DISCURSIVE STRUGGLES AMONG

COLLEGE DRINKERS AND NON-DRINKERS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As our night class ended, I could almost feel what was about to happen. We had just turned in our final papers and the room was filled with talk of "blowing off steam." My friend slowly approached from across the room. Each step filled me with more dread than the last. Finally, the question left his lips.

"Do you want to go to the Locker Room with us?"

The truthful response to this question was a resounding "NO." Yet, what came from my mouth was a much less certain "sure." As we walked to his car and made the short drive to the bar, I began to form a plan. I would ask for some crazy, imported beer and then feign disappointment when it was not in stock. Then I would indulge in some greasy bar food before calling it an early night, citing my long drive home and a morning class. I had the perfect plan. That was until my friend ordered himself two shots. "Drink this," he said, "It's good for people who don't normally drink." In that moment, surrounded by friends, feeling the relief of a completed semester, and with my general guilt at my buddy's purchase of the shot, I threw one back. Everyone watched my face intently. I tried not to make a grimace. It was done. I had taken my first drink since my first semester of college.

On the way out, my friend offered me a ride to my car, which was parked across campus. I told him that I would be fine and that I needed to "walk it off" in the cold December air. He mentioned that it was just one shot, and a weak one at that. I merely shrugged and waved, heading off into the night. What he did not, and could not, understand was that it wasn't the drink that I needed to walk off. It was the uneasy feeling in my stomach. For four years, I had been the guy who did not drink. The guy who respectfully declined invitations to nights out in

The Village, the small area of real estate directly south of the university that was designed to provide the ideal night out for college students. Was I still that guy after this one drink?

Rationale

While this particular story is personal to me, it is also representative of experiences shared by many college students across the United States. Research indicates that nearly 20% of college students abstain from alcohol (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachmann, & Schulenberg, 2013). These students have struggled to find their place in a culture that sees drinking as a mainstream behavior. Communication research has just begun to tell the stories of college non-drinkers (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013; Romo, 2012). However, as we shift our focus to non-drinkers, we must not forget that they are attempting to, and often do, fit into a larger population of drinkers. Thus, we cannot hope to examine the discourse of non-drinkers without also examining the discourse of drinkers. In this study I investigate the meanings of "drinking" and "abstinence" for drinkers and non-drinkers in a college setting. Further, I investigate how drinkers and non-drinkers discursively manage encounters with each other.

Overview

In chapter two, I provide context for the study by guiding the reader through existing literature that describes the culture of drinking in colleges, the topic of binge drinking, and how non-drinkers are often viewed within college culture. I will also discuss the components of Relational Dialectics Theory (Baxter, 2011), which will help the reader contextualize my chosen theoretical frame and method of analysis. In chapter three, I describe the participants of the study, data collection procedures, and the specific method I used to analyze the data. In chapter four, I present my findings and discuss them in terms of my analytic framework. In chapter five,

I summarize my findings, discuss their implications, acknowledge the strengths and limitations of the current study, and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Reality of College Drinking

Alcohol has an undeniable presence in the United States. We create rituals around the substance to signify holidays, celebrate milestones, and to solidify business transactions. It is used to express feelings of love, respect, and camaraderie. Over 60% of adults in the U.S. are currently drinkers, with another 14.3% identifying as former drinkers (Schoenborn, Adams, & Peregoy, 2013).

Drinking is also a significant part of college life in our culture. Although researchers have thus far been unable to determine the accuracy of student reports of drinking behaviors (Fishburne & Brown, 2006; Hagman, Cohn, Noel, & Clifford, 2010), scholars have nonetheless studied the drinking habits of college-aged students. Interestingly, alcohol use increases with one's level of education (Schoenborn, et al., 2013), and is the only substance that is more likely to be consumed by college students than young adults who are not attending college (Johnston, et al., 2013). Alcohol is often a part of college life from the first day on campus. The first year of college is typically a time for risk-taking, and first-year students have reported that one out of every five days is a "drinking day" (Talbott et al., 2008). New college students tend to adapt to drinking norms quickly, and the more their new college experience differs from their high school social lives, the more likely they are to engage in heavy drinking behaviors (Schultz & Neighbors, 2007). These behaviors may be more drastic for students who are also dealing with mental trauma, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Read, et al., 2012). Individuals usually notice positive changes in social and emotional feelings while intoxicated, simultaneously ignoring any potential negative effects on cognition (Roehling & Goldman, 1987). College students typically use alcohol to enhance their social experience and bring about more positive

moods (Osberg, et al., 2010), as well as alleviate any potential social anxiety (Ham, 2009). This can lead to a significant impact on the formation of their identities as students and as adults (Ham, 2009).

Students who drink heavily often find positive reinforcement for their behaviors (Skidmore & Murphy, 2010). Additionally, risky behaviors, such as heavy drinking, are easier to engage in when accompanied by peers (Varela & Pritchard, 2011). Indeed, peer usage proves to be an extremely reliable predictor of drinking behavior (Zamboanga, Schwartz, Ham, Jarvis, & Olthius, 2009). Inversely, abstaining from drinking may result in students feeling left out from some social activity (Sheehan & Ridge, 2001). If a new student were to experience both of these outcomes, they may quickly form habits of drinking heavily to maintain social relationships and positive feelings very early in their academic life. The more social capital that a person has, the more well liked they are, and the more their behavior is likely to be emulated (Laursen, Hafen, Kerr, & Stattin, 2012). Thus, a great amount of social capital may be gained from maintaining and matching the drinking behavior of one's social group (Balsa, Homer, French, & Norton, 2010). This may create a cycle of drinking to become popular, then establishing drinking as the popular behavior. College-aged students risk falling in with a heavy drinking crowd, therefore feeling the pressure and potential social reward for assimilating into this behavior. For example, most college males report great social pressure to drink and shame for expressing concerns about excessive drinking behavior (Suls & Green, 2003). According to White, Fleming, Kim, Catalano, and McMorris (2008), campus life is particularly prone to such a cycle because the usual factors that keep students from drinking, such as pro-social involvement (e.g., religious activity, volunteer work) have a significantly smaller effect than factors that promote drinking (e.g., peer pressure, milestones that are centered on drinking). However, for those who still live at home,

parents maintain a larger influence in student behavior, regardless of that drinking behavior (White, et al., 2008; Wood, Read, Mitchell, & Brand, 2004).

   Drinker identities. Whether or not one drinks can become a defining characteristic for college students (Lindgren, et al., 2013). Many students choose to identify themselves as "drinkers" and "non-drinkers," and the choice of this identity becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding their drinking habits. Thus, if a student labels him or herself as a drinker, one can expect to see drinking behavior, as well as cravings for alcohol in that student (Lindgren, et al., 2013). Students often find ways to enact and present the identity of "drinker" through social media (Ridout, Campbell, & Ellis, 2012). For example, students self-identify as drinkers by posting pages of themselves drinking, even going as far as using these photos for profile pictures, which serve as photographic distillations of their identity. They also express their identity through participation in groups and pages that involve alcohol use. More explicit textual examples of drinking behavior often come from friends, such as posts soliciting the next drinking event or revelation of past behavior (Ridout, et al., 2012).

   Through social construction of a drinker identity, students place themselves in greater contact with peers who drink (Yanovitzky, Stewart, & Lederman, 2006). The more students associate with those who drink, the more drinking becomes a part of the collective identity of their peer group. Additionally, greater contact with a drinking peer group normalizes the drinking behaviors of such an "in-group" for students (Yanovitzky, et al., 2006). Therefore, when discussing the "typical college drinker," drinkers tend to label that person as "the other," who exists outside the group, and discount their experience, although it is likely to be quite similar to the experiences of those within the group itself (Yanovitzky, et al., 2006). For example, students in a social group may hear about dangerous drinking behavior of college

students from an outside source, and then immediately decide that this information does not apply to them without any real consideration of the dangerous behavior. Thus, being a part of this group enables students to deflect information about potential dangerous drinking habits away from themselves. Further, because students in peer groups with a high level of social support will adhere more strictly to the norms they have established for the group (Cullum, O'Grady, Sandoval, Armeli, & Tennen, 2013), they can isolate themselves from other groups, a tactic so effective that the social group is able to view itself as independent from the culture in which it resides. Therefore, students will believe the drinking norms of their social group to be the correct behavior (Cullum, et al., 2013). Any discussion that does not appear to pertain to their social group is likely to be discounted.[1]

Drinking as a social event. College drinking tends to be ritualistic. Specific rituals, such as holidays, sporting events, and especially 21st birthdays, tend to be celebrated with heavy amounts of drinking (Neighbors, et al., 2011). Often, these events are structured in a way to maximize their length and the amount that one drinks. Pre-partying, sometimes known as "pre-gaming" serves as a kind of "party before the party," where students engage in drinking in preparation for the official party to start (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007). The amount of pre-partying is also related directly to the setting and type of event, with fraternity parties leading to higher levels of pre-partying and going to restaurants/bars leading to more drinking during the event (Paschall & Saltz, 2007). Among students' reasons for pre-partying are making the night more interesting, saving money, and facilitating social experiences (Pederson, LaBrie, & Kilmer, 2009). Pre-partying almost exclusively serves the social function of drinking, enabling students

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[1] This does not necessarily mean that the norms of social groups will involve heavy drinking

to extend the ritual beyond what is the usual length and intensity, as well as avoid the potentially awkward feeling of meeting new people in public by drinking with close friends in private first.

The focus on the social aspect of pre-partying is likely responsible for the heavier amounts of drinking. In all contexts, students are more likely to drink at events where many people are intoxicated (Clapp, Reed, Holmes, Lange, & Voas, 2006). For example, Pederson and LaBrie (2007) discovered "problems specifically related to fast consumption (e.g., blackouts, passing out, hangovers) all were correlated significantly with pre-partying" (p. 242). Students who only drink heavily to signify certain events and rituals are also at a higher risk of binge drinking than students who engage in heavy drinking regularly (Neighbors, et al., 2011). This makes the social ritual of celebrating specific events troubling in that it exposes casual drinkers to situations and consequences that are often new to them. Also problematic is that the riskiest events, such as 21st birthdays (Neighbors, et al., 2011), are floating milestones, occurring on a different day for each individual. It is statistically possible for each day of the year to be a significant drinking event for at least one student on a given campus. However, most troubling is that weekend drinking outweighs drinking for special occasions, meaning that every week has a few days that are cause for heavy drinking (Woodyard & Hallam, 2010). The result is the threat of risky drinking behavior may be omnipresent.

