

Sober Sociability: How non-drinking students navigate outside the norm

By

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Abstract

Drinking culture on campuses has been written about for decades, and drinking students see drinking culture as a means of forming and maintaining friendships, socializing in large groups and vital in their university experience. Non-drinking university students are left out of drinking literature, in turn, leaving them out of drinking discourse. I bring non-drinkers' voices to the forefront by conducting nine semi-structured interviews with them. Through these interviews I answer the following research questions: how do Dalhousie students who do not drink feel about the drinking culture on university campuses? And what effect do they feel non-drinking has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships? After thematically analyzing my data, I found that the marginalization of non-drinkers is a social process, not an internal feeling possessed by non-drinkers. Nevertheless, non-drinkers do have roles to play in drinking cultures, such as the 'mother' who protects drunk friends and the storyteller who remembers what others do not; they do not associate having a good time and forming friendships with drinking alcohol.

Keywords: Students, Drinking, Alcohol, Friendship, University, Social Lives, Social Norms, Storytelling, Gender Norms.

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Introduction: Non-Drinkers Within a Drinking Culture

Numerous studies over the last few decades have reported the effects of drinking on university campuses (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Drinking students are at the forefront of these articles, sharing their experiences of university while intoxicated, as well as how they perceive non-drinking students (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). These drinking students see alcohol as vital in their university lifestyle, crediting it for their ability to make friends, socialize in larger groups, have fun in a stressful environment and help them maintain relationships (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). What happens when one is not part of the dominant drinking culture on university campuses? By asking this question I had the idea to study the social experiences of *non-drinkers*, which I approached via two research questions. First, how do Dalhousie students who do not drink feel about the drinking culture on university campuses? And second, what effect do they feel non-drinking has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships?

To answer these questions, I conducted nine semi-structured interviews with non-drinking (or rarely drinking) Dalhousie students. I asked these students a multitude of questions pertaining to their sobriety within a drinking culture. Through these interviews I was able to examine how non-drinking students perceive drinking pressure both on and off Dalhousie campus. And the role alcohol plays in their formation and maintenance of friendship. I found out the roles that non-drinkers play in their friend groups while their friends are drinking. I looked at how these roles relate to both gender and social norms in institutions and the general population. Lastly, I examined the role that discourse plays in the non-drinker's life on and off campus.

I address the knowledge gap in alcohol consumption and drinking culture research by focusing on the narratives and experiences of those who do not drink. By addressing this knowledge gap, I will be able to have a better understanding of what happens when you do not drink. I will be able to answer questions like, are those who do not drink able to bond with their peers just as well as those that do drink? Can non-drinkers share stories with their peers to help strengthen their friendships? Or are non-drinkers destined to have less meaningful friendships than their counterparts? By interviewing only non-drinkers, and addressing this knowledge gap, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the role that alcohol consumption has in the non-drinkers' formation of healthy friendship circles, romantic relationships, and individual well-being.

Literature Review

The transition to university is a pivotal time in young people's lives as they can begin to "redefine" who they are. But what happens when students feel unable to connect to a core element of university culture? My research will explore how university students who do not drink feel when they arrive at university, which, in North America, tends to have a prominent drinking culture among students (Tan, 2012). I want to find out how non-drinking students feel about campus drinking culture and what effects they feel it has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships. The specific research questions I ask are, how do first-year students who do not drink feel about the drinking culture on university campuses? And what effect do they feel drinking culture has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships?

To answer these questions, I will conduct semi-structured interviews, structuring them around three themes that relate to alcohol consumption, which also structure my literature

review. First I will discuss the drinking culture present on Canadian university campuses. Then I will discuss the social functions of drinking on campus, specifically how alcohol builds relationships and affects sociability. I will conclude by discussing the obligations that individuals feel to drink, and what happens when they deviate from those.

Drinking cultures on campus

Since Neolithic times, alcohol has played a significant role in forming social scripts and cultural beliefs (Morris, 1998). Over time and place, drinking alcohol is a social activity that has affected the behaviours and lifestyle of those who participate, both individually and culturally, in different ways (Morris, 1998). Some nations (UK, US, Australia, etc.) are known to associate alcohol with "violent and antisocial behaviour, while in others drinking behaviour is largely peaceful and harmonious" (Morris, 1998, p. 6). Like different nations, universities have different attitudes toward drinking and different social scripts where drinking norms are established (Schreiber, 2021; Tan, 2012). Canadian universities have begun reporting alarmingly high levels of not only alcohol consumption, but risky alcohol consumption (Henderson et al., 2018). Risky alcohol consumption is when alcohol consumption could be a factor, either dependent or independent to, an increase of negative factors, like a fluctuation in mental health concerns (depression, anxiety, etc.), binge drinking episodes, etc. (Henderson, et al., 2018). As well, through online surveys conducted with Canadian undergraduate students, Henderson et al. (2018) found that alcohol consumption is rising on Canadian campuses due to the culture surrounding extracurricular activities such as sororities/fraternities, athletics, and societies. Membership in these clubs "increases the odds of regular and heavy alcohol use" (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 101). These findings display how drinking is becoming more intertwined with campus and university drinking culture. If it is through student life (clubs, sororities, etc.) that

norms and rules are formed, and if alcohol is becoming more of a norm, then will those who do not drink be seen as outsiders?

Social functions of drinking on campus

When looking at the relationship between sociability and alcohol it is important to look at the role of alcohol within large group settings (Henderson et al., 2018; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Group settings, just like nations and drinking cultures, have different cultural scripts that affect, and can be affected by alcohol consumption (Henderson et al., 2018; Morris, 1998). And it is by following these scripts that individuals feel as though they are a part of certain groups (Henderson et al., 2018; Morris, 1998). This theory can be linked to Durkheim's theories on collective consciousness (Appelrouth and Edles, 2015), insofar as the latter holds that individuals do not want to be without a society or group, they want to be part of something bigger than themselves (Appelrouth and Edles, 2015). In this sense, Tan (2012) explains how we can look at drunkenness as a social performance, as it "represents risk-taking, entertainment, physical exploration, sexual traps, and contextual behaviour within this college subculture" (p. 121). Both Tan (2012) and Tutenges and Rod (2009), through purposive sampling studies and examining drinking stories from two qualitative research projects, reported that students found alcohol helped them come out of their shells among their peers. For example, some students found that without alcohol they had a hard time making friends as they were unlikely to speak out in social situations (Tan, 2012).

Speaking out is a major factor in building one's social capital (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Speaking out is not what one would assume it is, as it is not about raising concern or complaint, instead it is commonly viewed as the act of talking to

friends in social situations (Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). It can also be a specific act of storytelling after a night out with friends (Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). In this context storytelling is the process by which group identity is formed as friends share stories of their shared drunken escapades with one another (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Storytelling forms a bridge between an individual's experience with alcohol and their standing in a larger social group (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001).

