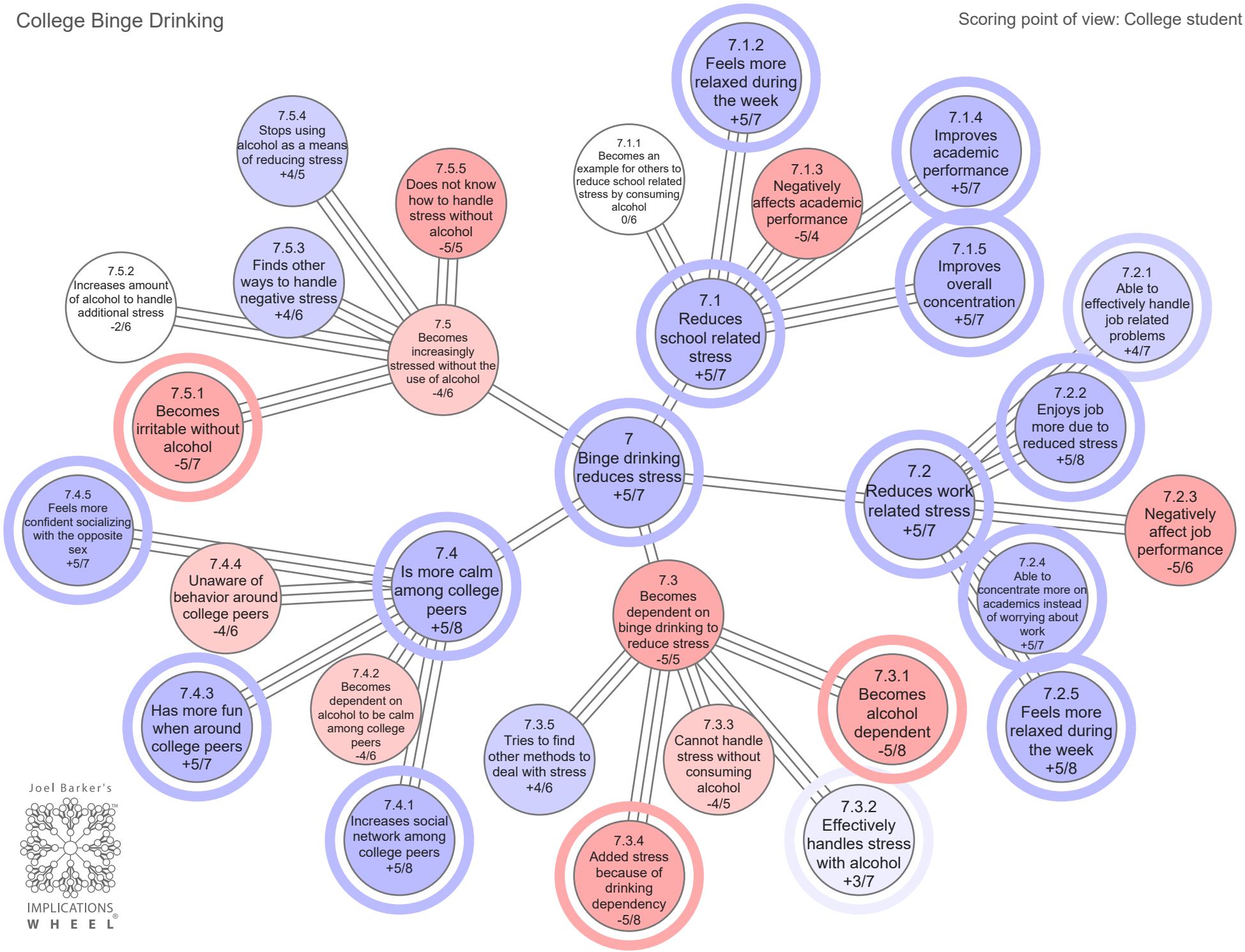


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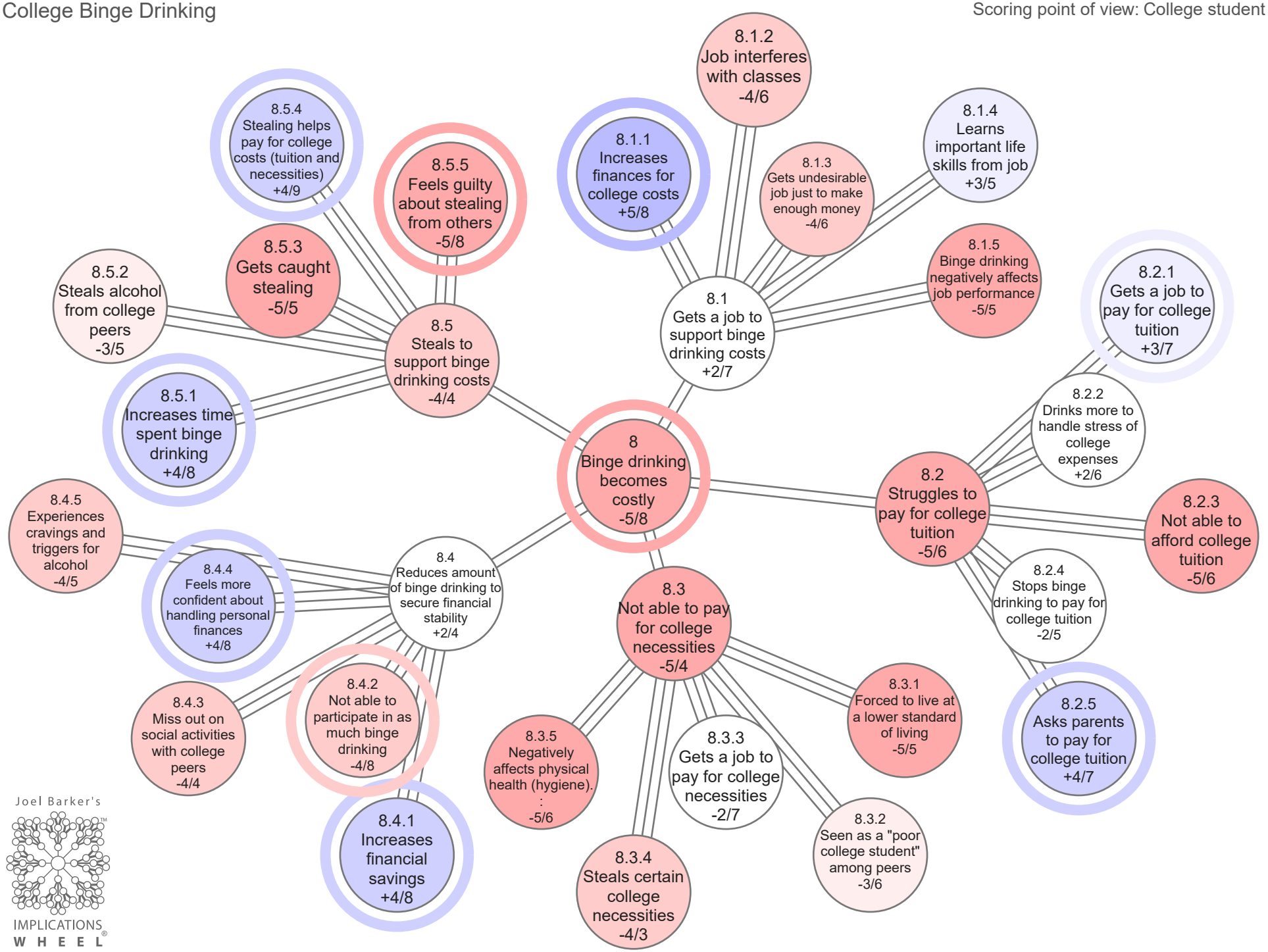