Binge Drinking

There is no type of drinking riskier than "binge drinking." This type of heavy drinking has been associated with negative consequences such as educational difficulties, psychosocial problems, antisocial behaviors, injuries, alcohol poisoning, high-risk sexual behaviors and alcohol-impaired driving (Talbott, et al., 2008). Binge drinking also results in damage to others, such as violence, vandalism, hate crimes and noise disturbances, as well as costs to college

institutions (Perkins, 2002). In terms of college-aged drinkers, binge drinking occurs more frequently in students who also binged in high school, are involved in sororities/fraternities (Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995), and athletics (Ford, 2007). In fact, students who are not involved in Greek life are often better equipped to resist peer pressure to engage in binge drinking (Crawford & Novak, 2007). Motivations for this activity range from perceived positive social outcomes to more practical factors, such as the availability and affordable price of alcohol (Herchl, McChargue, MacKillop, Stoltenberg, & Highland, 2012). Whatever the reason, engaging in periods of extreme alcohol consumption is a dangerous practice as binge drinkers are the most likely student group to continue this dangerous behavior after leaving college (Campbell & Demb, 2008).

Although many experts agree that binge drinking is a problem, getting stakeholders to agree on a definition of binge drinking has been difficult. Some scholars define binge drinking as "occasions during which a person consumes an excessive and potentially harmful amount of alcohol" (Bonar, et al., 2011) while others define it as drinking that occurs over the period of several days (Herring, Berridge, & Thom, 2008). Describing the process of binge drinking vaguely, as merely drinking to excess (Bonar, et al., 2011), leaves the definition open to interpretation, as students are likely to have a different idea of "excess" than professionals. Others have attempted to place a specific number of drinks and blood alcohol content level on the term, determining that if men drink more than five drinks and women drink more than four on one occasion they are on a binge ("the 5/4 drink standard"), as this will place them over the legal blood alcohol content limit (Pedersen & LaBrie, 2007; Tomberg, 2010). Others argue, however, that the different levels of alcohol in various drinks confound any definition based on the number of drinks consumed. This definition is also culturally bound, as drinks have different

levels of alcohol in them depending on the country in which they are served (Herring, et al., 2008). This can lead to people who "drink moderately" in one culture being mistaken for "binge drinkers" in another culture, due to the 5/4 drink standard giving them an apparently lower threshold than they may actually have (Gmel, Kuntsche, & Rehm, 2010). Further, Fillmore and Jude (2011) argue that it may be more beneficial to consider the *frequency* of drinking instead of the *amount* of drinks in a sitting to determine risky drinking behavior. All of these variables make a singular numerical standard for what constitutes a binge virtually impossible to determine.

Students are also counted among those who cannot agree on a standard definition of binge drinking. Students consider a higher number of drinks to constitute a binge only if they have binged more frequently (Bonar, et al., 2011). For example, a single binge is only labeled as such when it is found in an ongoing pattern of binge drinking across multiple nights out (Bonar, et al., 2011). Additionally, a study of female college students in Australia indicated that binge drinking is perceived as a result of behavior, rather than the amount of drinks (Murugiah, 2012). This means that a person who imbibes a large number of drinks, but does not engage in embarrassing behavior such as vomiting or fighting, is not perceived to be binge drinking. Inversely, if a person has a moderate amount of drinks and then engages in these behaviors, they are believed to be binging. Moreover, students who binge socially are not perceived as engaging in problem drinking, while those who binge alone perpetuate the idea that problem drinking only occurs in social isolation (Segrist & Pettibone, 2009).

Even when presented with information from researchers on the topic of binge drinking, college students are likely to adhere to a definition that they themselves have created based on personal experience and the testimony of peers (Park, Smith, Klein, & Martell, 2011).

Furthermore, college students do not often see clinically severe consequences of binge drinking (e.g., withdrawal, tolerance, loss of control) as severe (Merrill, Read, & Barnett, 2013). Therefore, it is difficult to study the concept of binge drinking when potential participants have their own ideas about what the activity even entails (Courtney & Polich, 2009). With all of these factors in mind, Courtney and Polich (2009) have created the following operational definition of binge drinking: "A pattern of drinking alcohol that brings BAC to 0.08 gram percent or above ($\geq$ 5/4 for men/women in 2 hr.) on more than one occasion within the past 6 months" (p. 152). This definition is inclusive of the quantity standard which previous research has used, the legal blood alcohol limit, the frequency in which drinking takes place, and the existence of a pattern of behavior.

Binge drinking is a less effective term to use when attempting to change the excessive drinking behavior of students because it focuses on quantity, which students tend to disregard (Goodhart, Lederman, Stewart, & Laitman, 2003). Since students have varying perceptions of what number constitutes a "few too many," they are likely to dismiss the act of binge drinking as something in which they have not participated. "Dangerous drinking" has been suggested as a new term because   the focus is placed on that which students are most often concerned: outcomes (Lederman, Stewart, Goodhart, & Laitman, 2003). Students are more likely to respond to the concept of danger as something that could potentially affect them in negative ways. Additionally, they find "dangerous drinking" to be less judgmental than terms such as "problem drinking" or "responsible drinking" (Lederman, et al., 2003). Further, conceptions of responsible drinking are often made up of potentially harmful ideas, such as knowing one's limits without defining what those limits are (Barry & Goodson, 2011). The interview protocols for this study

contained no explicit references to "binge" or "dangerous" drinking. Any discussion of heavy drinking uses terms that were provided by the participants of the current study.

College Non-Drinkers

Although drinking is considered a mainstream behavior in college, college non-drinkers comprise almost 20% of the college population (Johnston, et al., 2011). Non-drinkers have listed many reasons for abstaining from alcohol. Some of these reasons are practical, such as lack of availability, fearing trouble with authority, worry over risks and negative effects, and health concerns (Huang, Dejong, Schneider, & Towvim, 2011; Johnson & Cohen, 2004). Other reasons for abstinence have more to do maintaining control of behavior, exercising social responsibility, and avoiding disapproval from friends (Huang, et al., 2011; Johnson & Cohen, 2004). Some non-drinkers list reasons that are more closely tied to their identities, such as adhering to personal values and religious beliefs, as well as recovering from alcohol dependence (Huang, et al., 2011). One longitudinal study of non-drinkers revealed that those who abstain due to their upbringing or religious beliefs are likely to abstain throughout their transition to a legal drinking age (Epler, Sher, & Piasecki, 2009). Further, college students consistently cite a lack of enjoyment as a reason for abstaining from any substance, including alcohol (Rosenberg, et al., 2008). There is a key difference in reasoning however, for abstinence between drinkers and non-drinkers. Drinkers often report that the reasons they will endorse non-drinking on any given night are situational, such as needing to drive home or concerns that it will affect schoolwork, whereas non-drinkers often frame their abstinence as an overall lifestyle choice (Huang, et al., 2011). The tension many non-drinkers experience living in a segment of culture populated largely with drinkers has recently propelled a few scholars to examine the day-to-day lives of college non-drinkers and their reasons for not drinking (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013; Romo, 2012).

Herman-Kinney and Kinney (2013) divided non-drinkers' reasons for abstaining into two distinct categories: Negative associations and positive associations. Non-drinkers' negative associations included reports about the bad taste of alcohol ("gross," "make me want to puke," "bitter and sour"), negative family histories of alcoholism ("alcohol ruined my family"), negative personal experiences with alcohol ("I never want to disappoint [my parents] like that again"), and a desire to remain in control ("I have seen so many people make asses of themselves…") as reasons to abstain from the substance (pp. 73-76). Positive associations were more often tied to personal factors, most notably identity. Non-drinkers reported that abstaining role models ("[My parents] are like that little voice inside my head, telling me not to do it"), academic identity ("I am not going to risk my hard work and flunk out of school because I partied too much"), athletic identity ("Ever since I started out as a little kid all the coaches told us that our body was our temple…"), and religious identity (This belief was strictly ingrained in me") (pp. 76-79). Overall, according to these authors, the negative associations tended to be focused on external factors, such as the properties of alcohol and its effects, whereas the positive associations tend to be focused on internal factors such as identity. Additionally, non-drinkers exhibited a clear desire to maintain control of one's life and view alcohol as a threat to this control. Similarly, Romo (2012) observed that non-drinkers deem it important to establish a healthy identity that highlights the positive aspects of their lifestyle around their choice to abstain.

When drinking is the mainstream behavior, as is often the case on college campuses, non-drinking often falls into the category of deviance. This has occurred in cultures where drinking is prevalent, such New Zealand, where individuals who do not meet the drinking norm have been met with ridicule and even threats of physical violence (Paton-Simpson, 2001). Although abstaining from a potentially dangerous behavior is universally recognized as the healthy option,

it does not conform to the expectation in many societies, making it a "healthy deviant behavior" (Romo & Donovan-Kicken, 2012). "Healthy deviance" is a relatively new way to conceptualize positive behaviors with negative stigma. These behaviors, such as vegetarianism and abstaining from alcohol, present a unique challenge for individuals. Healthy deviants exist in an environment where their behaviors, which by all conventional wisdom provide nothing but health benefits for them, need to be justified to those who conform to the mainstream. This belief can result in reported instances of bullying (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013; Romo, 2012; Romo & Donovan-Kicken, 2012). For example, non-drinkers reported that they were excluded from social activities involving alcohol. Additionally, they were interrogated about their choice to abstain or received "weird looks" at the parties to which they were invited (Romo, 2012). Non-drinkers also reported bullying in face-to-face and computer mediated contexts (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013). One student reported that when his roommates found out about his non-drinking status, they vandalized his car, wrote profanity on the windshield, emptied alcohol inside the car, and left empty alcohol containers and human waste in the seats of the car (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013). Whether it is due to the overall norm of drinking or specific instances of stigmatization, non-drinkers have ample motivation for developing strategies to deal with these issues.

Non-drinkers often feel that they must conform to a set of rules when discussing their lifestyle with drinkers. These rules include making sure to highlight the positive aspects of their choice, saving face for those who drink, and, when possible, avoiding the topics of alcohol and their own abstinence altogether (Romo, 2012). Often, non-drinkers find that hiding in plain sight is their best course of action, going as far as grabbing cups at parties and filling them with non-alcoholic drinks to "pass" as drinkers (Romo, 2012). Non-drinking students opt for this type of

concealment early on in college. However, they can find this strategy to be exhausting over time. In fact, some non-drinking students decide to "give-in" and accept the stigma, as it is perceived to be their "only way out" (Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013). Over time, non-drinking students who are skilled communicators often decide who will be an ally to their lifestyle and disclose their non-drinking behavior to these individuals in an attempt to alleviate some of the social pressure (Romo, 2012).