By analyzing the literature on how Canadian university culture and overall sociability are affected by alcohol consumption, I can narrow down my research to explore whether individuals who do not drink feel about university culture. Do they feel like they are missing out on important group activities? Do they feel less like a 'part' of their friend groups? Do they struggle to make friends who drink? From the literature on storytelling and drinking culture, I hypothesize that those who do not drink will feel left out or 'othered' during storytelling sessions with their friends (Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009).

Socializing and gender

Socializing and storytelling differ between genders, and both can be dependent on alcohol (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Sheehan and Ridge (2001) conducted qualitative research studies with young women to examine how they see binge drinking and drinking culture in Australia. Lindsay (2006) conducted qualitative research in the form of interviews and field observations, with a focus on analyzing drinking culture through gender and class. Both Lindsay (2006) and Sheehan and Ridge (2001) focus their research on femininity in the context of drinking culture. Lindsay (2006) explains how "gender relations have an impact on drinking style" (p. 33). Both studies explain how "group narratives" are formed while drinking and gender and culture

play a large role in the formation of these narratives (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Specifically, female participants in both studies found that drinking allowed them to defy certain social norms that they found constrictive (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Many women found they were supposed to be seen as "quiet" or "shy" in their larger social groups, but when they became intoxicated, they were able to "let go" and were able to feel less self-conscious about their behaviour (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Women felt less restricted to aligning with societal conventions of how to behave and many reported that letting go allowed for an increase in storytelling, for example, they found it easier to discuss their sex lives, relationships, etc. with one another (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). This relationship between alcohol and increased discourse and vulnerability can be seen in an all-women focus group conducted by Sheehan and Ridge (2001). For example, one woman stated, "when you drink with people you become really close to them... you talk about the silly things you did, and we laugh... the other day we were laughing so much we were crying with laughter" (p. 358). This increased vulnerability can be seen in another participant's choice to drink one night while hanging out with her friends. As she stated (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001),

I decided not to have a drink because I was working the next morning, and I was just standing there. They (her friends) were all drinking and having a good time and laughing, and I felt really left out so I had a few drinking and I had a good time too – I was really glad that I ended up drinking, but to be part of the group. (p. 361)

Increased vulnerability in storytelling helped women feel more connected with one another thus strengthening their social circles (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001).

Men, on the other hand, have different societal norms that govern their relationship with alcohol. Tutenges and Rod (2009) examined two different drinking studies done on Danish youth, with specific focus on the relationship between comedy and storytelling. Their male

research participants found that alcohol helped them share their own stories in a more vulnerable way, explaining how “drinking stories rarely occur alone, especially in drinking situations where several storytellers take turns entertaining and lifting the general mood with funny stories...” (Tutenges and Rod, 2009, p. 362). Men explained how lifting the mood and sharing stories allows for sources of entertainment while drinking (Tutenges and Rod, 2009).

Social obligations and the ‘healthy’ deviant

Lastly, Paton-Simpson (2001) studied the social obligation that comes with college-aged drinking and found that non-drinkers were seen as “deviant” or different than others. Wolburg’s (2022) article similarly found that non-drinkers go against the drinking norms present in universities. Wolburg (2022) uses other studies as well as her own to conclude that drinking culture sees non-drinkers as a “threat to fun, threat to connection, and threat to self” (p. 3). Wolburg (2022) and Paton-Simpson (2001) both examine how non-drinkers are stigmatized in social situations, meaning that even if some non-drinkers feel like they can be present for the night out and just stay sober they will be treated differently. Wolburg (2022) and Paton-Simpson (2001) found that students reported an inability to be part of the storytelling and bonding while sober. Some non-drinkers reported that they will drink a few times a year as it can help them to be seen as “part of the group”, Wolburg (2022) calls these non-drinkers “healthy deviants” (p. 3). This literature helps formulate my hypothesis that non-drinking individuals will feel left out during episodes of storytelling. This concept of the “healthy deviant” displays how drinking on college campuses is a social obligation and how students will be pressured into drinking, so they do not feel “othered” or out of place (Paton-Simpson, 2001; Wolburg, 2022). By using previously established concepts on the ‘healthy deviant’ and othering as well as research on the

social obligation surrounding alcohol consumption, I have been able to add depth to my research and refine my interview questions.

By using literature to examine the three sections of my research topic, I found the knowledge gap present in research on drinking culture and by doing this I was able to build a strong foundation for my present research. Previous literature on drinking culture on Canadian university campuses, social functions of drinking on campus, and obligations that make individuals feel the need to drink, reveals the knowledge gap that research has focused on the voices of those who drink. By using this literature and previous research to formulate my qualitative research interview questions, I am able to explore the impact that university drinking culture has on non-drinking students. With a specific focus on how the impact of drinking culture affects those who are experiencing a pivotal life change, their undergrad. In addition to this, I was able to use my questions on storytelling to find out how storytelling interacts within the lives of non-drinkers.

Methods

My research consisted of nine semi-structured interviews documented during January and February of 2023. Three of my participants were men and six were women. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 23, seven were first-year Dalhousie students, one was in second year and one was in third year. My interview participants were selected through non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling. To be eligible, my participants had to be Dalhousie undergrad students, 18 years or over, and drink alcohol rarely or never. For the recruitment process, I used physical posters and reached out to professors in the sociology department. I asked professors to post my recruitment message and poster to their Dalhousie Brightspace page. I then contacted

potential interviewees via my Dalhousie email and met them in person, on campus, for a 30-minute interview. My interviews were documented using the audio-recording Voice Memo app on my iPhone. I had a written interview guide that I used during each interview. The guide, and my interviews, were broken into three different parts, each holding a certain theme of questions (part 1: introduction, part 2: friendships and drinking personalities, and part 3: sobriety and social stamina). Each interview was transcribed and coded using NVivo software and Word.

Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2020) explain how semi-structured interviews are "appropriate for addressing more complex social behavioural research questions" (p. 1361). My research does address this category of social behavioural research, as I focus on alcohol's role in social behaviour. As well, one of the goals of my research is to understand the unique perspective of my participants while still maintaining a specific structure. Both Adeoye-Olatunde and Olanik (2020) as well as Kvale (1996), explain how semi-structured interviews are one of the best ways to go about this. Kvale (1996) explains how the "interview is a stage upon which knowledge is constructed through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee roles" (p. 127). With the hopes I succeeded in maintaining a welcoming environment for my participants throughout the interviews, I was able to have long conversations about my research topic and understand where each participant fit themselves into my research topic and questions (Kvale, 1996, p. 128).