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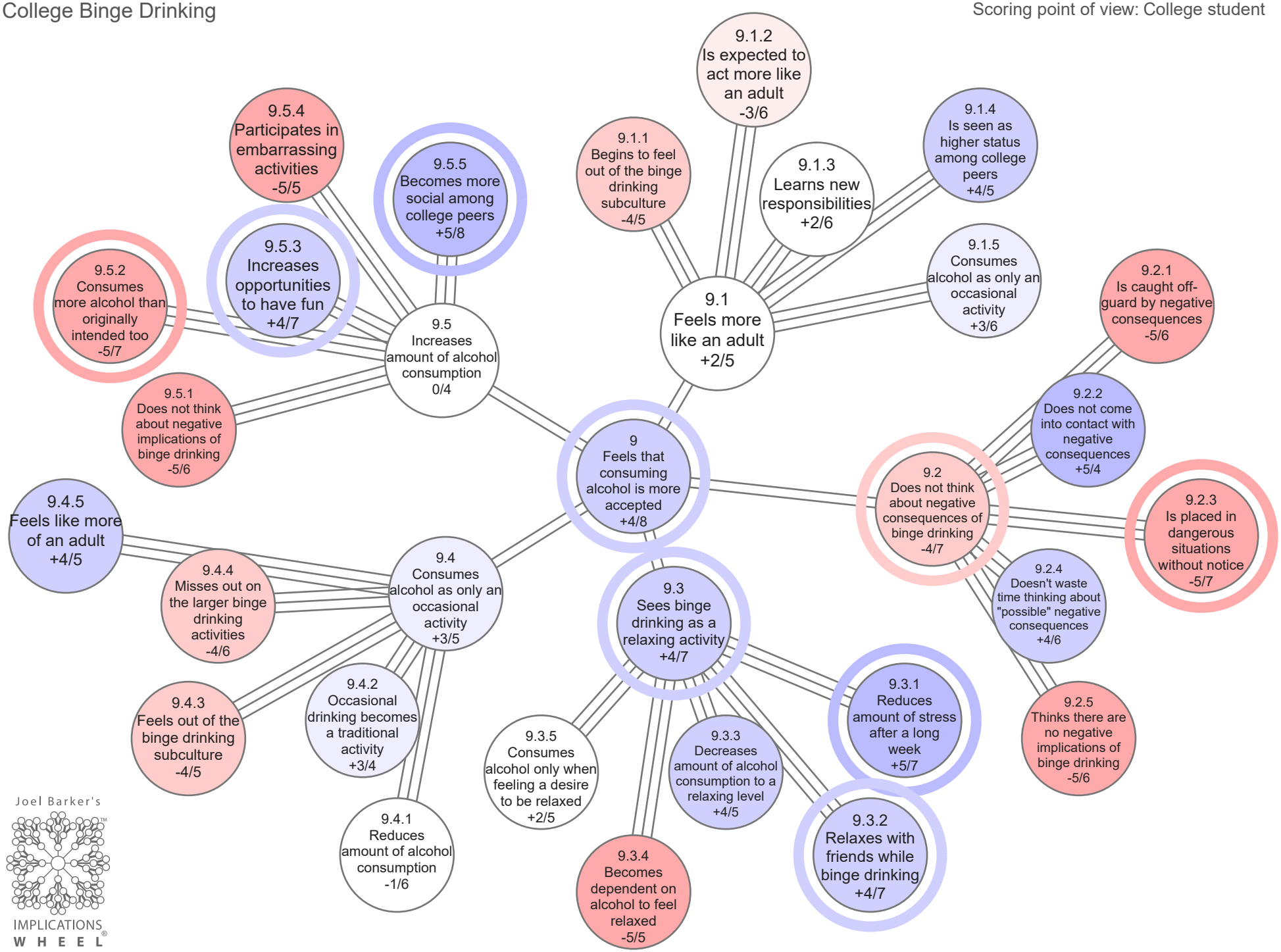


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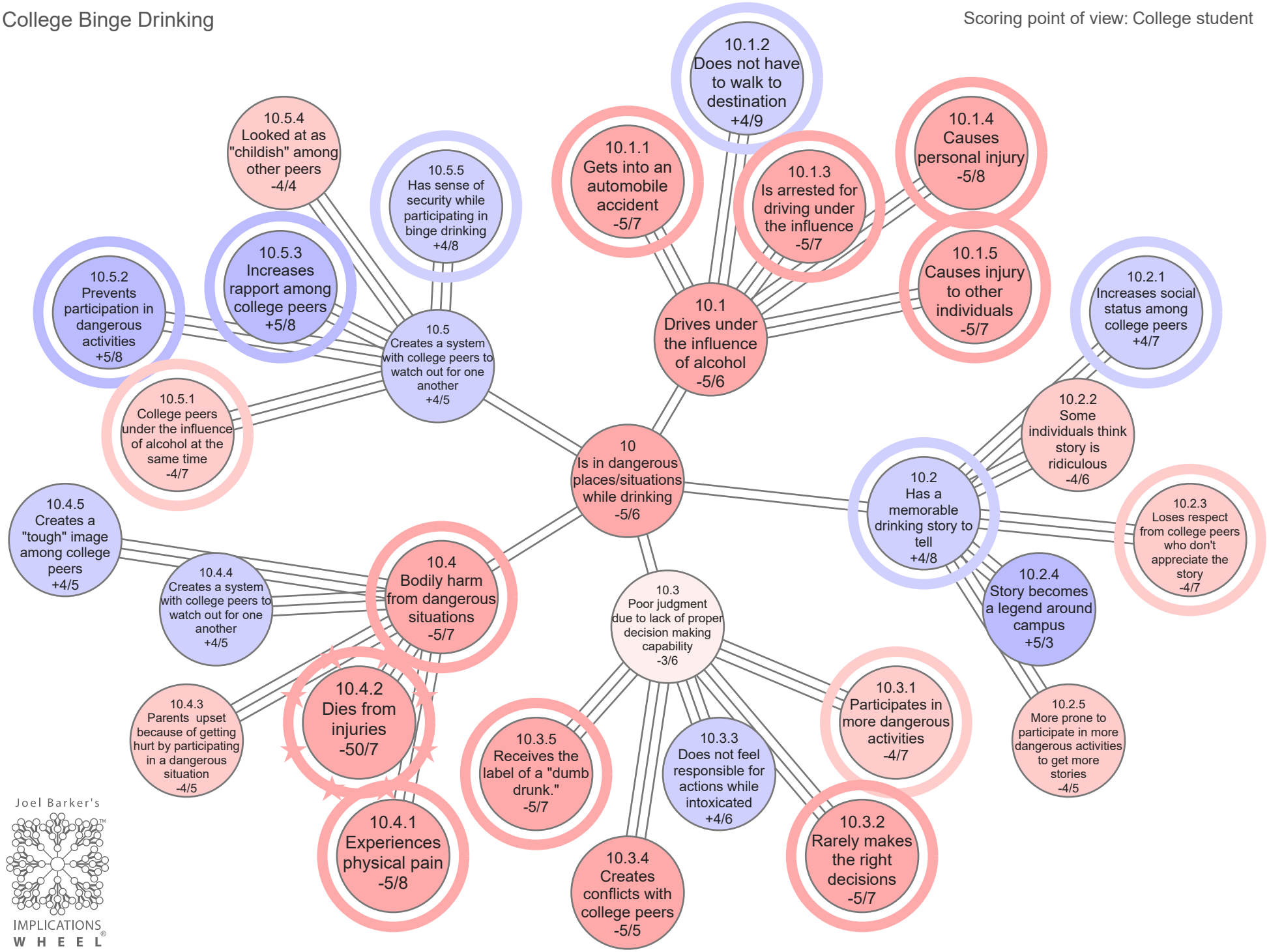