Attempting to find a way to save the face of drinkers is also a potential motivation for light concealment, which involves hiding one's status as a non-drinker instead of hiding oneself altogether. Non-drinkers report that it is best to keep from discussing the topic of alcohol so as not to sound as if they are creating a morally superior position (Romo, 2012). They do not feel as if they are hiding who they are; they are merely engaging in the topic carefully to save the face of others. Another face-saving strategy that non-drinkers employ is rejecting the drink instead of rejecting the drinker (Romo, 2012). This specific strategy is also risky, as drinking is commonly used as an icebreaker for social situations and rejecting a drink may mean shutting down a potential conversation. Therefore, rejecting the drink also involves immediately shifting the conversation to other icebreaking strategies such as introductions. It is also important for non-drinkers to both verbally and nonverbally express a lack of judgment of drinkers (Romo, 2012). This is also usually followed with an expression of non-drinking as a statement about one's personal choice that is tied specifically to one's identity to further avoid the perception of a moral stance on the part of the non-drinker.

Tying the choice of abstinence to personal identity also involves potentially highlighting the positive benefits of the choice. Non-drinkers often feel that this strategy is most true to their identities, as it is a way to hold themselves accountable (Romo, 2012). By making their lifestyle

choice public, non-drinkers reaffirm abstinence as a foundation for their identities. Hopefully, by accentuating the positive aspects of the lifestyle to others, and more importantly, themselves, non-drinkers are able to armor themselves against any potential stigma, real or imagined.

Relational Dialectics Theory

To investigate how drinkers and non-drinkers in a college setting make sense of the meanings of "drinking" and the meanings of "abstinence," as well as how they discursively manage encounters with each other about these topics, I am employing Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) (Baxter, 2011). The following section helps the reader conceptualize RDT.

RDT 1.0. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) first conceived of RDT as a way to address the contradictions they found in their own interpretive research. In particular, they noticed in research interviews, participants would describe a desire to remain independent from their romantic partners in the same passage that they labeled their relationship as a cohesive unit. Baxter and Montgomery noticed that study of these types of contradictions was lacking, as the majority of communication theory was focused on one side of a given contradiction, and not the dialectical tensions themselves. In order to formulate their own theory to address these contradictions, Baxter and Montgomery turned to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), who conceptualized life as being controlled by the dialogue between individuals. And, for Bakhtin, *dialogue* was the convergence of two distinct voices, which, in an "ideal dialogue," merged with one another while remaining unique. The existence of multiple voices reveals the existence of multiple socially constructed realities. Thus, Bakhtin's work in dialogism provided a platform for Baxter and Montgomery to explore the ways individuals contradict each other, and how such contradictions, and the *management* of such contradictions, shapes their respective social realities.

There are a number of dialectical tensions that exist in relationships beyond the first three identified by Baxter and Montgomery, and much of the RDT research that has been conducted since the theory's conception has focused on identifying these tensions (Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Sahlstein, Maguire, & Timmerman, 2009). Although there are several different types of tensions, many of them can be rooted in three dialectics initially discussed in Baxter and Montgomery's original work: *connectedness-separateness, certainty-uncertainty,* and *openness-closedness. Connectedness-separateness* describes the tension that relational partners feel when negotiating the level of autonomy that they should maintain within their relationship. *Certainty-uncertainty* describes the competing desires for stability and novelty in a relationship. Finally, *openness-closedness* describes the tension that occurs between the desire of relational partners to disclose personal information in their relationships while also maintaining a sense of privacy and self. Although these dialectics are discussed in binary terms, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) are quick to label them as "multivocal," meaning that these tensions reveal the many ways of dealing with contradiction on a continuum instead of merely an "either/or" choice. In order to manage these tensions, couples engage in various processes to maintain balance. Examples of these are *spiraling inversion*, during which relational partners focus on different ends of the tensions at different times, and *segmentation*, during which couples choose different places to exist in a dialectic based on topics of discussion and contexts of communication.

 Much of the RDT-based research that has occurred in the wake of the original theory has focused on revealing, and explicating, dialectical tensions within a variety of interpersonal contexts. For example, RDT has been used to describe the process of marriage and the various contradictions that exist within that relational institution (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2002; Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995). Research in the context of marriage also yielded discovery of the

contradictions that outside stressors create for romantic relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite, Golish, & Olson, 2002; Golden, 2010; Sahlstein, 2006; Sahlstein, Maguire, & Timmerman, 2009). RDT has also been employed to study communication relationships in families, where a variety of close relationships can be explained and understood, instead of just two relational partners. Stepfamily communication has been a particularly fruitful context of RDT-based research (Baxter, Braithwaite, Bryant, & Wagner, 2004; Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Braithwaite, Baxter, & Harper, 1998; Braithwaite, Toller, Daas, Durham, & Jones, 2008). These studies focus on hearing from all of the members of stepfamilies to get a full picture of the dialectical tensions at play. More recently, scholars have pushed for RDT-based research to examine the experiences of college students (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011; Rudick & Golsan, 2014; Simmons, Lowery-Hart, Wahl, & McBride, 2013). Whatever it is used to study, RDT has proven to be one of the most commonly employed interpretive theories of the past few decades.

RDT 2.0. Although RDT has been one of the most prominent and profitable theories in communication studies, Baxter (2011) has come to critique her early work, contending that RDT 1.0, while ostensibly based on Bahktin's dialogism, traditionally places too much emphasis on the individual. For Baxter, this focus on individualism privileges psychological processes and de-emphasizes the dialogic communication processes that occur *between* individuals. Baxter also argues that RDT 1.0 research did not attend sufficiently to the role power plays in the tensions within communication processes. Baxter has recently expanded RDT to address these issues.

Baxter (2011) states that "RDT is a theory of relational meaning making—that is, how the meanings surrounding individual and relationship identities are constructed through language use [and in particular how] meanings are wrought from the struggle of competing, often contradictory discourses" (p. 2). Thus, for Baxter, meanings are the myriad ways that any given

concept can be understood. The meaning of a given concept is complex because it exists as a part of a "coherent web of meaning" that Baxter (2011) labels "discourse" (p. 2). Discourses are not comprehensive collections of meaning. Rather, they consist of meanings that are in some way linked with one another. Individuals may approach a particular domain from a different discursive position based on their specific position within social reality (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, age, country of origin, exigencies of the moment, etc.). For example, a student may perceive a course syllabus as merely a guide for how the course will progress, while the professor may perceive it as the final word on course policy. The competition of contradictory discourses is key to the expanded iteration of RDT (RDT 2.0).

Baxter (2011) notes that RDT 2.0 differs from RDT 1.0 in five key ways. First, in RDT 2.0, contradiction is a *discursive* struggle, in which discourses themselves – not individuals – are struggling to coexist. Second, in RDT 2.0 an individual's *utterance* is the "social unit" (Baxter, 2011, p. 18) taking place within a larger chain of communication that includes utterances that are already spoken, as well as anticipated responses. Third, RDT 2.0 is concerned with the interplay of competing discourses. As Baxter (2011) notes, "RDT 2.0 devotes substantially more attention than RDT 1.0 to the ways in which discourses can interpenetrate" (p. 18). This requires the researcher to attend more carefully to particular features of language. Fourth, RDT 2.0 is more concerned with examining power, which allows some discourses to be more central, and therefore more dominant, than other discourses to be marginalized as a result of competition. Lastly, RDT 2.0 elaborates on an interpretive method known as *contrapuntal analysis* as the ideal way to examine the interplay of competing discourses. These five differences represent an overview of RDT 2.0's expansion on the theory's previous iteration. To best understand this new

direction, I will explain in some depth the salient aspects of RDT that have been less prominent in previous RDT-based literature.

Although Bakhtin's (1986) concept of speech events as utterances is articulated in RDT 1.0, RDT 2.0 places far greater focus on this aspect of Bakhtin's theory. For Bakhtin (and Baxter), an utterance is not merely a single thought spoken by an autonomous individual to exist in a vacuum. Rather, an utterance is a link in a larger "chain of speech communion" that is shared by the speaker, listener, and any potential listener. By being a part of this chain, utterances exist in relation to speech that has occurred before, as well as speech that has yet to occur. In order to uncover the systems of meaning at play and their discursive struggles, Baxter suggests that researchers train their research on one or more of four links in this utterance chain. Each of these four links, the *Distal-Already-Spoken,* the *Proximal-Already-Spoken,* the *Proximal-Not-Yet-Spoken,* and the *Distal-Not-Yet-Spoken,* will be discussed here.

The first link of the utterance chain, the *Distal-Already-Spoken* refers to the greater cultural discourses that influence how we communicate with one another. These cultural discourses also influence our individual identities, as well as the identities that we form in our social relationships (e.g., "Drinking is what college students do"). The second link in the utterance chain, the *Proximal-Already-Spoken*, concerns the past history of relational partners. This is the site where all of the previous interactions that relational partners have shared with one another influence their communication in a present utterance (e.g., "We've been going out to the bars together since second semester"). The third link in the utterance chain, the *Proximal-Not-Yet-Spoken,* focuses on a communicator's anticipation of what a relational partner will say next and their attempt to adjust their messages accordingly (e.g., "You didn't want to go out on Friday night, so I assumed you wouldn't want to go out tonight"). In other words, the proximal-not-yet-

spoken is the link where interaction partners engage in a dance of anticipatory judgment and the management of competition between discourses. The final link in the utterance chain, the *Distal-Not-Yet-Spoken*, describes the anticipated evaluation of an interaction by a hypothetical listener. This is the link in which we assume that an imagined audience who "watches" our conversation will judge our interactions. In essence, relational partners are not only concerned with the potential judgment of those present in the conversation; they are also concerned with how this conversation would appear to an outsider (e.g., "Everyone is going to think I'm a prude if I turn down this drink"). In sum, these four links in the utterance chain help scholars account for both personal and cultural influences on relational discourse across different moments in time.