Kvale (1996) discusses extensively the importance of having the correct interview environment and plan. Using Kvale's (1996) ideas, each interview had a briefing and debriefing/conclusion. The briefing, following Kvale's (1996) model, is where I introduced my research topic and subject, as well as the purpose of my research and the interview process. It is here that I asked my participants if they mind being recorded on my iPhone. In the debriefing,

which I referred to as the conclusion in my interview guide, I asked my participants if they have anything else they wanted to say or any questions they wanted to ask. The debriefing allowed me to make sure that my participants left the interview feeling comfortable and that all their questions were answered (Kvale, 1996). Kvale (1996) stresses the importance of a small continuation of the debrief after the recording device has turned off, stating,

After the first gasp of relief, the interviewee may bring up topics he or she did not feel safe raising with the tape recorder on. And the interviewer can now, insofar as the subject is interested, tell more fully about the purpose and design of the interview study (p. 128)

In one interview this did occur, as one of my participants continued talking about one of the questions I asked mid-way through the interview. I did not turn the recording back on but I did make sure to write a few notes about what she said once she had left the interview. I asked her if I could write notes on what she said and she told me that she is totally fine with that.

Throughout my interviews I tried to use active listening and let my participants talk as freely as they needed. Because my interviews were semi-structured, meaning I had a script with questions I aimed to ask, I found it more important to hear my participants answers out, than break their train of thought and risk them forgetting what they were saying. That being said, I chose to have a script, or set of questions, so that I would make sure I covered similar ground with all my participants.

Another important aspect of semi-structured interviews is who my participants are and my recruitment process. My interview participants were selected through non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2020). Purposive sampling is explained by Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2020) as "is an approach for purposive selecting of participants based on meeting certain criteria of interest" (p. 1361). Participants for

my research had to meet certain criteria: they must be students who attend Dalhousie University, must be 18 years or over, and rarely or never drink alcohol. I aimed to conduct around ten interviews and have a similar ratio of men to women. While I succeeded in completing ten interviews, I interviewed six women and only three men, a limitation in my research. Non-binary folks were also welcome to participate if they answered the recruitment call, but all my participants were cis-gender. Because my research focuses on the role of gender in alcohol consumption and the formation of friendship circles, having both female- and male-identifying participants allows me to have a balance in my discussion of different gendered experiences in forming and maintaining friendships.

For the recruitment process, I used physical posters and had three Dalhousie professors post my research poster on their class Brightspace page (Appendix A). The physical posters will be placed up throughout the main Dalhousie buildings in communal areas and outside of large auditoriums. Once potential interview participants scanned the QR code on my poster, they were brought to a private Google Forms page where they were asked for their name and email. Because my participants were chosen at random I emailed back potential participants in the order that the forms came back to me. Those who agreed to an interview were then sent a consent form to look over and a date was chosen to conduct the interview. My interview guide (Appendix B) is split into three main sections and each section connects to important literature on my research topic. The first section is where I introduced myself to participants and asked them some introductory and general background questions. In this section, I got participants to tell me a little bit about themselves, their gender identity, social life, why they do not drink, etc. The second section is about building friendships and drinking personalities. In this section, I asked participants about the general drinking habits of their friend groups and where they believe they

"fit in" and are included within their social circles. In the last section, sobriety and stamina, I asked participants if they consider themselves introverts or extroverts and their romantic relationship status. I followed these questions with a final wrap-up, where I asked a question about the impact their identity has on their choice for sobriety.

It is essential to acknowledge any ethical concerns involved in my research. Before beginning my research process I received approval from Dalhousie University's Research Ethics Board. In accordance with my Research Ethics Board approval, the research risks associated with my interviews were unlikely to cause any risks that were outside of my participants' regular day-to-day life. That being said, to mitigate any potential risks that could have occurred during my interviews, I informed all participants of the question categories and asked if they would like to read through the questions. I told them they could skip questions or stop the interview process at any point. Before each interview I had participants sign a consent form (Appendix C) explaining these same points. On the consent form and expressed to each participant upon completion of the interview, I informed participants that they have two weeks from the interview date to retract any or all of their interview responses. All identifying information from interview notes and transcripts were removed, and all names are changed to pseudonyms in my thesis.

To analyze my data, I sat for at least ten minutes at the end of each interview and wrote down anything that came to mind that I knew would not be on the recording (Kvale, 1996). Once all the interviews were completed I analyzed my data through a process known as "coding" (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2020, p. 1364). Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2020), define coding as "the process of identifying and labeling topics, similarities, and differences in the interview data" (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2020, p. 1364). Coding uses both inductive, for example, participant quotes, and deductive approaches, main ideas to highlight theory (Adeoye-

Olatunde and Olenik, 2020). I made sure to use both forms of coding. After this, I conducted a thematic analysis, which "refers to the process of combining codes to summarize findings in a coherent and meaningful way" (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2020, p. 1364). One aspect of this, and one that Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2020) determine as especially important, is identifying the differences in the responses of my interview participants and trying to highlight patterns of differences.

Findings

My findings coalesce into two themes. The first theme being non-drinkers and peer pressure: how 'questioning' is its own kind of pressure. The second theme is how non-drinkers are marginalized and come to occupy distinct roles within a drinking culture. This theme is split into two sub-sections, responsibility and 'mothering of friends' and storytelling. Outside these more 'major' analytical themes, it is also worth noting one more descriptive finding from the interviews, which I will touch on first.

Six of my interview participants described a connection between their living situation and their relations to alcohol and the formation of their social circles. This does not mean that my participants did not drink alcohol because of where they were/are living, but I found patterns in the role alcohol plays in friendship building within different living situations. Of nine interviews, four participants live in Dalhousie (Dal) residence at the time of their interview and one second-year student lived in residence his first year. Of the five who live(d) in residence, three of them believe they experience a heightened form of drinking culture than those who do not live in residence. For these three, it is constantly being surrounded by alcohol that heightens the drinking culture. Emily is one of these interviewees, she told me how there is someone on her

floor who pours shots and drinks for his friends and they are “so rowdy all the time, they don’t shut up. They’re so loud in the hallway with no conscious idea about what’s going on around [them]”. One off-campus living student I interviewed believed to experience the same drinking culture as those within residence. When I asked her why she thinks this, she explained that she has many roommates who drink around her and at in the same apartment as her. Just like those living in residence, she does not have a say in constantly being surrounded by drinking. This connection between alcohol consumption within your living area and sobriety, led me to the finding that those who have no choice in their proximity to alcohol consumption see university drinking as more defined within their lives than those who do have a choice.

Analytical Theme 1: Non-drinkers and peer pressure: how ‘questioning’ is its own kind of pressure

Non-drinkers do not get peer pressured in the stereotypical ways we imagine, but they do feel a specific kind of pressure. I have decided to call this pressure ‘questioning.’ Across most of my interviews, I heard stories about non-drinkers feeling pressure to drink, being questioned about their non-drinking, and feeling ‘othered’ because of it. While each of these is interesting on its own, they all point to one larger, key finding, the marginalization of non-drinkers is a social process, not an internal feeling possessed by non-drinkers.