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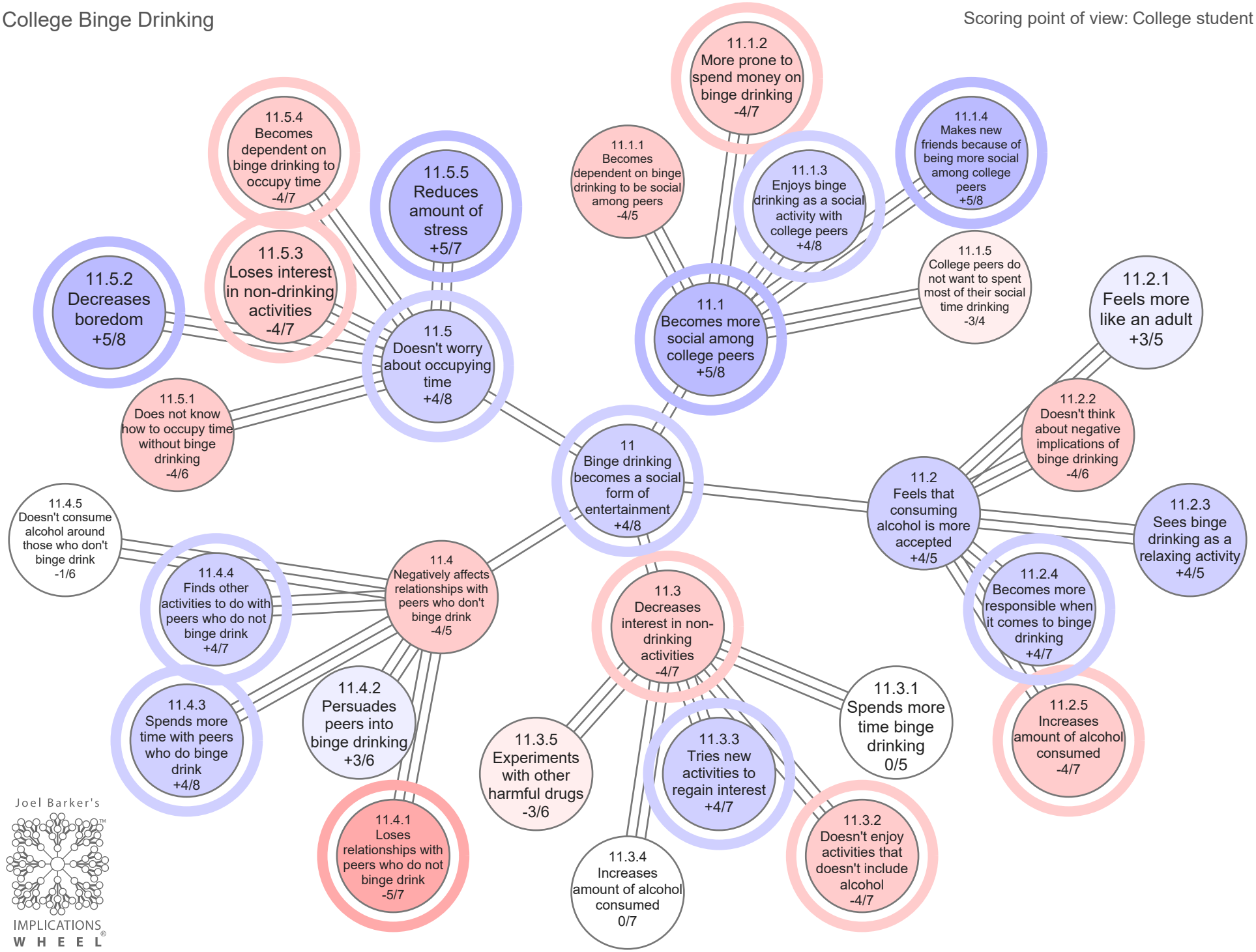


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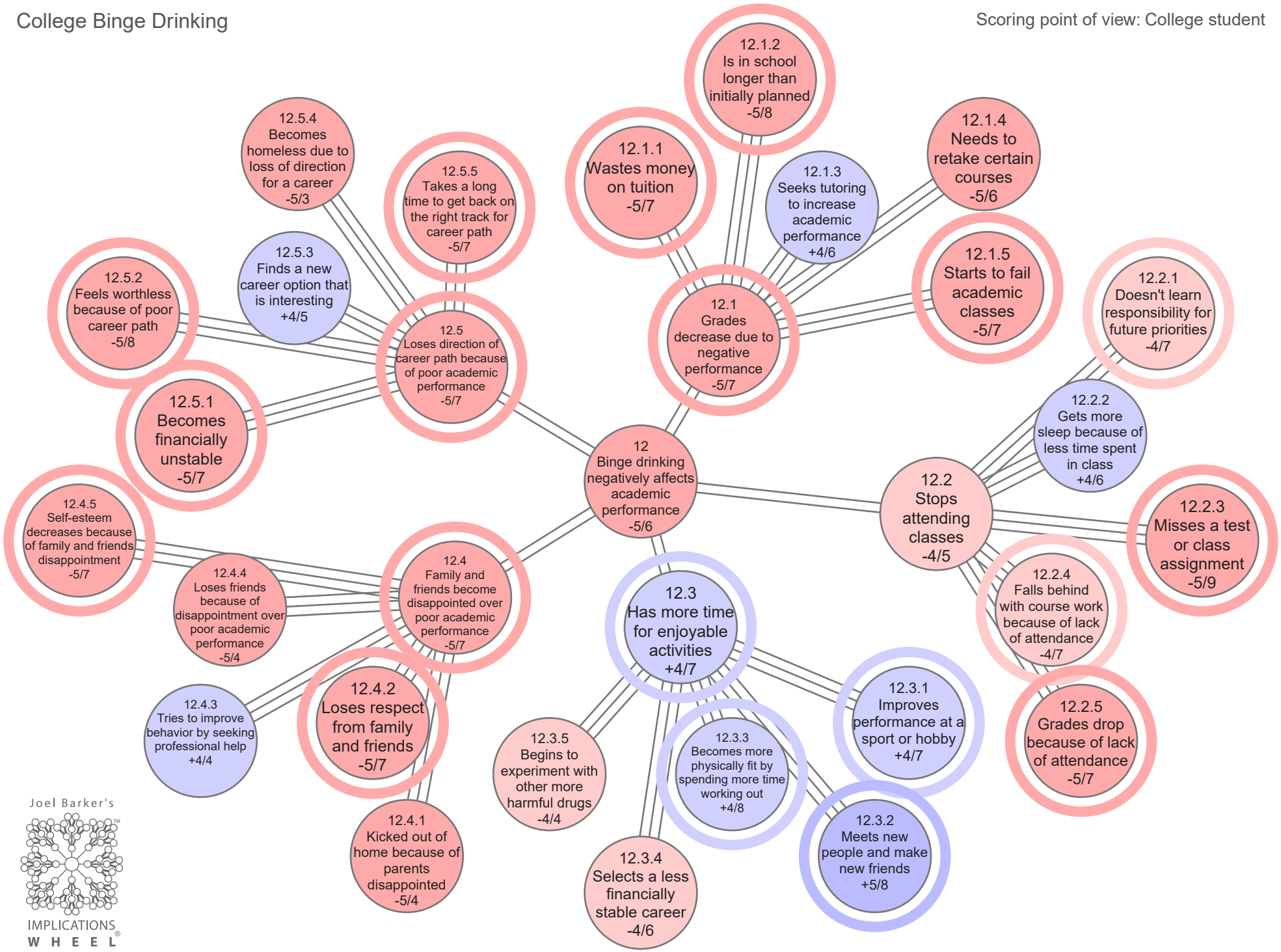


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# College Binge Drinking

## A Scouting Report

### Summary View

This summary view includes the implications that were scored as highly likely and either highly desirable or highly undesirable.