In addition to the utterance chain, RDT 2.0 provides a renewed focus on the role power plays in the competition of discourses. For Baxter (2011), power exists in systems of meaning (discourses) "through which social reality as we know it is constructed" (p. 124). Baxter notes that in a given discursive struggle, one discourse will be more powerful than the other. This more powerful discourse is labeled as centripetal, as this discourse is at the center of ongoing discussion. The less powerful discourse is labeled as centrifugal, as it exists in the margins of communication. Which discourse is more central depends on a number of factors, most notably the culture and context in which the discourses exist. For example, the relative position of discourse concerning the value of college education with regard to its centripetality/centrifugality would be different if it were taking place in a meeting of college professors than it would in a factory break room, as these are two cultures that have different orientations to higher education.

These four links in the utterance chain represent potential sites of communication research for a new generation of RDT-driven scholars. By conceptualizing utterances as ongoing links in a chain concerned with the past, present, and future on both personal and cultural levels,

communication researchers can see discourse as an ongoing and fluid process that manages the power that various systems of meaning hold in our lives. By examining communication at one or more of these four links, researchers can identify which discourses are central and which are relegated to the margins, giving them a more complete picture of interpersonal communication as it affects social reality at large.

The recent qualitative research by Romo (2012) and Herman-Kinney & Kinney (2013) enabled college non-drinkers to tell their stories and reveal their coping strategies in ways that have not yet been seen in academic literature. These nascent research streams deal specifically with the feelings of stigma related to a perceived deviance of nondrinking behavior. Particular reasons for non-drinking and coping strategies are identified from the perspectives of non-drinkers. Further, previous research that has sought to investigate college drinking has been conducted with the assumption that drinking is a "normative behavior." To date, research examining the utterances that reside in discursive struggles in the coexistence of drinkers and non-drinkers has yet to occur. To analyze these discursive struggles, both drinkers and non-drinkers must be permitted to discuss their experiences and how they communicatively negotiate their positions within a college context. This study seeks to examine the meanings that form the discourses of college drinking and abstinence, as well as examine the ways that these discourses compete. Therefore, I posit the following research questions:

RQ 1: What does "drinking" mean for college drinkers and non-drinkers?

RQ 2: What does "abstinence" mean for college drinkers and non-drinkers?

RQ 3: How do college drinkers and non-drinkers discursively manage encounters with one another?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the discursive struggles between drinkers and non-drinkers in a college setting. To provide context for the reader, I have described the culture of drinking in college, discussed the various definitions of "dangerous drinking," explored the challenges non-drinkers face in college, and discussed the evolution of my chosen theoretical frame, Relational Dialectics Theory. Research was conducted in the service of exploring the following research questions:

RQ 1: What does "drinking" mean for college drinkers and non-drinkers?

RQ 2: What does "abstinence" mean for college drinkers and non-drinkers?

RQ 3: How do college drinkers and non-drinkers discursively manage encounters with one another?

To gather the data necessary to answer my research questions, I first used focus group procedures. Next, I analyzed these data using contrapuntal analysis, (Baxter, 2011). Neither my data-gathering method, nor my data-analysis method has been used before in this particular research context.

Focus Group Procedure

Focus groups can be defined as "small groups of people with particular characteristics convened for a focused discussion of a particular topic" (Hollander, 2004, p. 606). Participants are brought to the group due to a shared experience with the hope that their stories will build upon one another throughout the session. The ideal range of participants for a focus group is six to 12 people (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). More than six are recommended in order to hear a diverse selection of opinions on a subject, and less than 12 are recommended in order to ensure that every opinion is heard and that the discussion will remain

focused. The key difference between focus groups and one-on-one interviewing, aside from the size of the groups, is that participants are encouraged to respond to one another, in addition to the researcher (Nestel, et al., 2012).

This sense of collaboration is only one of many benefits of focus group methodology. Participants often feel valued when participating in focus groups and the interviewers feel that a relationship has been formed between themselves and the participants (Nestel, et al., 2012). This is due to the fact that participants' insights are listened to by a group of peers. Focus groups benefit from tapping into an existing community and creating new relationships within this community that may not have otherwise formed. Focus groups also allow for the potential to create a collective perspective among participants, enabling researchers to synthesize the information and knowledge gained from the experience (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips, & Davidson, 2007). Participants can tell their stories, which may seem insignificant on their own, and turn them into a part of a larger, more contributive tale. Participants may even find a spiritual benefit to sharing their stories in focus groups, creating a liminal space that enables a transformation of self (Moloney, 2011). Focus groups can potentially create an environment in which participants are able to see first-hand that the research being conducted has benefits for them.

Focus groups have been employed as a way to evaluate life in an academic environment, specifically that of a first-year graduate medical program (Nestel, et al., 2012). Although this instance of focus group methodology was primarily focused on improving the graduate program itself, researchers noted that these focus groups allowed medical students to provide a more honest and accurate picture of life in their program through an increased comfort with participation. Focus group methodology led the respondents to reveal more and do so with

increased security (Nestel, et al., 2012). Focus groups have also been used to examine the alcohol behaviors of young people, specifically as they relate to the issue of social capital (Demant & Jarvinen, 2011). In this study, focus groups allowed the researchers to watch as norms involving alcohol were negotiated among the group in real time, providing the researchers with a much more accurate representation of social norms and social capital.

A focus group methodology is potentially useful for furthering the emerging area of research around the discursive struggle of non-drinking because the topic is one that is likely to be sensitive for those involved. Further, Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) assert that when focus groups are employed to examine interpersonal communication, they may be useful in producing data related to social power. . Therefore, focus groups serve as a useful tool to reveal power at play within discursive struggle. Finally, a focus group configuration has yet to be employed to gather data in this specific research context. Previous qualitative research involving non-drinkers and their stigmatization has employed only one-on-one interviews to collect data (Romo, 2012; Herman-Kinney & Kinney, 2013). Focus group methodology has the potential to reveal a wider range of topics or more of a consensus of themes than the previous few studies. This, as well as its collaborative nature, its ability to allow for a combined narrative among participants, and its ability to create a safe environment for discussing sensitive subjects are reasons why I chose to employ focus groups as my method for data collection.

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval, participants, all of whom were at least 21 years of age, were recruited by soliciting upper-level (300 and 400) Communication Studies classes at Ball State University using an approved recruitment script (See Appendix A). Based on contact sheet responses (See Appendix B), participants were divided into one of two focus groups: one

comprised of students who report as drinkers, and one comprised of students who report as non-drinkers. The date and time of each focus group was negotiated through e-mail. The drinkers' focus group consisted of 6 participants, 2 male and 4 female; ages ranged from 21 to 24. The non-drinkers' focus group consisted of 4 participants, all female; ages ranged from 22 to 24. To protect their identities, participants were invited to provide pseudonyms for themselves at the beginning of each focus group. Before each focus group began, participants signed informed consent forms, which explained the goals of the project and their rights as participants (see Appendix C). I moderated the focus groups in person with a structured script of questions for drinkers (see Appendix D) and non-drinkers (see Appendix E) in the David Letterman Building Observation Room (LB 220). Each of the focus group sessions lasted approximately 90 minutes. To ensure accuracy, all interviews were audio-recorded and personally transcribed by myself.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the six-step method of contrapuntal analysis, which Baxter (2011) adapted from the work of Braun and Clarke (2006). I will outline these steps and describe the way in which I fulfilled them.

Step one: Becoming familiar with the data set. Baxter (2011) suggests that being sufficiently familiar with the data entails working with the data in all aspects as a researcher. This includes, at the very least, partially transcribing the interviews and reading them from beginning to end to get a sense of what the data includes. As described above, I conducted the focus groups and completely transcribed them verbatim. The two focus groups together comprise 51 pages, which I read through a number of times. Thus, through my work with the data at every level, I achieved Baxter's requirements for familiarity.

Step two: Generating initial coding categories. Coding categories, as Baxter describes them, are derived from passages in the data that answer some analytic (research) question, Coding categories are identified when a passage in the data appears to provide an answer to the research question. The researcher then reads the textual data until the point of saturation, when the researcher can identify no new code categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis of the transcripts in the current study yielded 99 distinct initial coding categories, some of which were present in both focus groups. For example, the coding category "alcohol equals vulnerability" is an initial coding category derived from the drinker's focus group. This category consists of textual examples such as "[my] filter gets fuzzy" and "I'm paranoid I'm saying something wrong." These examples describe the vulnerable feelings that drinkers have when under the influence of alcohol.

Step three: Generating themes (discourses). In this step, coding categories are examined and reorganized into larger systems of meaning, which are labeled "themes." Like the previous step, this process continues until the point of saturation. A given coding category may belong to more than one theme. At this stage, discursive struggles can be identified. For example, in my own theme generation process, the coding category of "alcohol equals vulnerability" is a part of a larger theme of "drinkers portraying themselves as victims." This theme deals with the discursive struggle of expression in which drinkers are concerned about their ability to represent themselves when inebriated and feel limited in their ability to do so.

Step four: Reviewing the themes (discourses). This stage serves as a check of the identified themes. For this study, I considered themes valid and worthy of reporting if they met any of Owen's (1984) three criteria of "(1) recurrence, (2) repetition, and (3) forcefulness" (p. 275).

Step five: Defining and naming themes. Themes/discourses are finalized and defined in this stage. Baxter (2011) suggests that additional validity checks should be undertaken, such as researcher triangulation and member checking. My coding was checked at all phases by my faculty advisor.

Step six: Locating exemplars. Exemplars that capture the essential meaning of a given theme/discourse are chosen in this stage. These exemplars should illuminate all of the work of the previous steps. Up until this point, the analysis I have described bears no significant difference from a typical thematic analysis performed by many qualitative researchers. However, the next portion of the analysis represents the "contrapuntal" analysis, where researchers are required to examine whether the discourses identified previously compete.

Discursive markers. Baxter (2011) borrows three linguistic markers from the work of Martin and White (2005), to identify discourses as competing with one another: *Negating*, *countering*, and *entertaining*. Linguistic markers in the *negating* category contain phrases such as "I don't" or "I can't" and they function to refute/negate a centrifugal discourse. For example, the sentence "I can't see myself as someone who doesn't drink" negates the position of those who do. *Countering* markers contain phrases such as "however" and "but." These serve to replace an alternative discursive position. Consider the statement "we're friends, but we don't hang out when I party on the weekends." This passage counters the idea that friends must spend time with each other on the weekend and be part of each other's "drinking lives." *Entertaining* is a discursive marker that opens the possibility of multiple positions with phrases like "on the other hand" and "it's possible that." For example, the statement that "it's possible that we would be closer if she drank" opens up a new way of speaking by providing the possibility that the

statement may be untrue. In the current study, these discourse markers were analyzed in interview transcripts to determine the nature of the discursive struggles at play.