When I asked participants if they felt pressure to drink they more often than not answered with a no, only to follow up by sharing stories where I, as an outsider hearing about their experience, would confidently say they were pressured. For example, I asked Maia if she feels pressure to drink she said “no, not really” but then if I asked her if her friends treat her differently because she doesn’t drink, she responded with,

Yeah definitely [...] they ask me like, why don't you drink? Like, are you weak? Or are you on meds? I say it's because of my beliefs but because that's something less tangible I don't think they understand why. They keep asking why and saying things like okay, but why? And I say, well, geez, you shouldn't ask me that, I just don't want to.

From examples like this, I deduced that non-drinkers experienced pressure in a different way than the stereotypical idea of peer pressure – wherein drinks are forced or non-drinkers are told they're 'lame' or 'uncool' for not drinking. In contrast, people mostly felt questioned.

Questioning allowed drinkers to take what they believed to be a more respectful stance on pressuring non-drinkers, while still making them feel othered.

While all participants said they had been questioned about their non-drinking, those who did not have as much of a tangible reason for their sobriety, like Maia's story above, were met with constant questioning, even among their friends. Several examples will illustrate this constant questioning. When I asked Derek how his friends view his sobriety and if they care, he stated:

They definitely do [care]. They're interested because when I did drink first semester, it was really rough for me because I was mentally and stomach wise not doing well, so I was kind of forcing myself to drink and they saw that and they were like... and I do tell them stories about when I was younger and going absolutely insane and they're like, "dang I wish I saw that drunk Derek" [...] and I know they do wish I did drink but they totally, definitely, respect the fact that I don't and understand why.

What is important to understand from Derek's response is that his friends respect that he does not drink and that they understand why he does not. He had an obvious health issue that made drinking unpleasant, and people could accept that because it made sense; moreover, they respected it. Indeed, respect and understanding go hand in hand with many of my participant's experiences with drinking pressure. Maia, on the other hand, does not drink for a few reasons but mainly it is because she does not want to, and when talking about pressure and drinking, she

would say that when she does go out to parties (which for her is quite rare) she would bring her Hydroflask and when people would ask her if she wants a drink or something she would be able to just say she has her drink. This helped limit the number of people who would always ask her why she is not drinking. When I asked Tracy, another first-year about pressure and drinking, she stated:

...it's like, "Oh! Why don't you have a drink?" And it's always a back and forth of like: "drink? No", "drink? No."... Um, yeah so, I've been noticing that a lot more since I graduated it's a lot of push and pull in that sense of, "well, why don't you have a drink?", "because I don't want to" and it's a back-and-forth that goes on a little too long. It goes on for a while throughout the night.

Tracy shared that some of her other friends who do not drink receive more pushback than others, and she does not know why that is. Based on my other findings, it may be that those who have a concrete reason (something more than a preference) are less bothered.

Sometimes questioning took the form of asking if non-drinkers are certain they want to participate in activities where people will be drinking, such as partying or relaxing movie nights with friends. Participants reacted to this kind of questioning in two main ways. The first was by being annoyed by such questions, and the second was a feeling of neutrality. Maia explained to me how she gets invited to parties but once people who are outside her close friend group find out she does not drink, they tend to stop inviting her. She also explained how she will still get invited but then be met with surprised reactions for actually going out with them. As well, she will be questioned about why she would want to be part of a social gathering where drinking is involved. In our interview, she shared this with me,

And like, I'm saying no, I can still have fun with people. Like, I know you guys drink. But there are also people who don't drink. Yeah, I mean, like we can still dance. We can still enjoy the pool. So why would you think that I wouldn't come because I don't drink?

My friends have told me like, oh if you don't drink you'll be in the corner with your phone. What's the point then? And I have to tell them like, no that's not me.

This question about why non-drinkers would want to go to a drinking event was not exclusive to Maia. Many other participants shared similar stories, and an overall feeling of being a burden to those who are drinking seemed to emerge. Amanda explained it to me as they are solidifying that if "you're not drunk with them, you're not getting the same experience... like you're not seeing it through the same lens that they're seeing it through. So, you're kind of missing out". It is through this constant questioning and asking if non-drinkers want to come or why they would want to come that make them feel 'othered' or like they are missing out.

These findings of social pressure, or questioning, align with literature on university drinking culture (Duckworth et al., 2021; Paton-Simpson, 2001; Tan, 2012). As explained earlier, there is little literature on non-drinking students, but the literature on students who *do* drink shows that drinkers tend to have these perceptions of non-drinkers. Duckworth et al., (2021) examined the relationship between social role transitions and alcohol use among young adults and Tan (2012) studied American university students who drink through purposive sampling. Both studies found that many drinking students see non-drinkers as outsiders and not part of a larger group dynamic. Tan (2012), stated, "those who do not drink are perceived [by drinkers] to have trouble fitting into the campus crowd, tend to be ostracized, and have to constantly justify their non-drinking to others" (p. 128). As well, none of my participants related to what Wolburg (2022) calls the "healthy deviant", or someone who will drink periodically to fit in (p. 3). All my participants stood by their choice to drink or not, and if they drank very rarely, it was their choice whether they wanted to or not. The importance of the knowledge gap in drinking research is displayed here as well, as it is through the voices of non-drinkers that I

noticed that this feeling of missing out or othering seemed to aggravate my participants because many saw their sober presence as somewhat necessary.

Analytical Theme 2a: Marginalization and roles within a drinking culture: storytelling and the responsibility of the 'mother'

Non-drinkers may feel pressure through 'questioning', but they do not feel completely marginalized because they still have roles to play within a drinking culture. Two of these roles are the mom/caretaker and the storyteller/listener role. This section explains how participants see their presence as necessary and vital in filling these roles.

Out of six women I interviewed, four of them found they often or periodically fill the role of the 'mom' when their friends are drinking. None of the men I interviewed brought up or saw themselves filling a role like this, nor did they explain how they will take on the more responsible role when out with friends. Many women, in contrast, found themselves taking on the responsibility of making sure they're friends are safe. Or, in the case of Maia, had to force herself to not fulfill the 'mom' or responsible role. Maia explained how it is not her job to take on these roles, and even then, she made sure to tell me that if anybody needs help or if she is close to the person(s) drinking, like her sister or boyfriend, she will obviously make sure they are safe.