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# College Binge Drinking

Scoring point of view: College student

Summary type: Likely Significant

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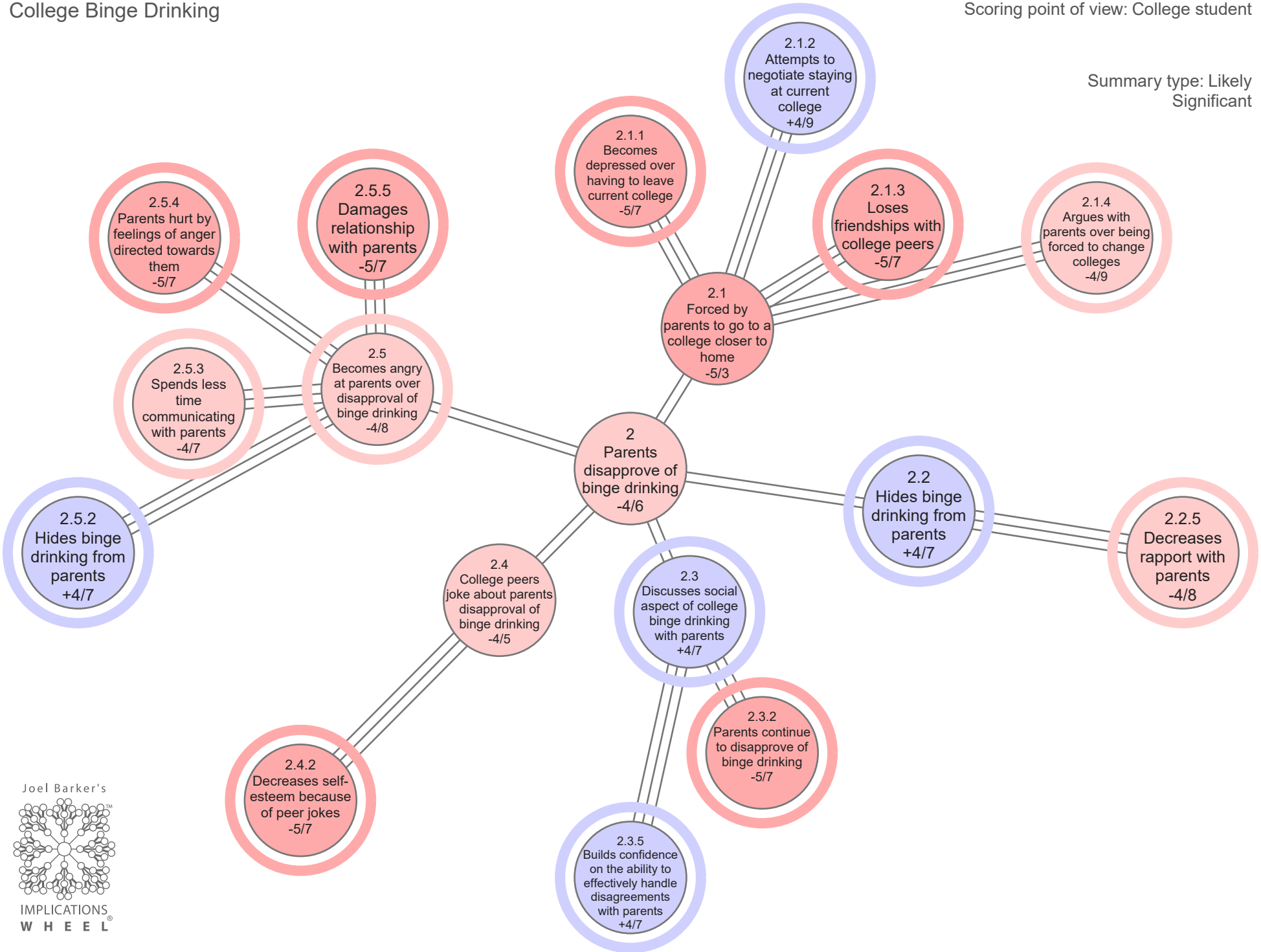


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Summary type: Likely Significant

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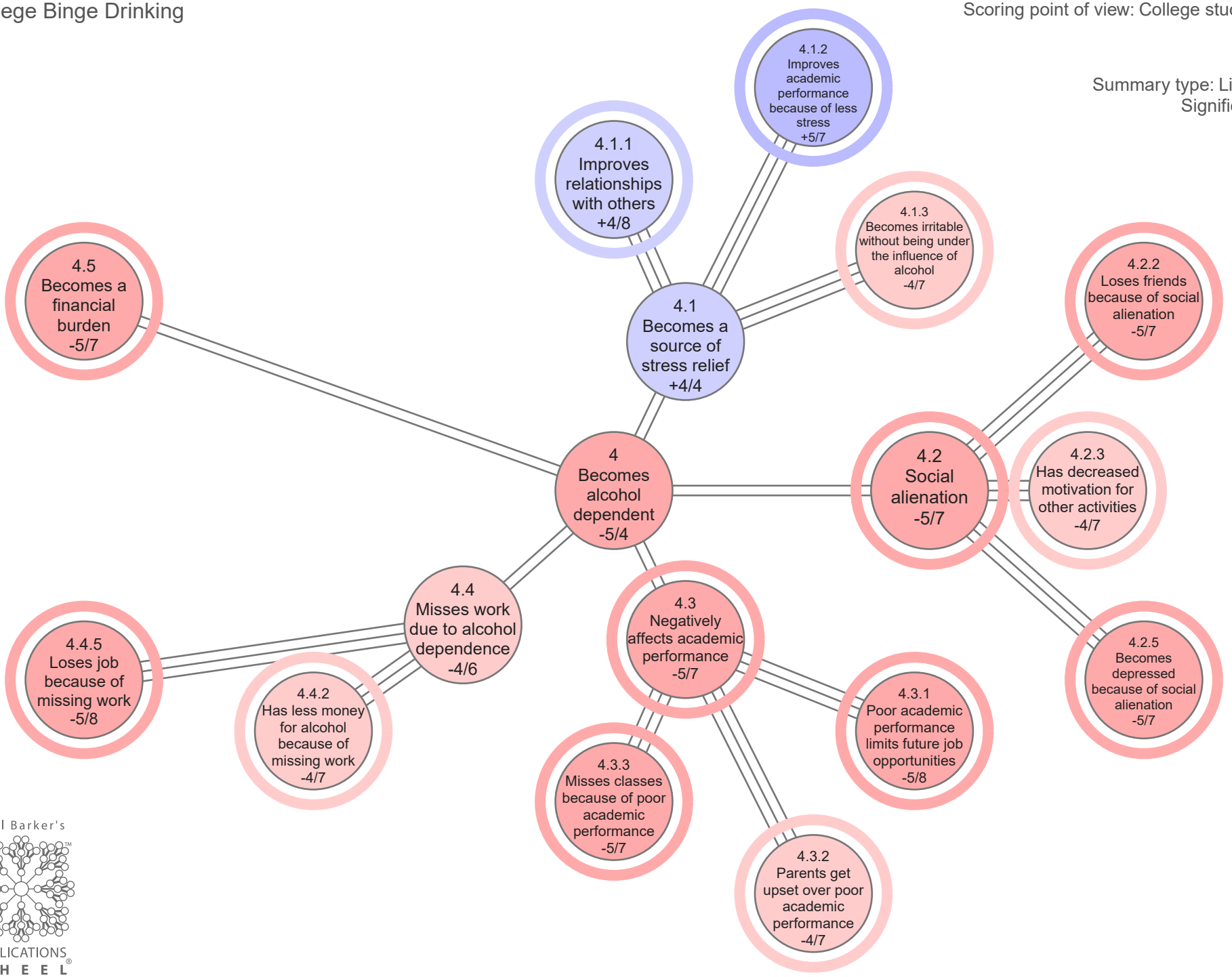