Scholars employing contrapuntal analysis do not stop at identifying competing discourses. They are also concerned with how these competing discourses interact with one another and vie for discursive power along the centripetal-centrifugal continuum. Borrowing from the work of Deetz (1992), Baxter (2011) has identified a number of discursive moves to illustrate this discursive struggle. First, Baxter illustrates contractive practices–those turns in discourse that attempt to marginalize one discourse so that another might achieve total prominence (monologue). Contractive practices include *disqualification*, *naturalization*, *neutralization*, *topic avoidance*, *subjectification of experience,* and *pacification*. *Disqualification* is a discursive move where a speaker is denied voice due to "lack of expertise." *Naturalization* is where the centripetal discourse is discussed as if it occurs naturally, or as a matter of course. *Neutralization –* or *camouflage,* as Baxter calls it- occurs when value-laden statements are treated as objective truth. *Topic avoidance* occurs when certain alternative positions are labeled as taboo. *Subjectification of experience* describes the process of delegitimizing other's discursive positions by claiming they are personal opinions held by individuals, thus removing the power of social construction (e.g., "You are the *only* one who thinks I drank too much last night."). Finally, *pacification* silences competing discourses by claiming that conflict is not worth the trouble and partners should "agree to disagree."

Baxter also employs some of the expansive practices identified by Martin and White (2005), that make a move toward idealized dialogue between discourses. These include the previously mentioned *entertaining* discursive marker, in which the possibility of multiple positions is opened through language, as well as a linguistic marker known as *attributing*, which

credits others for their discursive positions, thus acknowledging the existence of several voices. This list of discursive moves (See Appendix F) that Baxter (2011) has chosen to provide in her initial discussion of contrapuntal analysis is by no means exhaustive. As the use of RDT 2.0 in communication research continues to grow in the coming years, scholars may find more of these linguistic markers, just as they mapped many types of dialectical contradictions that extended well beyond those originally theorized by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). Which of these linguistic markers were at play within the discursive struggles of the current study will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Analytic Locus Within the Chain of Speech Communion

Before I begin the analysis, it is profitable to locate for the reader the specific analytic locus of my study along Baxter's chain of speech communion, as well as frame the specific culture in which the analysis takes place. As Baxter (2011) notes, the chain of speech communion consists of four main links that serve as the sites of competing discourses: the distal already-spoken, the proximal already-spoken, the proximal not-yet-spoken, and the distal not-yet-spoken. This analysis only focuses on the first, the distal already-spoken, for two reasons: First, the data that were analyzed for this analysis came from focus group interviews, which were comprised mostly of self-reports of past interactions. The other three links in the chain require analysis of specific utterances in a close personal relationship while the communication is in process. It would be irresponsible to claim that any utterances reported in this study exist at these three sites without the appropriate data. Second, distal already-spokens are sites that illustrate how existing cultural ideas affect our ability to make meaning of our existence, including our relationships. As this study was created with the goal of exploring how the choice of abstaining from, or imbibing in, alcohol affects relationships with the "opposite" group in a culture largely supportive of alcohol behaviors, analysis of the competition between cultural discourses is an appropriate form of analysis.

Ball State University: A Culture of College Alcohol Use

Ball State University, our specific cultural site, is a medium-sized, public research university in the Midwestern United States. Specifically, Ball State is located in Muncie, Indiana, a town with around 70,000 residents (BSU, 2014). Muncie is sometimes referred to as "Middletown, U.S.A." and is the home to the Center for Middletown Studies (BSU, 2014). An

average of 21,000 undergraduate and graduate students enroll at Ball State each year (BSU,

2014). While research has examined the overall trend of high alcohol usage in campuses across

the nation (Johnston et al., 2011; White et al., 2008), they do not speak of the cultural norms of

Ball State specifically. However, in order to get a sense of how alcohol exists within the culture

of Ball State, one would only need to peruse the campus newspaper, *Ball State Daily News*.

According to an article by Christopher Stephens in *Ball State Daily News* (2013), excise officers

arrested 64 people for underage drinking during the first two weekends of the most recent

academic year. Further, some students at Ball State have altered their diets so that they can feel

stronger effects from alcohol (Lange, 2014). The importance of alcohol to events such as

Halloween parties and football games is evident from other articles in the *Ball State Daily News,*

where students are advised to focus their economic planning toward buying alcohol during

holidays (Demaree, 2013). Parents are even cited as a potential source of drinking knowledge

that can be passed on to students to enrich their college experience (Ervin, 2013). These

snapshots of local life clearly mark alcohol as a prominent part of the Ball State experience.

Although both drinkers and non-drinkers were interviewed in separate focus groups,

similar themes emerged from analysis of the data from each group. Both groups were concerned

with the norms of acceptable drinking behavior among college-aged students and how those

norms were enacted. Both groups discussed the socially acceptable reasons for abstaining from

alcohol use and considered the validity of these reasons. Additionally, similar discursive markers

were revealed in the analysis of both focus groups, although these markers were employed in

slightly different ways. Perhaps most interestingly, both groups noted negative feelings

associated with interaction with the opposite group, with drinkers remarking on discomfort they

felt and non-drinkers expressing marginalization. In the following analysis, I will explore these

themes and analyze how they surfaced in both focus groups. I will analyze what "drinking" means and what "abstinence" means for drinkers and non-drinkers in a college setting, as well as how the two groups discursively manage encounters with each other.

Theme One: The Meaning of "Drinking"

Drinkers. Members of the drinkers' focus group were often relaxed when discussing a typical weekend—in which drinking invariably featured prominently. For example, Glenda[2] easily listed different places that she and her girlfriends went for the weekend, citing a well-entrenched routine:

> Um, usually on Thursdays…me and my three really good girlfriends go to Puerta and we get margaritas and we complain about our lives in those superficial ways. And then…we start off at The Chug and get a drink or two. And we say that we're going to do karaoke but we never do. And then two of my friends want to go to Dill and we go to Dill and try to make sure that they're okay throughout the night.

In this excerpt, Glenda makes references to several local places that are identified as weekend destinations. This passage is steeped in assumed cultural knowledge of drinking destinations. From this excerpt, potential listeners are expected to recognize various locales as being ideal for the consumption of margaritas, the singing of karaoke, and that one specific location should cause concern for one's friends. These facts are not directly stated because Glenda implies that everyone listening should have a basic cultural understanding of this type of situation. Additionally, the word "usually" serves as what Deetz (1992) would label as the contractive practice of *naturalization*, which functions to make this weekend routine one of absolute normalcy. "Usually" means that this is what normally happens on the weekend. Thus, "drinking"

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[2] Pseudonyms have been used to protect all participants' identities.

is simply part and parcel of the weekend's normal activities; it is how the weekend should be understood.

Additionally, participants speak of the importance of alcohol in various rituals involving drinking, such as "birthdays," "tailgating," and "St. Patrick's Day," which is consistent with previous research concerning rituals marked by drinking (Neighbors, et al., 2011). And, as the following excerpt demonstrates, at certain events such as the Super Bowl, those in the drinking group had difficulty comprehending enjoying the event without alcohol.

Angie: What do you do during the Super Bowl when you don't drink? Like you don't want to watch the game if you're team's not playing. You're there to drink.

[All laugh]

Frank: Eat a lot of cheese balls.

Angie: Like, I just think that's what people DO.

Another participant, Gretchen, spoke clearly to the centripetal position of alcohol in the discourse at Ball State University when she stated that "I feel like. . . if you go to Ball State and you're. . . immersed in the type of community, there almost has to be a reason [to abstain] it's like it's not a surprise that you're surrounded by it."

Perhaps the most emphatic utterance concerning alcohol's centripetal position at Ball State, and in the larger cultural discourse that signifies "drinking" as an appropriate behavior for university life, is the following exchange:

Frank: I don't think I HAVE to, but I definitely think I do. It's just this is what my friends do on the weekend. You don't want to just be like "Hey, let's go sit down in a park together" it's more like "Hey, let's go get some drinks together," you know? It's just like the thing that brings people together. It's like a place of community.

Regina: Yeah. It's just like fun. . . .Yeah. It's part of like an activity. Just like people go

out to dinner, like people go out and drink as something to do with friends or family.

Barney: Yeah. Especially in, like, the college culture.

More broadly, participants in the drinkers' group placed drinking as a behavior that signifies

adulthood. One participant, Angie, notes, "I see myself as the kind of adult that throws…parties,

and is an entertainer. So…I definitely see myself as having a glass of wine with dinner….as an

adult with a husband and kids. That's how I was raised so I don't think anything's wrong with

it." Similarly, Regina explained:

Yeah, I think honestly…in our culture that [drinking] is part of being an adult.

Like, adults drink. Most adults. I think that's just what you do. It shouldn't be a

"drinker" or a "non-drinker," it's just you're an adult, so you drink adult

beverages.

These excerpts are steeped in the contractive move of naturalization. Angie expressed that

drinking is what you do at Super Bowl parties, a statement echoed by Regina's later discussion

of adult behavior. "That's what you do" rings with the authority that alcohol is a central part of

adulthood and college life. For Regina, it is not a matter of drinking responsibly; it is a matter of

illustrating acceptance of responsibility *by drinking*. Further, Angie expresses that alcohol is a

natural part of her ideal adult life and that this information has been passed down through her

upbringing. Gretchen reveals the specific cultural discourse of drinking at Ball State with a

similar linguistic turn toward naturalization. Further, Frank rejects the notion of engaging in

communal college activity without the presence of alcohol. These utterances carry with them

cultural norms and expectations of drinking as a natural part of college life and adulthood. These

contractive moves in language establish the power of drinking as the centripetal discourse of

adult life in general, and college life in particular. It is not a matter of *choosing* to consume

alcohol, as drinking is the normative behavior in which one *must* engage to be a proper college

student and adult. It is a matter of accepting that this is the behavior you *should* enact. Through

naturalization, the phrase "adult beverages" moves from euphemism to instruction.

This discussion of drinking as central part of college life, as well as a signifier of

adulthood, clearly frames "drinking" as the normative behavior in college life. The power that

these discourses hold in the college environment is made apparent in how easily the participants

discussed the sites of their alcohol rituals. This power is not only apparent in the ease with which

they are discussed, but also from the implicit expectation that a listener should know what is

being discussed.