The women explained to me how they thought of their mom's role as both a necessity and a behaviour they seem to fall into. Throughout my interviews, I discovered this role was embodied by both women who like to go out/hang out with their friends when they drink as well as women who will rarely do so. For example, Emily does not like going out with her friends when they are drinking a lot, but she will try to distract herself and, for lack of a better word, get

through the experience by filling the role of the ‘caretaker’ of the group. Grace, who enjoys hanging out with her friends whether they are drinking or not, noted that when people drink, "their judgment, in terms of what is safe and what is not safe, is shocking." This makes her feel like she needs to be watchful over her drunk friends. Anika shared this same train of thought, explaining how she has a friend who tends to get quite drunk, stating “I end up taking care of her a little bit when she’s around me”. Anika emphasized to me that she does not see this as a burden, but she is trying to make sure her friend is safe and okay. Tracy filled this role from time to time as well, and explained to me that while this role can be annoying at the end of the day, they are her friends and “if they’re left to their own devices bad stuff happens”. This is not to say that Anika, Tracy, or any person who finds themselves filling the mom role necessarily does so out of pressure or being sober, but from my interview experiences many women who filled this role felt a sense of obligation to do so.

These patterns displayed by many of the women in my interviews connect to previous literature on gendered drinking conventions and societal roles placed on women (Gabriel and Gardner, 1999; Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). A common theme that arises from literature on women and drinking, is that women drink to relax (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). For example, Lindsay’s (2006) study on the role that social and binge drinking plays in young women’s lives, found her study aligned with many others when it came to young women drinking to relax. As Lindsay (2006) found, relaxation allowed women to defy social norms that they found constrictive in their everyday lives. This connection between relaxation and defying social norms is important to look at when discussing women non-drinkers and the ‘mom role’ they take on.

R.W. Connell, an Australian sociologist who studies the field of gender, specifically masculinity and men's studies, wrote a pivotal book for her field titled "Masculinities" (1995, 2005). In "Masculinities" (2005), Connell defines what gender relations are. According to Connell (2005), gender is a social practice that refers "to bodies and what bodies do" but it is not reduced to the individual body (p. 71). Biological determinants, such as health, hormones, body weight, etc. do not determine gender, social practice does (Connell, 2005). In European and American societies these practices are structured through the subordination of women and the domination of men (Connell, 2005). What structures this domination is hegemonic masculinity and the way hegemonic masculinity interacts with complicit, marginalized, and subordinate masculinity (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is what Connell (2005) defines as the dominant form of masculinity, it shapes institutions and their participants and benefits from the subjugation of women. Complicit, marginalized, and subordinate masculinity all interact with hegemonic masculinity to determine what we see as hegemonic within our society (Connell, 2005).

Discourse is a major way in which hegemonic masculinity is defined within our culture, specifically within institutions (Butler, 1993; Connell, 2005). Individuals are not one specific type of masculinity, many people participate and benefit from hegemonic masculinity without meaning to (Connell, 2005). Just like Connell's work on masculinities displays, the non-drinking male participants in my interviews are not outside the norm for not seeing themselves as the caretakers (Connell, 2005; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Tutenges and Rod (2009) interviewed a young drinking man who displayed a lack of caretaking. Claus explained his night out with his friends to Tutenges and Rod (2009) as such,

...At some point during the night, the group went to a local pub a local pub and sang karaoke. They were all very drink. One man in the group wanted to perform a dance while signing, but he stumbled, knocked over a TV set, and ended up on the floor enmeshed in electrical wires [...]. (p. 362).

The rest of Claus' story is told through first person narration,

We went to different bakeries and sang morning songs to them [he laughs]. And people came out on the streets and on their balconies and yelled, "Shut up down there". That was definitely fun. And then in the end we went to Felix [another bar], er, I think. We stayed there and continued drinking, and in the end, nobody was able to walk. So then we went home. (p. 362).

Claus' story displays two findings within my research. The first being a relationship between his behavior, and more largely men's drinking behavior, and two common words used throughout my interviews. The words "rowdy" and "irresponsible", were used by both the men and women I interviewed when describing the drinking behavior of young men. Claus' story clearly displays both rowdy and irresponsible behavior. The second finding is the larger relationship between social conventions and behaviors for men versus for women (Connell, 2005; Gabriel and Gardner, 1999). In multiple instances throughout Claus' story there are hegemonic behaviors taking place. One example is found here: "We went to different bakeries and sang morning songs to them [he laughs]. And people came out on the streets and on their balconies and yelled, "Shut up down there"" (Tutenges and Rod, 2009). McVittie et al., (2017) discuss hegemonic masculinity as,

In current Western and Westernized societies the ideal hegemonic masculinity is treated as being synonymous with an identity that is broadly what is considered 'macho', being (at least to some extent) assertive and aggressive, courageous, almost invulnerable to threats and problems... (p. 7).

McVittie et al., (2017) definition of hegemonic masculinity is seen in Claus' story. The aggressive yelling and lack of care surrounding his, and his friends, feelings of disturbing others while they are sleeping, represents hegemonic behavior (Connell, 2005; McVittie et al., 2017).

Claus' story displays a connection between male non-drinkers and drinkers. While non-drinking men may avoid situations like Claus' due to their sobriety, neither Claus' nor the male non-drinkers in my interviews saw themselves as individuals who should take on responsible roles in situations where people are drinking. This is not to say that my male non-drinking participants should have stepped up and been more responsible than their drinking friends. As it is not the job of non-drinkers to look after their friends.

The relationship between alcohol and increased risk among women is discussed in drinking literature as well (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ride, 2001). While conducting interviews and focus groups among drinking secondary school aged women in Australia, Sheehan and Ridge (2001) found that alcohol use increases the chance of risk. When leading their focus groups, Sheehan and Ridge (2001) noticed that women would drink more in larger social groups, and in these groups the percentage on women who did not drink were either low or non-existent, which would lead to a higher risk of injury. For example, one woman explained her time drinking with her friends, stating (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001):

Our friend was drink and walking around the party hugging and kissing everyone and crying saying is anything happened to you I'd be sad [...]. It was hilarious – then she fell over and cut her leg – that wasn't so funny. (p. 356)

Another woman shared her story as well (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001),

I was having the best time and dancing and pretending to sing into the microphone, you know, and Karen was doing her spitting beer through her teeth trick. Then I felt the room start to spin and I thought, 'Oh my god, I'm gunna chuck [throw-up] and I did, about ten times. (p. 356)

I relate Sheehan and Ridge's (2001) drinking literature to the 'mom' or caretaker experiences as it displays how my non-drinking women participants are making rational decisions in looking out for their friends. While they are not obligated to fulfill the 'mom role' they have reason to

believe that this role should be taken on by somebody. By comparing how men behave in drinking situations compared to how women behave in drinking situations, there are clear example shown between the gender differences that come with the social conventions placed on women's behavior (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tutenges and Rod, 2009).