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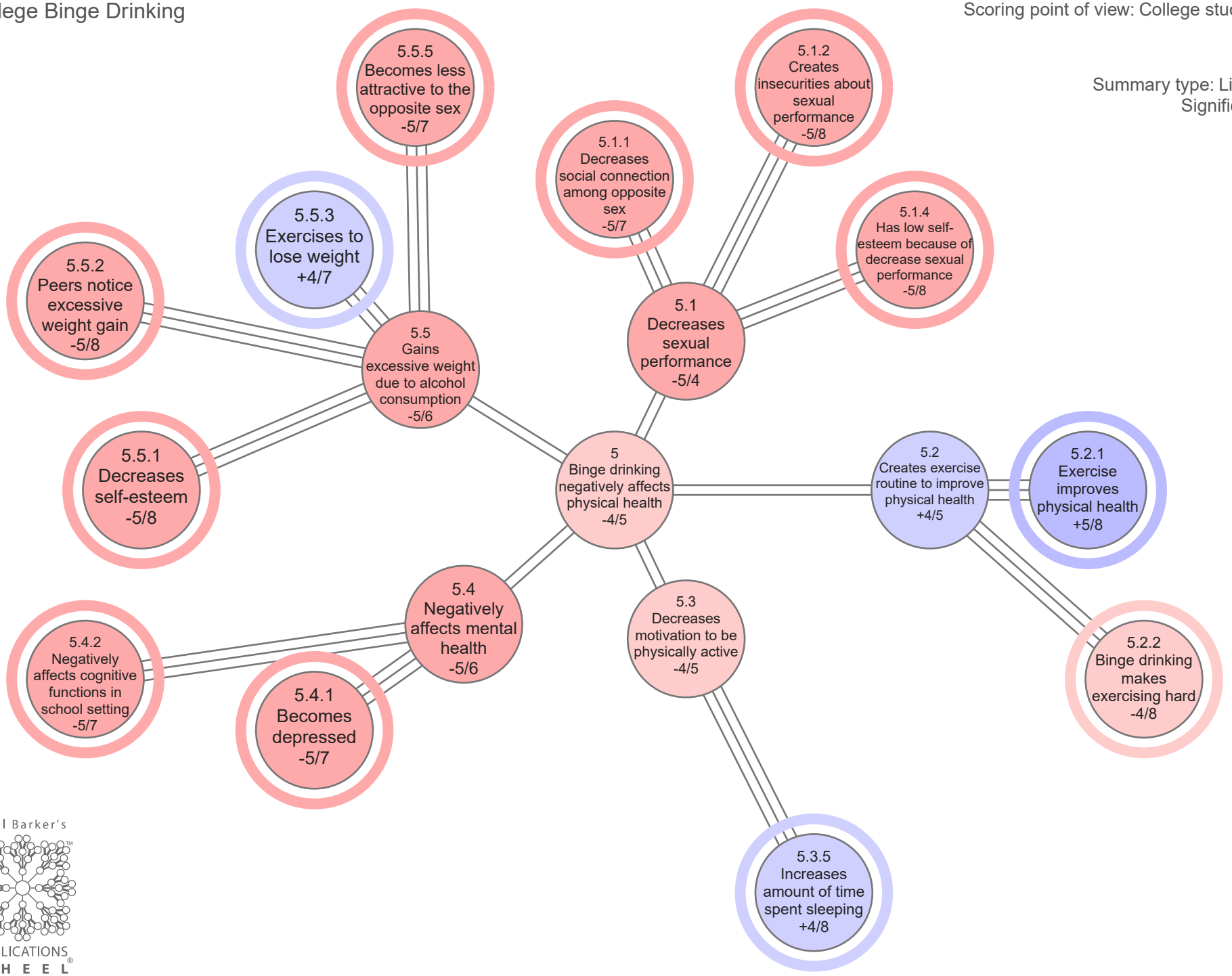
Summary type: Likely Significant

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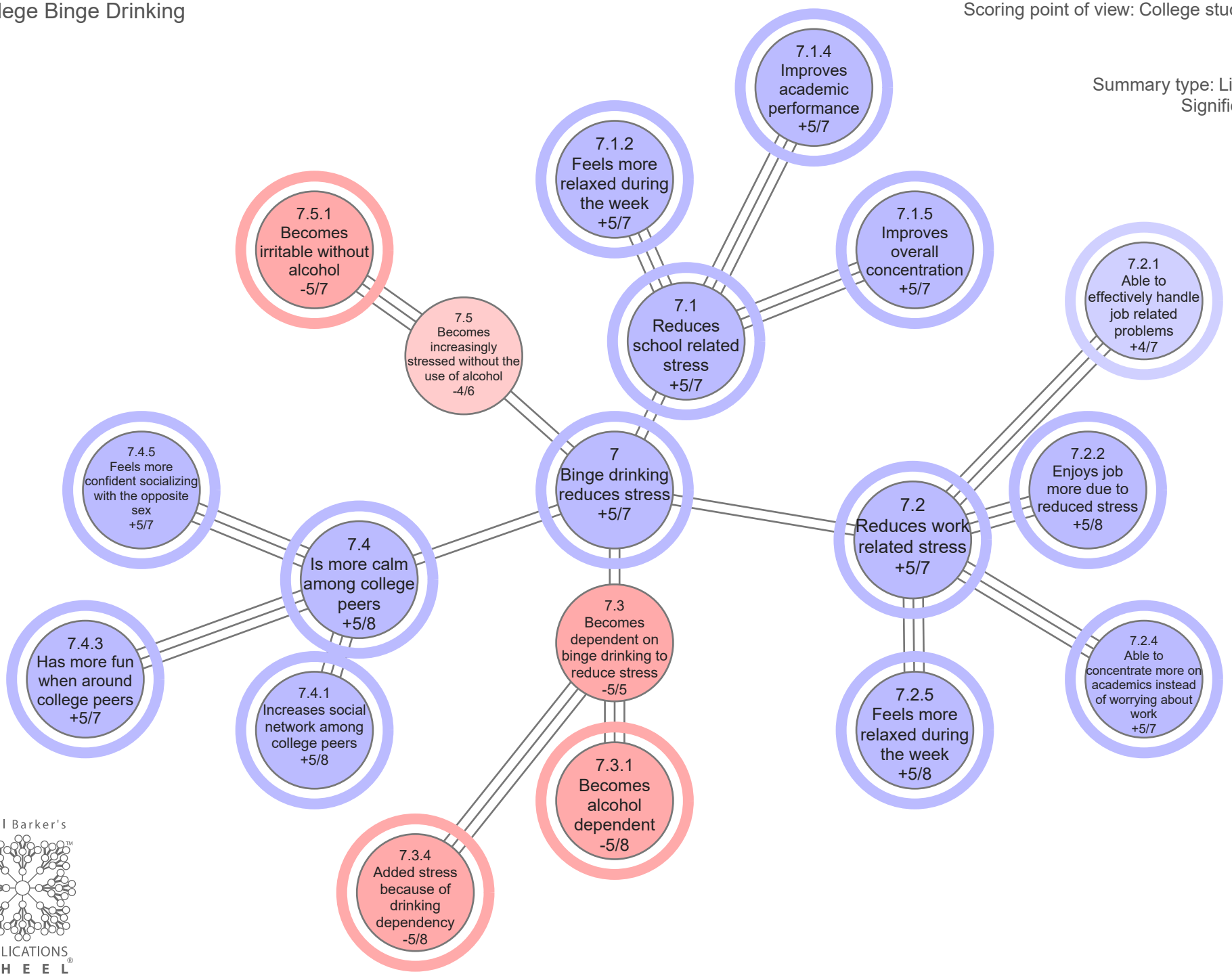
Scoring point of view: College student