Non-drinkers. Like drinkers, non-drinkers construct a complex meaning for "drinking"

and "drinker.". One participant, Penelope, was quick to note that the identifier of "drinker"

should only come with a high amount of alcohol use. She states "…if they're drinking enough to

be labeled a 'drinker'…I think of somebody who takes it… over the top." Penelope speaks to the

idea that "drinker" suggests a high level of alcohol use, potentially to the point of abuse.

Members of the non-drinker's group not only provided nuance to the label of "drinker," they

discussed the idea that there are different types of drinkers who exist based on the amount of

alcohol they consume. Another participant, Rachel explains:

> I can't picture just one…type of person as a drinker. Um, I think of a couple
>
> different things: I think of the person that goes out to the bars or the girl that's
>
> running around acting like an idiot because she's drunk and she's falling all over
>
> the place or just guys that are hanging out or just groups of people that are all just
>
> having a good time. Like, there's the social drinker and then there's just like the

drinker that like HAS to have that drink. And so, like, I think that there's just a lot

of different types of drinkers so I can't just identify one person with that word.

Rachel continues by describing these two types of drinkers as "social drinkers" and "party

drinkers." This distinction at first seems to recognize that drinking is a varied activity and that

there is no such thing as a singular "drinker." Teja also speaks of the effect that college culture

has on drinking when she states, "not all drinkers get drunk, that's just kind of…the society that

we live in." The identification of "society" suggests that existence within college culture that

gives drinking a meaning of drinking to excess or as a means to inebriation.

Non-drinkers also noted these multiple meanings in their family history. Teja recalls,

"…someone is always drunk at like our family things." However, she is quick to add, "…but

they're not all alcoholics. They're not just sitting home drunk all the time and having to be

picked up from wherever they are from getting wasted but they do drink all of the time."

Penelope adds a similar discussion:

> My family's like that too. Like my Mom's whole side of the family is…they're all
>
> drinkers. Nobody gets…well, I don't want to say that *nobody* gets embarrassing.
>
> Um, it's definitely like at family functions like a big part of like the family culture
>
> (emphasis added).

Non-drinkers speak of many meanings associated with "drinking." "Drinking" denotes both

drinking to excess and looking foolish as well as spending time with peers in a social way.

"Drinking" also reminds non-drinkers of their family behavior. Further, various types of drinking

behavior are identified as present in family history. Thus, non-drinkers are using discursive

markers of *entertaining* in these passages to allow for a larger variety of meanings (Martin &

White, 2005). Through the expansive practice of entertaining, non-drinkers are allowing for the

potential of many different types of college drinkers who bring multiple systems of meaning to the discussion.

Theme Two: The Meaning of "Abstinence"

  Drinkers. "Abstinence" is also a term around which discursive struggles are at play. On one hand, acknowledging a variety of reasons for abstaining from alcohol functions to invite multiple meanings into discussion. On the other hand, the discourse of non-drinking is frequently pushed to the margins by a mandate that non-drinking must come with some kind of reason or explanation to be legitimized within the dominant discourse.

  The meaning of "abstinence" that is most in accordance with the meaning of alcohol as "adult behavior" that is a part centripetal discourse is that a non-drinker could be acting as the Designated Driver (DD) for the night. Drinkers agreed about the necessity of the DD to ensure the safety of individuals. Drinkers also spoke of the act of being a DD as an honorable undertaking. One participant expressed that being a good DD is a "skill." Participants also expressed a sense of camaraderie associated with deciding to be a DD. The task of a DD is to look out for one's friends and make sure that they are okay. Drinkers are quick to assume that if a person is at a site where drinking is a primary activity and they are not drinking, that they must be acting as a DD. This perception of non-drinking as a temporary undertaking allows the dominant discourse to remain unchallenged.

  Designated Driving is not the only acceptable meaning of "non-drinking" identified by drinkers. Drinkers also listed reasons related to mental and physical health, as well as personal faith as acceptable reasons for abstaining. Drinkers noted that non-drinkers might choose to abstain due to a past mental trauma, such as recovery from addiction or personal loss. Drinkers also note that people may choose to abstain from alcohol out of a desire to remain in control of

their behavior. Drinkers also recognize the health benefits that come with the choice of abstinence. One participant, Barney, observes the following about non-drinking:

> …someone has made a decision, whether it's faith,…personal pact, you know, whatever the case may be…"that I'm not going to drink." You know, "I just don't want to poison my body" if you will.

The use of the phrase "poison my body" acknowledges that there are health risks involved with choosing to drink. This passage also acknowledges that one's decision not to drink can come from a place of faith, establishing another acceptable reason for abstaining. These acknowledgements of many reasons for abstinence function as what Martin and White (2005) identify as the expansive discursive practice of *attributing*. Through this acknowledgement of multiple reasons for abstaining from alcohol use, the members of the drinkers' focus group are also acknowledging the voices of many non-drinkers who abstain for many different reasons. By attributing different hypothetical reasons for abstinence, drinkers are opening the possibility for different hypothetical non-drinking discourses to exist in the larger conversation.

One drinker, Regina, also expressed a tension between acquaintances and close friends when discussing the extent to which she accepted a person's reason for abstaining from drinking. She describes it thus:

> I think it depends on who the person is that says they're a non-drinker. Somebody you don't know very well, or for me personally, I'm more accepting of that. But, if I was going out with my friends and my friend was like "I'm not drinking," usually everyone is like "Why not?! Come on! You're being such a party pooper!" or whatever. You know…if you're friends with them, you are more judgmental towards them than if it was a stranger.

Regina expresses a larger threat to centripetal discourse from friends, who are required to provide stronger reasons for choosing not to drink than someone who matters less to her. A possible explanation for this is that Regina wishes for her friends to have values that are consistent with her own. By having similarity in close relationships, Regina is able to avoid any potential contradiction in these relationships in regards to drinking. As her own values are those with centripetal power, it is much easier for Regina to exist in a reality where her positions on drinking are not challenged by those closest to her.

If there are behaviors and attitudes that are deemed acceptable for non-drinkers in the eyes of drinkers, then there are likely to also be behaviors and attitudes that are unacceptable. The drinkers who were interviewed unanimously agreed that they felt that non-drinkers who do not have adequate reasons for abstaining or fail to adhere to the centripetal discourse, are viewed as "judgmental" by those who drink. As Frank explains, "Like, when I hear 'I'm a non-drinker' I'm thinking 'Oh, you're judging me because I have a beer in my hand right now, or whatever.'" The utterances "I'm a non-drinker" and "I don't drink" were continuously reported by drinkers as a cause of disruption in discourse. Drinkers often shared stories of approaching others in a bar or at a party, and this other person revealing that they are a non-drinker. In these cases, the utterance "I don't drink" functions as the contractive discursive maker of *topic avoidance*, since topic avoidance involves marking a subject as taboo and inappropriate for discussion (Deetz, 1992). In the eyes of drinkers, non-drinkers use this utterance as a way to avoid inviting the discourse of college drinking into their discussion. Further, drinkers respond to this utterance with suspicion that they are being judged.

Angie illustrates this apprehension in how she reacts to the revelation of non-drinking as a choice:

So, [laughs] when . . .people say that they're not…a drinker it does come off like

a judgment thing to me because it's like they felt the need to…point out that

they're not a drinker. And…sometimes I come home in the shambliest state

possible. I don't want to associate myself with someone who is like, "Well, if you

didn't go drinking you wouldn't be so hung-over today, so…"

In this passage, she illustrates using her own form of topic avoidance as a reaction to the

contractive practice of sharing status as a non-drinker. Angie's response to the threat to the

discourse of drinking as a source of enjoyment in her life is to eliminate the existence of non-

drinking voices completely. Angie is able to perpetuate the cycle of discursive contraction,

further denying non-drinking discourses as a part of her life specifically, and college culture in

general. This further establishes the centripetal nature of drinking discourse, where drinkers have

the power to require non-drinkers to come up with reasons for abstaining without providing any

reasons to justify their own behavior. Challenges to this discourse bring drinkers distress and

feelings of powerlessness, so they must be dealt with to maintain discursive order.

Non-drinkers. Participants abstaining from alcohol also made sense of their "abstinence"

and how they choose to disclose this information to drinkers in multiple ways. Non-drinkers

listed health concerns, religious morality, personal trauma, and motherhood as reasons for why

they do not drink. These reasons fall within what is considered "socially acceptable" by the

dominant discourse. However, they are often revealed in accordance with other reasons. One

participant, Rachel, notes:

I mean, I have a couple of different reasons why I don't drink. When I was a

sophomore, I used to drink a lot more often and go out and try to be like a college

kid. And last year it just kind of all was like, "What's the point of this?" And after

I turned 21 I realized that I see people all the time and I'm like "you act so stupid, and like I don't want to act that way." So that's part of the reason, because I just don't want to make a fool out of myself. Another reason is my stomach just does not like liquor. I get really sick the next day. And for me it's just really not worth it anymore. And…I've had issues with my boyfriend because he's a drinker and he drinks…very often [nervous laugh]. Um, and we've had a lot of issues when we drink, so, he's another big reason why I don't drink. Because I didn't like fighting with him for no reason just because we were…drunk.

Another participant, Teja, expresses a similarly complicated reason for abstaining from alcohol:

Um, I have a lot of different reasons, but the main reasons would be…and I've never ever had alcohol before, so, but I didn't grow up around it, like, my parents don't drink. We've never had it in the house and um [pause] I've been raised in the church my whole life, and so church is where they really teach—not like that you're a sinner if you drink. But, drinking is not really something that um Christians should be seen like doing. Because in the Bible it says…that you're not supposed to get drunk and all that stuff. And so I figured, just to stay away from that stuff completely, that way I'm never tempted or I never cross that line. But, also…I don't want to look like an idiot in front of people, 'cause I think that when you're drunk, that's pretty much what happens. It's expensive and I wouldn't want to buy it.