Relations to Connell's (2005) theory of masculinities can be seen in both Lindsay's (2006) finding that women will drink to relax, allowing them to feel comfortable defying social and gender norms. As well as how none of my male interviewees saw themselves as taking on the role of the 'mom' (or responsible one). We can see hegemonic beliefs through these interactions, both social and gender norms see women as the caretakers and responsible ones, while men get to behave rowdy and irresponsibly (Cislaghi and Heise, 2019; Gabriel and Gardner, 1999; Lindsay, 2006; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). While I cannot make claims for all non-drinking women, as I discussed in my results, four of the non-drinking women I interviewed felt the need to fulfill this role. And one non-drinking woman had to actively try to avoid fulfilling this role. As well, all three men did not discuss pressure or a sense to fulfill this role. From my own findings and drawing on previous research on gender and social roles, we can see how women may drink to escape these roles and women who do not drink are not always able to escape these roles and thus end up becoming the 'mom' of the group.

Analytical Theme 2b: Storytelling

Lastly, I will discuss the relationship between storytelling and drinking within social groups. Storytelling is widely understood as a key piece of friendship formation (Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). It allows individuals to relate to their friends and is the process where group identity can be formed (Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009).

Sheehan and Ridge (2001) found that storytelling can act as a bridge between an individual's experience with alcohol and their place within their friend group or larger social group. Because storytelling can be rooted in alcohol and drinking within a drinking culture, I wanted to see how non-drinkers interact with storytelling. What I found throughout my interviews surprised me, as most non-drinkers saw storytelling as a major factor in bonding with their drinking friends.

Proving my hypothesis on storytelling incorrect.

While some of my participants told me they are not always a focal point of every story or storytelling experience, many believe they play a vital role in the dynamic. In all but two interviews my participants emphasized how often it is their lack of drinking that allows storytelling to occur. Because they are the sober ones, they can remember the night and remind their drinking friends of the night before. Derek explains his role in storytelling as such:

Yes, I'm almost always involved, almost always because they love to tell me and actually I like to hear it. And I also, I always tell them what they did while they're drunk, because they'll never freaking remember for the life of them, especially when they get really messed up.

Derek explained to me how there will always be times when he is not as much a part of the storytelling, but this is not exclusive to non-drinkers, as this happens for everyone. Grace and I discussed storytelling as well in her interview. While she told me she cannot always relate to her friends when they're drinking because their personalities change a lot, she found storytelling was a way she bonded with her friends the next day. She said,

I always know the next morning they'll wake up and say, 'do you remember when you did this?' and they will say 'no', and then we'll have more to relate to because people bond through stories and interesting events [...] I really don't feel like I lose the ability to relate to them because of that.

Grace and Derek are only two stories of many that came from the storytelling portion of my interviews; their stories as well as many others show how it is the storytelling that allows them to solidify bonding moments with their friends. But many participants added that even if they do not go out with their friends and find themselves confused about what is going on, it is not that big of a deal. Tracy is another example of this, as she told me that even though there will be times she does not know what is going on, she likes letting her friends talk about their night and she does not feel excluded.

This comfort that my participants found when it came to not always knowing what is going on during moments of storytelling, is surprising and somewhat different than what literature on drinking students displays. Through purposive sampling of American university students who drink, Tan (2012) found that students will drink as a way to “achieve the desired personal and social outcomes while avoiding adverse ones” (p. 121). These desired outcomes included the ability to always relate to friends in moments of storytelling (Tan, 2012). As seen in the quotes above, many of my participants did not care about being the center of storytelling. They did not see these moments as undesired social outcomes, but instead of moments where they were not the key focus of the group.

While I expected gender to play a key role in storytelling, and thus developed interview questions pertaining to the relationship between storytelling and gender. I found only one connection between the two, that men will share and discuss their feelings more when intoxicated. I believe there is one main reason for this, at that is due to the lack of storytelling that occurs while drinking among my interview participants and their friends. As literature on drinking students discusses, many of these vital social interactions and storytelling moments occur when individuals are drinking (Lindsay, 2006; Tan, 2012). In my interviews my

participants explained that conversations with their drunk friends were not central to their formation of friendships. My non-drinking participants did not see a strong relationship between storytelling during moments of drinking, they saw storytelling as what occurs the day after. This differs from the literature I drew on in my literature review, as storytelling was seen as an aspect of socialization during drinking escapades and the day after (Lindsay, 2006; Tan, 2012; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001).

The only time discourse would occur in ways that somewhat aggravated my participants, was during times of “trauma dumping” or excessive sharing of feelings. Derek emphasized how he has one friend who tends to get quite drunk and “trauma dump” information on him. Meaning he will drink and then tell Derek everything that is going wrong in his life, even if Derek is not in the place to talk about his friends issues right at that moment. Derek made sure to tell me that he is always happy to help his friends through harder times and like that they can come to him to talk, but he feels like they will use alcohol to help them discuss their feelings. As he states here,

Umm just kind of, like, big trauma dumping emotional stuff, like things that they wouldn't tell me sober. And it's kind of disappointing and I've been told, like, this is usually just by my roommates as well (who are some of my best friends for sure) it'll be like, while they're saying this and their trauma dumping, they're like, "I wish I was saying this sober". I was like, "Yeah, you would never say this sober".

Derek went on to explain how this is disappointing because he wishes that they would just talk to him when they are sober, as he feels he is someone his friends can talk to. Sam, who is another male interviewee, explained how he and his friends do not discuss their feelings with each other often, but when his friends are drinking, they tend to share more with him.

The women I interviewed shared similar thoughts on their friends drinking and then “trauma dumping” on them. While some women explained how sometimes they would share a

little more than they would in everyday life, none of the women said this was abnormal among their friends. Nor did any of the women I interview discuss how they wish their female friends would share more with them when their sober, unlike Derek. To draw on Connell's work on masculinities yet again, we can see this relationship between hegemonic masculinity and men's lack of discussion surrounding feelings. As McVittie et al., (2017) state, "the hegemonic ideal is constructed as discouraging the acknowledgement of feelings and of weakness" (p. 27). Based on gendered norms, the Western stereotypical view of being masculine does not include overt sharing of feelings and emotions (Cislaghi and Heise, 2019). As well, vulnerability is seen as a feminine trait when it comes to gender norms in society (Cislaghi and Heise, 2019). Cislaghi and Heise (2019) explain gender norms as "in the world, embedded in institutions and reproduced by people's actions [...]" (p. 412). As seen in my discussion on the 'mom role' and literature on drinking conventions, gendered norms are reproduced in drinking cultures (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tan, 2012; Tutenges and Rod, 2009).

From Derek and Sam's interviews we can see that men disobey gender norms when it comes to sharing their feelings and emotions when drunk. It is beyond the scope of my research to conclude that it is alcohol that allows Derek and Sam's friends to disobey gender norms, but previous research is similar in my interview findings that alcohol facilitates a disobeying of hegemonically masculine gender roles in men (Lindsay, 2006; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001; Tutenges and Rod, 2009). It is also outside of my research scope to understand why Derek, a non-drinking man, does not share hegemonically masculine traits with his other male friends, as he is happy to discuss both his feelings and his friends' feelings while sober. There are many external factors that could shape Derek's construction of gender norms.