Summary type: Likely
Significant

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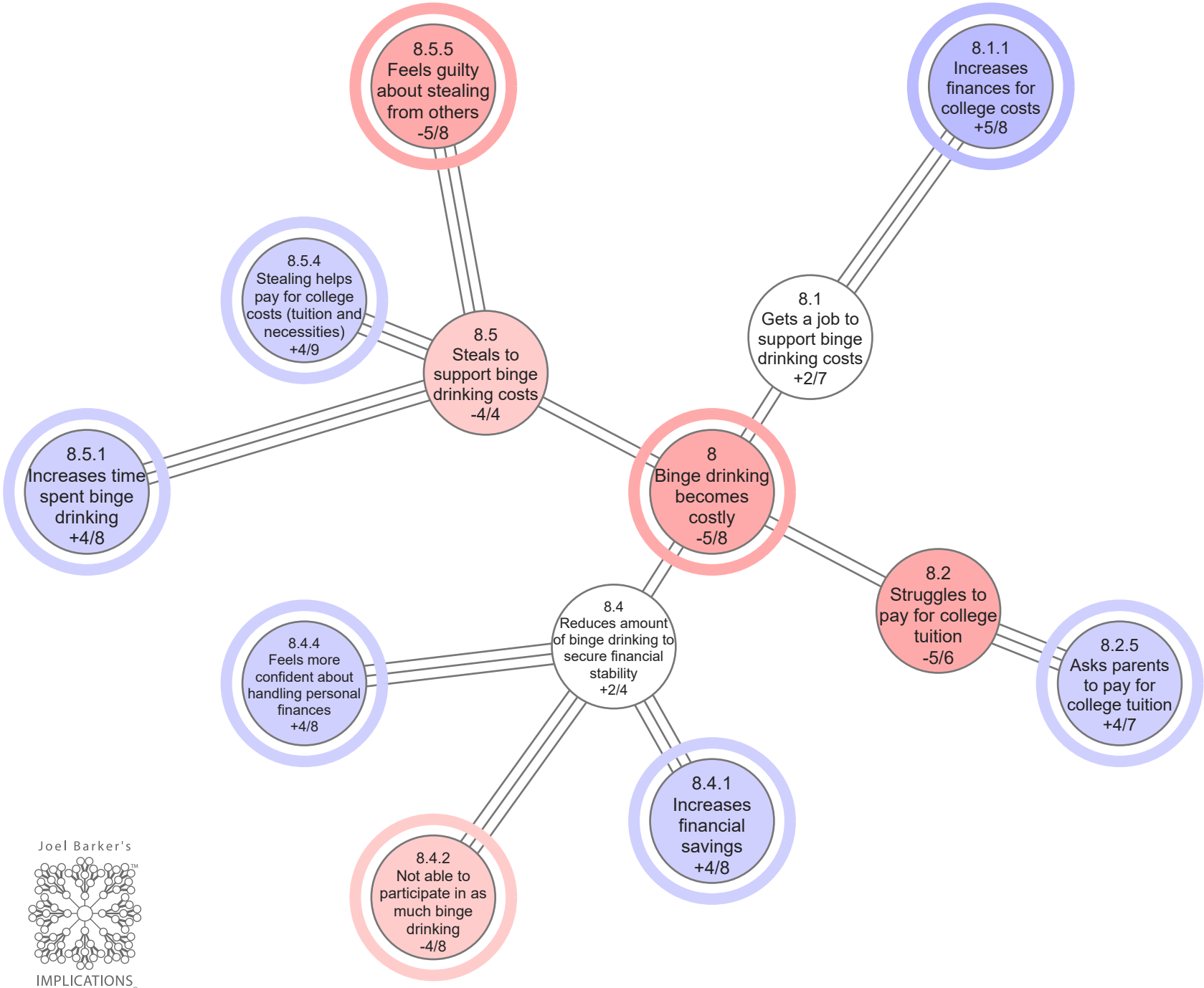


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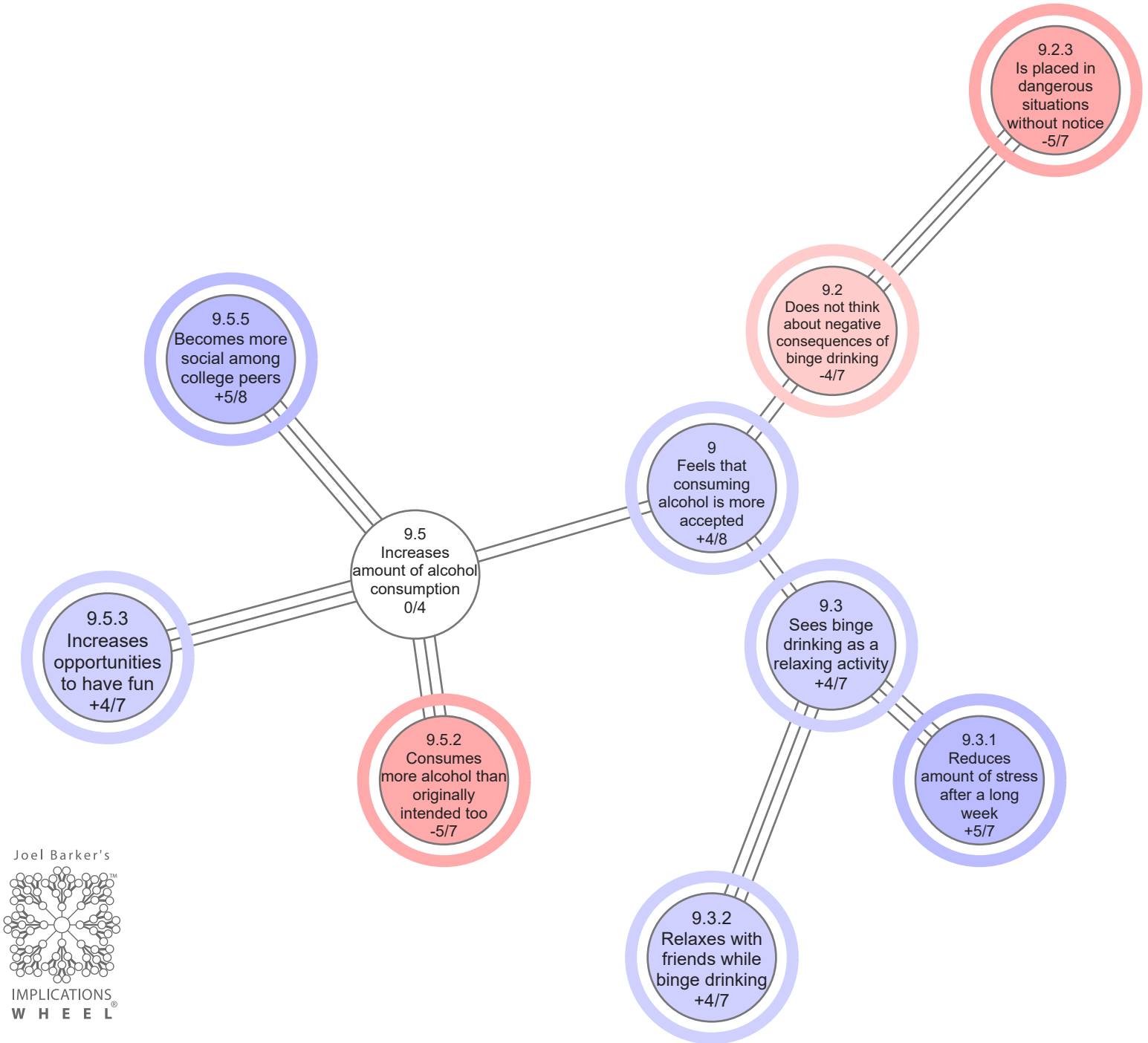