Present in these excerpts are negating discourse markers. Rachel frames her abstinence as a desire to avoid social approbation (didn't want to "act foolishly" any longer) and a relational

dilemma (didn't want to fight with her boyfriend). Here, alcohol serves as the source of foolish behavior and interpersonal conflict (which is also present in Teja's passage). Rachel makes this connection without the presence of the competing discourse, thus negating it's usefulness to her life. She sees the social capital that she stands to lose from behaving poorly as greater than what she stands to gain by adhering to the expectations of college drinking. Rachel also seems to associate alcohol with a source of interpersonal conflict with her boyfriend. Yet, she is hesitant to place him in the category of the party drinker, or to discuss the specifics of their conflict. Teja also negates the possibility that Christian morality and alcohol can coexist. Her assertions that her family never drank and drinking is not something that Christians should do are the prevailing way of speaking. Here, the potential argument that alcohol can be consumed in accordance with Christianity is invalidated before it can be uttered.

Rachel and Teja also provide slight contradiction to their positions by making contractive moves to limit their own discourse. Rachel expresses a desire to keep from being sick, which not only places the decision to abstain in the realm of convenience, but also demonstrates a subjectification of her own experience. She takes ownership of her health-related problems with alcohol use, which removes the cultural implications of her decision. Further, she does this through one of the reasons that the centripetal discourse has deemed "socially acceptable." Teja employs a countering discursive move to temper her discussion of Christian morality. While she frames the choice to abstain as a moral choice, she notes that drinking is not a sin. This effectively counters her moral stand, thus making sure that her disclosure of her abstinence presents less of a challenge to the dominant discourse.

Theme Three: The Discursive Management of Encounters

    Drinkers. Drinkers and non-drinkers discursively managed encounters with one another in a number of ways. Perhaps the most illuminating finding of discussing alcohol behaviors with college drinkers was discovering that they often feel uncomfortable by the challenge presented by non-drinkers. Their predominant claim is that non-drinkers are violating a cultural expectation by simply being present at the bar. This violation comes in the form of being sober at the bar where the expectation is that everyone around is inebriated. Drinkers lament losing a conversational filter when they are inebriated. The loss of this filter leaves them feeling anxious and even vulnerable. Glenda explains, "I get nervous because like when my filter is like fuzzy, I can talk about ANYTHING. And then like the next day or morning or whatever, I would think like 'What the hell was I thinking?'" Here, Glenda voices the potential of embarrassment and shame from being inebriated in front of those who are sober. She shares also shares a story where this potential was realized:

    …it was just one of those things where I had every intention of drinking a lot that

    night. And I was at the Chug and I had pre-gamed, you know, a little goofy. You

    know, I just, when I-when I'm a little tipsy I like to converse with people. So, I

    sat down next to some girl who was like sitting down by herself and I'm like "So,

    what's up?! How are you doin'?" And she just looked at me with—like I didn't

    even ask—she was just like "I don't drink." And, it was just SO uncomfortable

    cause…like my mind was SO fuzzy and…I probably took a long time to reply. I

    probably paused for about ten seconds trying to think of something non…drunk to

    say. It just made me feel uncomfortable because I didn't even ask her like "Hey,

    what are you drinking tonight?" She—it was almost, it was in a very judgmental

tone. It was in a very like, "I don't drink. Get away from me." And it's not like I

was a guy saying "Hey! Let me buy you a drink!"

As alluded, feeling embarrassed or awkward is not the only fear for drinkers in this

situation. Barney described the challenge presented by non-drinkers:

I would say vulnerable. Because…filter gets fuzzy, you start talking about things

you may not necessarily talk about when you're sober…you may have disclosed

some things you otherwise wouldn't. You're just like "Probably shouldn't have

said that to this person." And I think another one might be, you may just feel

[pause] I don't want to say self conscious because I don't think that's the right

term I want to use here. Maybe just reevaluate like how drunk you are. Like

"Why am I this drunk? Is there something that I can maybe do next time to where

I can start not getting so drunk, but just stay more at a lower level buzzed."

In Glenda's story there are both feelings of shame and vulnerability, as well as introspection

leading to a momentary change in behavior. The utterance "I don't drink" brought about a wave

of various uncomfortable feelings that effectively shut the conversation down. Similarly, the

constant pressure of saying the right thing while in an inebriated state caused Barney to

reevaluate his drinking behavior. The presence of a non-drinker made Barney feel vulnerable and

uncomfortable to the point that he considered finding a way to change his behavior to more

closely match that of a non-drinker. Again, the contractive move of "I don't drink" causes a

break in the conversation and a shift in the power dynamic between the two parties. These

situations force drinkers to deal with changes in the centripetal/centrifugal struggle.

One way that drinkers manage this power shift is by using their own form of contractive

practice: topic avoidance. Angie reveals:

Yeah, I can't really say…that I'm friends with a lot of non-drinkers. It's not that I

don't keep them around on purpose, it's just that my lifestyle gravitates more

towards people who, I guess are interested in fun, and, fun for me, I guess, is

going out and living.

Here, Angie states that she has avoided spending time with non-drinkers because they do not

represent her idea of a fun life. She has made non-drinking a nonexistent topic in her life by

avoiding association with anyone who may challenge this lifestyle. Drinkers may also turn to this

contractive practice in conversation. Barney recalls:

I want to say it was my 21st or 22nd [birthday] , and it was actually one of my

friends. She typically drinks when we go out, but she chose not to drink that night.

[S]he may have been DDing or just trying not to do anything really stupid, but, I

had forgotten or was just oblivious to the fact that she had not been drinking. I

maybe thought that she was drinking that night. Then, we were at the bar, um I

was probably yelling over the music and like I'm drunk, so the voice goes up

anyway, and then…I don't think she came out and was like "Hey, I'm not

drinking." I think it like washed over me, like I remembered like "Shit. She's not

drinking tonight." And then I was just like "I'm gonna go talk to these people

over here and I will see you later." Because I just…I would just want to avoid the

awkward situation and everything like that.

When faced with a form of the utterance "I'm not drinking," Barney chose to disengage from

discussion as a way to save face and avoid awkwardness. However, through this use of topic

avoidance as a defense mechanism, Barney shut down any discussion he might have had with his

friend that night.

Non-drinkers. Non-drinkers often expressed feelings of marginalization, noting that they are denied participation in activities that involve drinking. Additionally they are expected to manage friendships with drinkers more than drinkers are expected to reciprocate. As Frank, a member of the drinkers' focus group, states:

> I don't want to say that it's like the ball is in the non-drinker's court with the relationship. But, I definitely think that…if they're not intentional about hanging and like keeping that going and doing stuff together….It just kind of falls apart a little bit.

Implicit in this statement is the power of the discourse of college drinking. College is a drinker's world, and, if non-drinkers wish to participate in this world, they must go the extra mile and be more active. Further, non-drinkers must make sure that they police themselves when they do engage the dominant discourse. If they present contradiction, they risk losing the chance to participate completely. Teja illustrates:

> Well, like I mentioned before, some of my friends don't invite me to things because they know that I don't drink. So, I confronted one of my friends about it …so then I asked him—I was like "Why didn't you invite me to your party?" And he was like "Well, because there's going to be alcohol there and I knew you didn't drink so I just figured that you wouldn't want to come." And even though—just mostly for the fact that I wouldn't have known anyone there, I would have probably said no anyway, but I was kind of offended that he just assumed that I wouldn't want to go. And, um, and he even told me…that he's afraid to tell me that he drinks every once in a while because he thought that I was going to judge him just because I don't drink. So, I—I don't like that people

probably think that about me and I don't even know it. But, I can't really do

anything about it.

Teja is aware that the utterance "I don't drink" has led to marginalization in her life. She

recognizes that a party during which people are drinking is not something that she would like to

attend. However, the absence of an invitation still causes her emotional distress. Additionally,

Teja is dealing with slight demonization of her character, as at least one friend expresses fear

about revealing his drinking behavior to her, implicitly framing her as judgmental. Teja's choice

to abstain has marked her as a challenge to the centripetal discourse of college drinking, so she

has been removed from the conversation for fear of discomfort. Although Teja notes that she

would likely avoid going to the party, the fact that her choice to participate has been taken away

has left her feeling marginalized.

Teja and Penelope also expressed another way that they feel they are left out due to their

choice to abstain: the ability to truly empathize with their friends' drinking stories. Teja relates:

…I do have several friends that just feel the need to tell me about their

experience when they were drunk and when they were partying and I'm just

sitting there like "Yeah, okay, I don't really know what to say." Like I can't be

like "Yeah this one time that definitely happened to me too." So, I don't feel like I

can relate to people who tell me about their experiences drinking or partying, but,

like, I'm a good listener so I guess that's why people still tell me those things.

Due to her lack of experience, Teja has no way to really be an active participant in the

conversation, so she must remain a passive listener. Penelope has a similar problem although she

used to drink. She recalls feeling left out when talking with co-workers:

Cause…they all tell stories from that weekend. So, when they start getting into specifics, like well we were all together doing this. I can't really be like "Yeah, well ONE time…When I was your age…" Like that…I just kind of…leave. Like, I DO feel left out and I don't have a strategy for that. And sometimes I do miss it. Like I miss being able to just like have a drink with people and have it be just like included. Sometimes I miss it, but, like I think that generally, my decision was a good one.

The feelings that Penelope and Teja express of being left out are a result of the contractive discursive practice of *disqualification*. Due to their lack of expertise (or lapsed expertise, in Penelope's case), they feel as if they are effectively denied a voice when these topics are up for conversation. When drinkers choose to trade these stories as a topic of discussion, they are pushing non-drinkers to the side of any discussion. Whether intentional or not, drinkers are maintaining the upper hand in this discursive struggle by having discussions in which non-drinkers cannot participate. Worse for non-drinkers, they do not have an equivalent to the drinking story they can share with each other, in which drinkers could not participate. This is a form of disqualification that cannot be answered.

A clear through-line in all of the non-drinkers' accounts is their dismay at being faced with the labels of "judgmental" and "superior." All of them wish to fight this label; however, none of them speak of a way to actually change this perception. Others share stories of not speaking out when they are left out or mention that their lives are better when they don't have to face the awkward situation of going out. Non-drinkers also express pressure to avoid the disclosure of their non-drinking. Many of them share stories in which the utterance of "I don't drink" is only spoken as a last resort. Here, the contractive discursive practice of topic avoidance

is at play, leaving non-drinkers to feel that they must avoid disclosure of their abstinence for fear of further marginalization. In adhering to this topic avoidance, non-drinkers are resigned to the centrifugal nature of their discourse.