Conclusion and Further Research

Social scientific research on drinking foregrounds the importance of norms and belonging. Within drinking cultures, there are scripts and patterns of behaviour that non-drinkers have a hard time conforming to because the patterns revolve around the consumption of alcohol. Thus, it makes sense to imagine that non-drinkers would feel pressure and marginalization in settings—such as undergrad—where the norm is to consume a lot of alcohol.

By using the research questions, how do Dalhousie students who do not drink feel about the drinking culture on university campuses? And what effect do they feel non-drinking has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships? My qualitative study analyzed the experiences of nine non-drinking Dalhousie students and their perception of forming and maintaining friendships within university drinking culture. For many non-drinking individuals this feeling of pressure comes in the form of questioning. However, women non-drinkers explained another aspect of pressure as well as role structuring. And that is what I referred to as the ‘mom role’. As both drinking and gender literature discuss, this push that women non-drinkers feel to be the responsible one makes sense (Connell, 2005; Gabriel and Gardner, 1999; Lindsay, 2006). This does not mean it *should* occur, but patriarchy places women in positions where they feel they must be the responsible ones (Connell, 2005; Gabriel and Gardner, Lindsay, 2006). This role was two-fold, as women also would also use it as a way to busy themselves during social situations with increased alcohol. Meanwhile, storytelling plays a vital role in making non-drinkers feel *less* marginalized within a drinking culture, as it allows them to be part of the drinking discourse with their friends.

While I only conducted a small number of interviews, focused on solely Dalhousie university students, and had an uneven ratio of women to men among my participants, I

nevertheless learned some interesting things that alternately support and challenge existing theories, suggesting avenues for further research. Overall, I learned that the marginalization of non-drinkers is a social process, not an internal feeling possessed by non-drinkers. As well, the non-drinkers I interviewed do not associate having a good time and forming friendships with drinking alcohol.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Physical poster that was placed around Dalhousie and on the selected professors Brightspace page.

January 2023

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

Are you a first year Dalhousie or Kings student
who does not drink alcohol?



If you:

- Do not drink
- Are 18 years or over
- Are a first year Dal/Kings student

Please consider participating in a sociological honors research project on the experiences of forming social circles and relationships when sober. Participation will involve a confidential one hour interview on campus, at a local café or Microsoft Teams.

If interested contact Beau Block at is495085@dal.ca or scan this **QR code** and fill out the brief form!



Honors Supervisors: Dr. Karen Foster and Dr. Martha Radice

Appendix B. Interview Guide

Part 1: Participant's Introduction and general background questions

- Tell me a bit about yourself. I'd like to know where you are from, whether you're living on campus or not and who you live with, and how your first year is going so far.
- Do you mind telling me your gender identity? What are your preferred pronouns?
- How would you describe your social life, generally?
 - Would you say that your friends or friendships are predominantly women or men?
 - Do you have a main group of friends, or do you have friendships with individuals or smaller groups?
 - Are you in a romantic relationship at the moment?
- Do you mind telling me why you do not drink?
- How do you usually feel when you are around people who are drinking?
- Do you feel that there's a drinking culture on campus here? If so, how would you describe it?

Part 2: Building friendships and drinking personalities

- What role, if any, has alcohol played in your formation of meaningful friendships?
- If you have a "main" group of friends, how many of them would you consider regular social drinkers? Would you categorize your friends as drinkers?
- Why do you think your friends who drink, drink? What do you think they get out of it?
- Socially, where do you fit in within your friend group when your friends go out drinking?
- Do you find that some of your drinking friends behave differently while drinking than they do sober? If you have friends who drink, how do you find their behaviors shift when they are intoxicated compared to when they are sober? Are there examples you could tell me of specific instances when you saw a behavioral shift?
 - As we are discussing behaviors among intoxicated individuals, have you seen specific instances when some friends that are usually quiet when sober behave more loudly or rowdy when intoxicated?
 - Do you find that some friends are able to speak out more when they are drunk?
- Do any of your drinking friends have distinctive drinking personalities? Do some of them make you worry more, or laugh more, for instance?

- When your friends are hanging out without alcohol, do they share stories of their times drinking and “escapades” they got into?
 - Do inside jokes or stories come out of times when they are drinking? What’s your view of these jokes/stories?
- When your friends are drinking, do you feel you relate to your friends in the same way they relate to each other?
 - What kind of role does alcohol play here?
- Within your friend group, are you more of a quiet one or an outgoing one, or does it vary? Do you think there’s an obligation or pressure to drink on campus? If so, how does it work? How do you experience that obligation or pressure?
- How do you think your sobriety is viewed among your friends? Do you think your friends view you differently because you do not drink? If you tend to go out with your friends in an intoxicated environment (a bar, club, etc.), do you have any “going out” patterns that you follow? For example, I know that some people will drink a coffee or smoke weed.
 - What are your reasons for following these patterns?
- Do you have friends that do not drink? Among those friends, what kind of social activities do you all do together?
 - (if participant has both friends who do drink and those that do not) How would you say that the activities your drinking friends do differ from the activities that your non-drinking friends do? If at all.
 - What types of patterns do you see in these activities? For example, do you usually find your drinking friends doing the same things when they hang out, and vice versa? For example, drinking games, board games, etc.

Part 3: Sobriety and social stamina

- Would you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why? How does your sobriety play into that social role?
- Would you say most of your friends are introverts or extroverts? Why?
- How do you think an individual’s relationship status could factor into overall sociability, if at all?

- How do you think an individual's relationship status could factor into alcohol consumption, if at all?

Wrap-up

- Are there other parts of your identity (for instance, your religion, or your cultural background) that have an impact on your choice not to drink? In what ways?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your views on drinking culture on campus?

Appendix C. Consent Form

Invitation to Participate in a study of how non-drinking first-year students socialize at university

You are invited to participate in a research study. I, Beau Block, am the lead researcher and I am conducting research for my Sociology honours thesis at Dalhousie University. It is entirely your choice whether you participate or not. The information provided in this form tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do, and any potential risks or benefits. Please read this form carefully, take all the time you need, and ask any questions you may have.

Consent is an ongoing process throughout your participation. Throughout the interview you may opt out of answering any questions you do not want to answer, you may take any breaks you feel you need, and you can decide to withdraw consent at any point up to one week after your interview. If consent is withdrawn all research data that you have provided will be immediately deleted.