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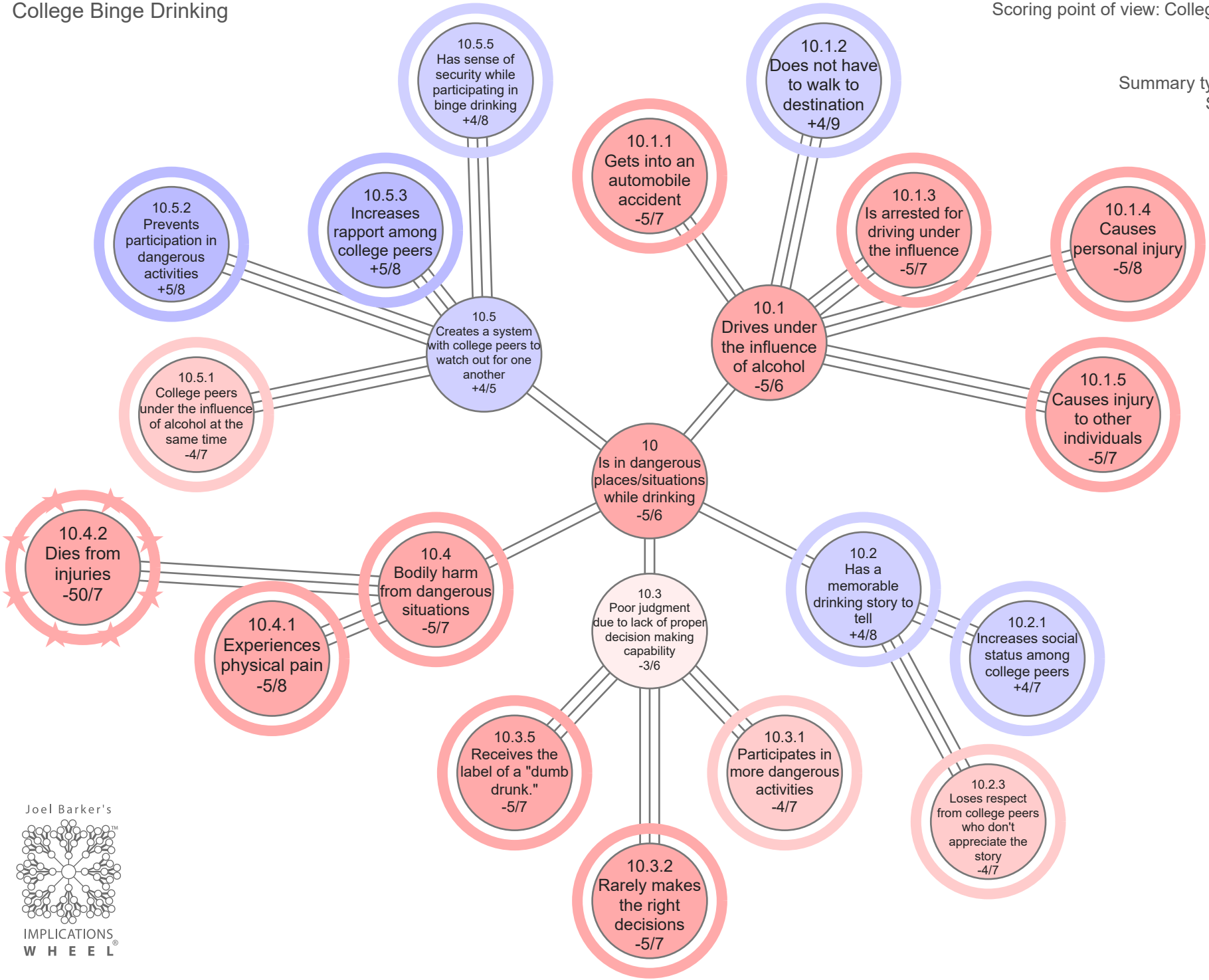


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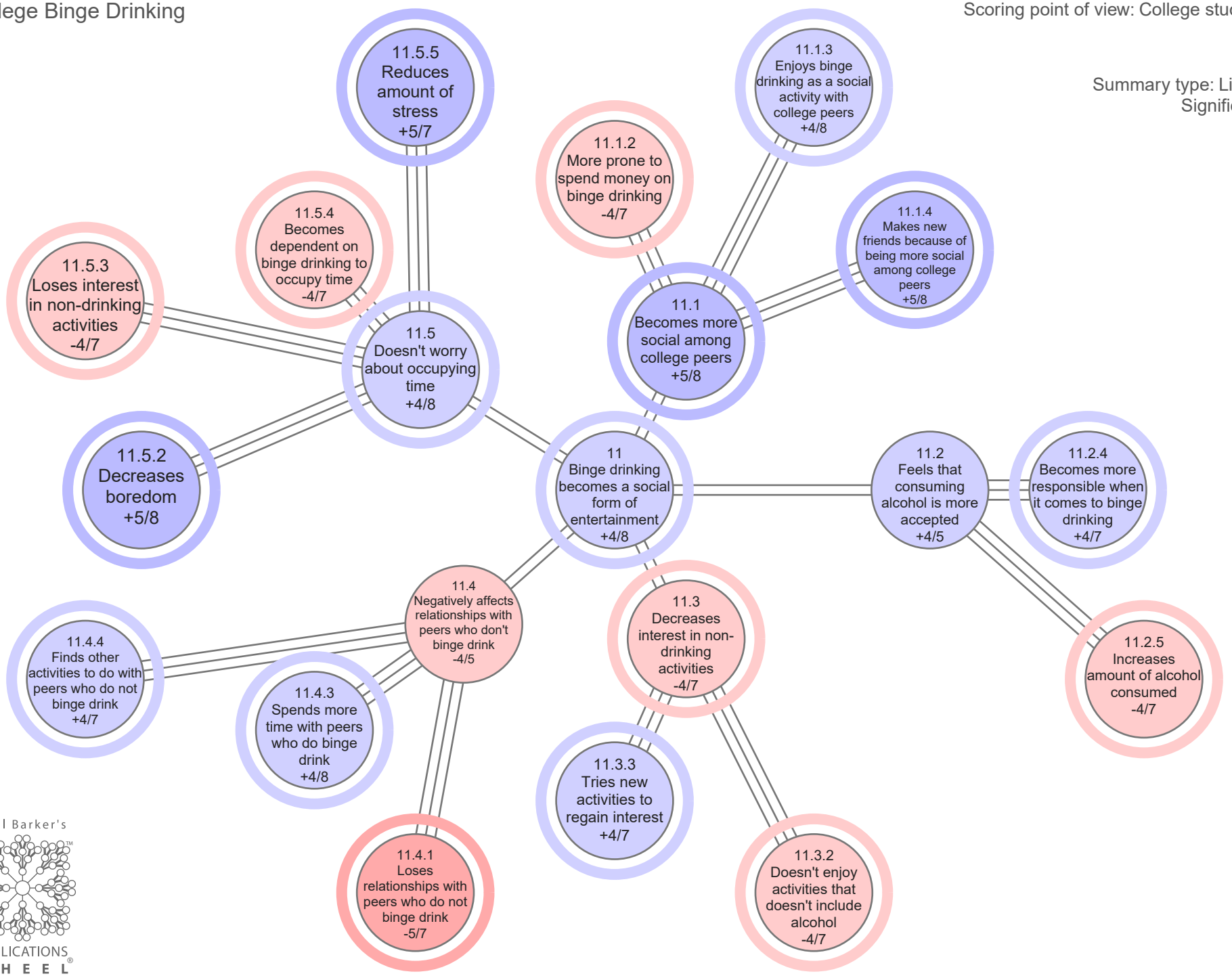
# College Binge Drinking