Purpose of the research study

My research focuses on first-year students who do not drink alcohol and explores how that affects their ability to form social circles and relationships in university. I aim to answer the questions, *how do first-year university students who do not drink alcohol feel about the drinking culture on university campuses? What effects do they feel that drinking culture has on their ability to form meaningful social circles and relationships?* By exploring this question, I hope to shed light on how sober students socialize and make friends in a social world that is dominated by the use of alcohol, and potentially contribute insight to developing better social supports for first-year students.

What you will be asked to do

If you decide to participate in the research, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me for an hour to an hour and a half, depending on how much you have to say. In the interview, I will ask you questions on alcohol use and dependency, drinking culture, family

history of alcohol use, gender differences in alcohol use, social circles, and personal romantic relationships. I will take notes throughout the interview and audio record the interview on the recording app on my iPhone.

Who can take part in the research study?

You can participate in this study if you:

- Are over 18 and
- Do not drink alcohol, or only drink alcohol very occasionally and
- Are a first-year student at Dalhousie University.

Possible risks and benefits

Risks

There are minimal risks associated with my research. My research does involve discussing sensitive topics, like gender and identity, friendship circles, and loneliness, and trauma surrounding alcohol use (whether that be firsthand or secondhand). At any point in the interview, you can skip over *any* questions, take a break, or stop the interview process completely. I will also give you a list of resources that you may wish to consult if you want to explore these issues further and/or with peers or professional counsellors.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participants in my study. Potential indirect benefits could include an increase in a sense of community or shared experience for the participants, as well as contributing to the production of further knowledge on campus drinking culture and how students who do not drink are able to maintain and build friendships in first year university.

Compensation/reimbursement

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Privacy

Upon completion of your interview, all information (hard copy notes will be scanned and interview recording) will be in a password-protected folder on my laptop. All of the information that you have provided to me will be kept private and your name will be removed from your data immediately following the interview. Only I will have access to the data you have provided and it will be in a password-protected folder on my personal laptop, backed up to my university

OneDrive account. My honours supervisors may have access to de-identified data. I will describe and share general findings in a presentation to the Sociology and Social Anthropology department as well as my honours thesis. Nothing that could identify you or connect the data to you will be included in any presentation. I will keep the de-identified data on my laptop for potential future research. You will have one week after the interview to withdraw your consent and if you do, all the data provided by you that I have on my laptop will be deleted.

If you have questions or concerns about the research, please contact me or the honors supervisor. I can be contacted through my email, is495085@dal.ca, or phone, (902) 412-7086. You can contact Dr. Martha Radice, my research supervisor, at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-6747, or email martha.radice@dal.ca.

Participant's consent

I have read the above information about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to participate in one interview, which will take 60-90 minutes, and that the interview will be audio recorded. I understand that direct quotes may be used from my interview without identifying me. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time up until one week after the date of this interview.

Name of participant: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Consent can be withdrawn and all information from participant will be discarded UNTIL:

Appendix D. Final REB Form



ANNUAL/FINAL REPORT

Annual report to the Research Ethics Board for the continuing ethical review of research involving humans / Final report to conclude REB oversight

A. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

This report is (<i>select one</i>):				<input type="checkbox"/> An annual report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A final report
REB file number:	2022-6433				
Study title:	Sober Sociability: How non-drinking students navigate outside the norm				
Lead researcher (named on REB submission)	Name	Beau Block			
	Email	Is495085@dal.ca	Phone	9024127086	
Current status of lead researcher (at Dalhousie University):					
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee/Academic Appointment <input type="checkbox"/> Former student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current student <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):					
Supervisor (if lead researcher is/was a student/resident/postdoc)	Name	Dr. Martha Radice and Dr. Karen Foster			
	Email	martha.radice@dal.ca and karen.foster@dal.ca			
Contact person for this report (if not lead researcher)	Name				
	Email		Phone		

B. RECRUITMENT & DATA COLLECTION STATUS

<p>Instructions: Complete ALL sections relevant to this study</p> <p>Study involves/involved recruiting participants: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>If yes, complete section B1.</i></p> <p>Study involves/involved secondary use of data: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>If yes, complete section B2.</i></p> <p>Study involves/involved use of human biological materials: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <i>If yes, complete section B2.</i></p>

B1. Recruitment of participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
B1.1 How many participants did the researcher intend to recruit? <i>(provide number approved in the most recent REB application/amendment)</i>	8-10
B1.2 How many participants have been recruited? <i>(if applicable, identify by participant group/method e.g. interviews: 10, focus groups: 25)</i> a) In total, since the beginning of the study: 9 b) Since the last annual report:	
B1.3 Recruitment for this study is: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> complete; or <input type="checkbox"/> on-going	
B1.4 Data collection from participants for this study is: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> complete; or <input type="checkbox"/> on-going	

B2. Use of secondary data and/or biological materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
B2.1 How many individual records/biological materials did the researcher intend to access? <i>(provide number approved in the most recent REB application/amendment)</i>	
B2.2 How many individual participant records/biological materials have been accessed? a) In total, since the beginning of the study: b) Since the last annual report:	

C. PROJECT HISTORY

<i>Since your last annual report (or since initial submission if this is your first annual report):</i>
C1. Have there been any variations to the original research project that have NOT been approved with an amendment request? This includes changes to the research methods, recruitment material, consent documents, study instruments or research team. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list the variation here: <i>(You will be notified if a formal amendment is required)</i>
C2. Have you experienced any challenges or delays recruiting or retaining participants or accessing records or biological materials? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please explain:

<p>C3. Have you experienced any problems in carrying out this project?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please explain:</p>
<p>C4. Have any participants experienced any harm as a result of their participation in this study?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please explain:</p>
<p>C5. Has any study participant expressed complaints, or experienced any difficulties in relation to their participation in the study?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please explain:</p>
<p>C6. Since the original approval, have there been any new reports in the literature that would suggest a change in the nature or likelihood of risks or benefits resulting from participation in this study?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please explain:</p>

D. APPLYING FOR STUDY CLOSURE

Complete this section only if this is a FINAL report as indicated in section A

<p>D1. For studies involving recruitment of participants, a closure may be submitted when:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> all research-related interventions or interactions with participants have been completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A (this study did not involve recruitment of participants)</p>
<p>D2. For studies involving secondary use of data and/or human biological materials, a closure may be submitted when:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> all data acquisition is complete, there will be no further access to participant records or collection of biological materials</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A (this study did not involve secondary use of data and/or human biological materials)</p>
<p>D3. Closure Request</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I am applying for study closure</p>

E. ATTESTATION (both boxes *must* be checked for the report to be accepted by the REB)

I agree that the information provided in this report accurately portrays the status of this project and describes to the Research Ethics Board any new developments related to the study since initial approval or the latest report.

I attest this project was, or will continue to be, completed in accordance with the approved REB application (or most recent approved amendment) and in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2).