Scoring point of view: College student

Summary type: Likely Significant

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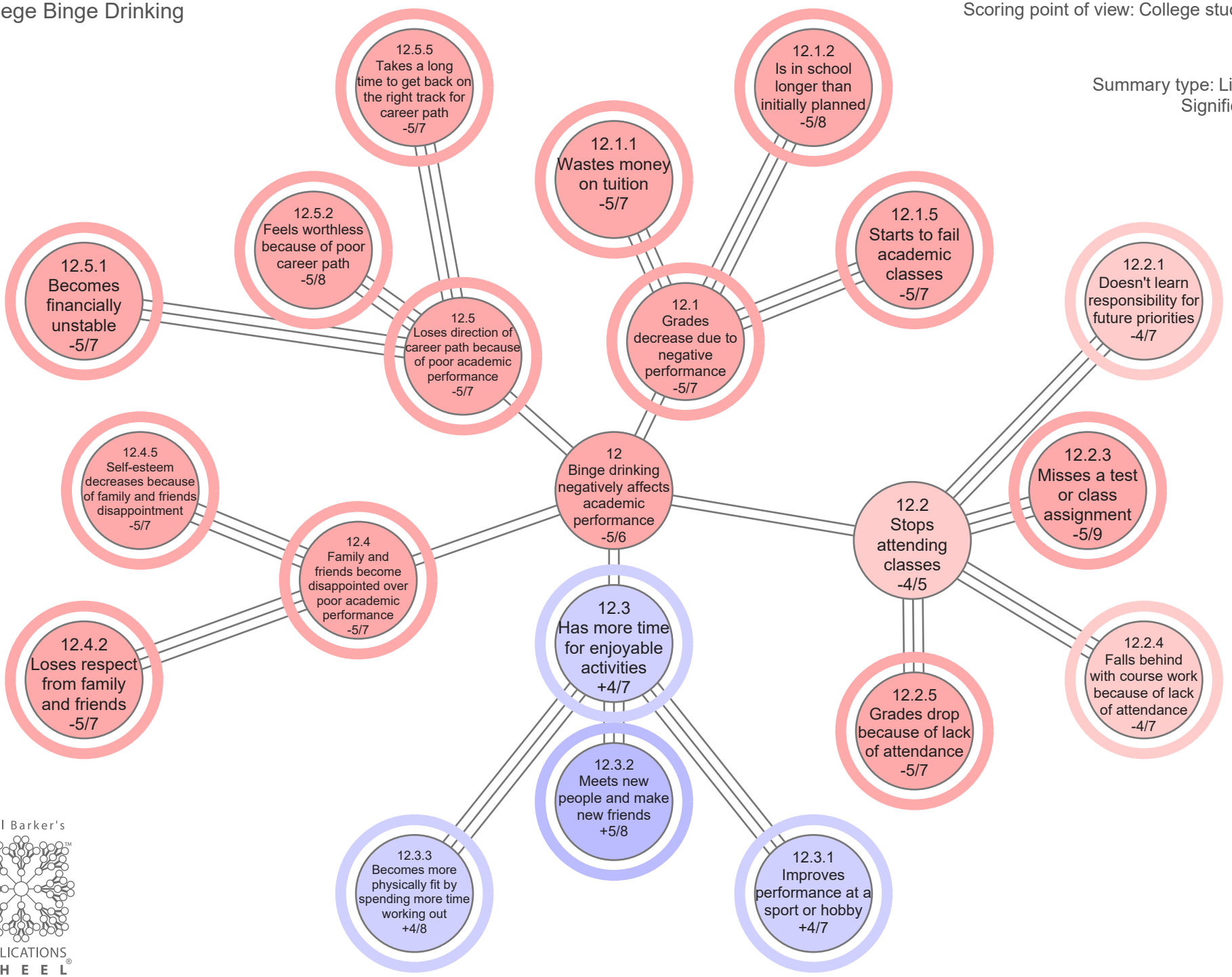
Scoring point of view: College student

Summary type: Likely Significant

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Joel Barker's Implications Wheel® is a software-enhanced, group process for discovering and mapping the implications of change:

- an innovation—yours or your competitor's
- an emerging trend
- a new law or policy—internal all the way up to international
- a significant event
- a new strategic objective

The implication map for a particular change is used to design actions to minimize the negative—and maximize the positive—consequences of that change.

## Generating Implications

The foundation of an Implications Wheel map is comprised of written implication statements. These statements are usually generated by teams of five working together. All teams may be gathered in one location, or each team may operate on its own time, in its own location. The live team process is structured to engage participants in respectful discussion, even between opposing sides of contentious issues.

The number of persons to involve in exploring a particular change is flexible. It depends on the complexity of the change being considered as well as the number of persons and amount of time that are available. Generally, the range is from 25 to 150 people.

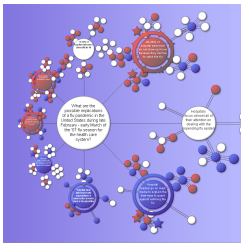
## Scoring and the Wisdom of Crowds

After the implication statements are generated, they are scored for desirability and likelihood. Once scored, the implication statements form a rich, visual map that can be searched and filtered based on various criteria.

Scoring is the part of the Implications Wheel process that can be opened to the largest numbers of participants. After teams have generated implications, those teams will usually score them. But you can also invite persons from around

the globe to contribute their scores, enabling you to involve several hundred—or even a few thousand—participants. Each participant is blind to the scores assigned by other participants, and the median score for each implication is computed, thereby meeting the parameters for a true Wisdom of Crowds assessment of how desirable each implication is and how likely it is to occur.

## Stakeholder Points of View



Since the desirability or undesirability of a particular implication depends on one's point of view, an implication map can be simultaneously scored by different stakeholders. For example:

A corporation could invite management to score and union members to score, and then generate comparison maps from the results. This would reveal areas of potential conflict between labor and management that might result from the change. It would also reveal areas where labor and management would both be hurt—or would both benefit—and therefore might be inclined to cooperate.

## Informed Leaders

The resulting implication maps give leaders a clear picture of what they are facing. Leadership uses this information to make well informed decisions. The Decision Strategy components of the Implications Wheel software enable those responsible for a change to design targeted actions around anticipated areas of opportunity and threat in order to reap maximum benefit and to avoid or mitigate harm.

## Contact Us

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