This centrifugal position leads non-drinkers to accept the discourse that they are responsible for any accommodation that happens in relationships between themselves and their drinking friends. They all feel that there is something that *they* need to do in order to be invited to parties, or that there is something that *they* can say to allow people to think differently about them. This echoes a dominant discourse that emerged in the drinker's focus group that the "ball is in the non-drinker's court" when considering relational maintenance. It is up to the non-drinker to decide what to do in their friendship. College drinkers are going to drink no matter what, as the dominant discourse has no motivation to yield to competing discourses. If non-drinkers cannot adapt, then they will not be invited to share discourse.

Non-drinkers may opt to deal with this dilemma by retreating from the dominant discourse completely. Teja notes:

> My closest friends, um…I think most of them…don't drink. Or they just drink very, very little. Um, but…I wouldn't say that they…are my closest friends because they don't drink. It's just that they happen—like that naturally—because it's like, well I'm not going to be really, really super close with someone who drinks all the time because we're not really going to hang out that much.

Teja denies any conscious decision to seek out people with a similar lifestyle; however, she also notes that it is "natural" that she would gravitate toward other people who enjoy similar activities as she does. She also acknowledges that she would not spend time with someone who drinks frequently, revealing that this decision may be more conscious than she admits. Teja is using the

contractive practice of naturalization to support her decision to disengage from friendships with drinkers. By reframing the marginalization of her own discourse in this way, she is able to reclaim non-drinkers' place in the discursive struggle. Natasha, who is a single parent, uses naturalization in a similar way when she describes the company that she generally keeps:

> I don't get invited to parties because people know I don't drink, so, I don't even have to explain it, really. The people that I'm friends with are either parents already, so they don't go out, or, if I do make friends here on campus, they—I think I kind of pick friends subconsciously that don't drink. I don't know. That's so weird to say…

Non-drinkers who still attempt to engage in the discursive struggle surrounding alcohol are faced with a dilemma. By choosing to engage the centripetal discourse, they are presenting a challenge to the idea alcohol is necessary to enjoy life in college and adulthood. However, they are also attempting to fit into a culture where they present a threat to the dominant ideology. Therefore, non-drinkers are pressured to mediate between highlighting the positives of their choice without seeming judgmental or superior.

Review

Contrapuntal analysis of discussions among drinkers and non-drinkers at the site of the distal already-spoken revealed that the two groups experience different aspects of many of the same phenomena. Both groups have perceptions of what are acceptable and unacceptable drinking and non-drinking behaviors. Both groups employ expansive practices of entertaining and attributing to acknowledge that drinkers and non-drinkers are not uniform groups espousing the same discourses through the acknowledgement of different ways to drink and different reasons for abstaining. Further, both groups use the contractive discursive practices of

naturalization and topic avoidance to navigate the discursive struggle that their orientations to alcohol use have placed them in. The key differences are in how these practices are used and perceived by the other group. Drinkers use naturalization to assert the normative nature of drinking in college and adult life. Non-drinkers use naturalization to reframe the marginalization of their discourse. Drinkers feel that the topic avoidance marker "I don't drink" used by non-drinkers challenges them and even makes them vulnerable in what are traditionally safe places. Non-drinkers employ topic avoidance markers to avoid using the phrase "I don't drink" altogether, effectively participating in the marginalization of their own discourse.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the discursive struggles that exist between drinkers and non-drinkers in college culture. This study found similar themes in examples of discursive struggles in both groups at the site of the distal already-spoken (Baxter, 2011). Additionally, this study identified specific discursive markers (Deetz, 1992; Martin & White, 2005) participants used to talk about their own and others' drinking behaviors and the effects that these markers have on their positions within this discursive struggle.

The meanings of "drinking" and "abstinence." Both groups discussed the meanings of college "drinking" in nuanced ways. Both drinkers and non-drinkers acknowledged that there are different ways to engage with alcohol and different levels of drinking. Both groups rejected homogenous classifications of drinkers and non-drinkers, entertaining the idea of multiple voices within each group. Non-drinkers noted that using alcohol in a social context was more acceptable for them. Drinkers demonstrated the centripetal power (Baxter, 2011) of drinking discourse in college through a collective assertion that drinking alcohol is a behavior that signifies adulthood. Although drinkers recognize the reasons for abstaining that non-drinkers may have, they assert that alcohol is an expectation of adulthood, and particularly life in college.

Both groups also discussed what alcohol abstinence meant to them. Drinkers placed a greater value on practical reasons for abstaining, such as being a designated driver for the night or having health issues that prevent the consumption of alcohol. Drinkers also recognized that they are more accepting of strangers who abstain from drinking than they are of friends who abstain from drinking. This may be because friends' behavior has a stronger power to upset the centripetal discourse simply because friends' opinions and behaviors matter more than

strangers'. Non-drinkers are frequently quick to identify primarily practical reasons for abstaining, although they supply moral or value-laden reasons as well. Non-drinkers illustrate the centrifugal position of their discourse through these drinker-centered revelations of abstinence.

Discursive management of encounters. Both groups expressed feelings of diminished power related to the presence of discursive struggle. Drinkers noted that the existence of non-drinkers in physical sites intended for drinking (e.g., bars), in many cases, led to feelings of challenge and discomfort. For example, drinkers shared stories in which they were "stopped in their tracks" in what they assumed was a safe place for alcohol consumption by a non-drinker's disclosure of their own abstinence. Indeed, for some participants, the existence of a sober person in a site marked for its acceptance of inebriation shifted the power dynamic in the eyes of drinkers. In contrast, non-drinkers expressed feelings of marginalization from not being invited to parties or nights on the town, as well as being unable to participate in stories about drinking. Interestingly, both groups adhere to the notion that non-drinkers, as the marginalized group, must exert more effort to engage in social situations than drinkers.

This analysis revealed that participants used a number of specific discursive markers as they negotiated the competing discourses. Although several discursive markers were identified in both groups, none carried more weight than the contractive utterance "I don't drink." For drinkers and non-drinkers, the utterance "I don't drink" serves as a contractive practice of topic avoidance (Deetz, 1992), which immediately shuts down any potential conversation between drinkers and non-drinkers in an alcohol-centered setting. Both groups acknowledge the contractive power of the utterance. Drinkers relate experiences wherein the utterance of "I don't drink" sends them on an introspective spiral of negative feelings about themselves. Non-drinkers, apparently recognizing the potential power of this utterance, express that they only speak the

phrase as an absolute last resort in conversations with drinkers in these contexts to avoid awkward situations.

Non-drinkers also employed the contractive practices of disqualification and subjectification of experience (Deetz, 1992) to mark the inability to discuss alcohol on the same level due to a lack of experience as a drinker. Some of these contractive practices were employed in centrifugal discourse in order to silence their own voices. However, participants also used expansive practices of attributing and entertaining (Martin & White, 2005) to open up the possibility of more voices to the discussion. Drinkers and non-drinkers acknowledged the existence of a variety of voices from all parts of the discursive struggle. The coexistence of expansive and contractive practices combined with the presence of self-contraction in the centrifugal discourse marks this particular discursive struggle as particularly complex.

Implications

This study uncovered several implications for ongoing research of alcohol among college-aged adults. First, the study revealed that the discursive struggle between drinkers and non-drinkers in a college setting does not yield simple meanings of "drinker as perpetrator" and "non-drinker as victim." Rather, this study revealed the complexity of meanings surrounding college drinking and abstinence, suggesting that drinkers and non-drinkers have a nuanced relationship with discursive power, and, they do not fit into simply defined roles within the collective social reality of college. For example, drinkers expressed feelings of challenge and discomfort as a result of facing the contractive statement "I don't drink," while non-drinkers expressed feelings of marginalization, even though this marginalization was often self-imposed. Additionally, an association between alcohol and adulthood in the drinkers' group suggests that the relationship between college drinking and responsibility is not as black and white as

stakeholders have previously thought. College drinkers may imbibe alcohol as a way to express their readiness for adulthood, as "drinking is what adults do," instead of simply engaging in irresponsible behavior for the sake of pleasure.

This study also carries implications for research concerning the use of alcohol in a college setting. First, contrapuntal analysis conducted with a focus on competing discourses reveals that the centripetal and centrifugal dimensions are fluid. For example, this analysis uncovered moments when the centrifugal discourse (e.g., "abstinence from alcohol is responsible") seemed to hold more power than the centripetal discourse (e.g., "drinking is what adults do"). Specifically, non-drinkers were found to have silencing power over drinkers. The contractive utterance "I don't drink" serves as a way to shut down discourse in the centripetal realm. This suggests that discursive moves work in an even more complex way than previously thought—in this case, among college drinkers and non-drinkers.

Strengths

One of the strengths of this project is that it approached a context that has, to date, been understudied: abstinence from drinking in a college setting. Further, this is the only study that has examined this phenomenon from the perspectives of both drinkers and non-drinkers. Additionally, this study employed focus group interviews to discuss these topics with college students, allowing participants to feel more secure about discussing this potentially sensitive topic (Nestel et al., 2012), allowing collective perspectives to emerge (Halcomb et al., 2007).

The focus group methodology carried with it two benefits that are particularly relevant for this RDT 2.0 project. First, focus groups are ideal for uncovering data related to social power in interpersonal communication (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), which helped me to identify reported speech revealing participants' discourse along the centripetal/centrifugal continuum.

Second, the collaborative and expansive nature of focus group interviewing allowed participants to reveal the existence of larger cultural discourses through the collective way they spoke about a topic.

Additionally, Baxter's RDT 2.0 framework and accompanying analysis—particularly at the site of the distal already-spoken—offers a more nuanced understanding of the discursive struggles that occur as participants report instances concerning their orientation to alcohol and their perceptions of each other. Further, these findings provide new insight into RDT 2.0, suggesting that there may be additional ways to conceive of the various discursive moves that relational partners use to manage struggles in a variety of social contexts. In this way, the current study adds to the growing canon of RDT 2.0 research.

Limitations

As with all studies, the current project contains a number of limitations, which can be ameliorated in future research. The first limitation is the absence of dyadic interviews. Baxter (2011) suggests that dyadic interviews are the optimal method for producing data conducive to contrapuntal analysis because they ideally allow the researcher to recede from the process and allow participants to discuss their relationship with each other. The data from these interviews will not only speak of the relationship in the text, they will provide discursive moves and relations to power that the participants naturally reveal through their discussion with each other. Although recruiting for dyadic interviews was a part of the data collection plan for the present study, responses were too low to provide a variety of relationships. The few dyadic interviews that were conducted yielded a paucity of data.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of breadth in terms of the utterance chain. The presence of only focus group data meant that discursive struggle could only be examined at the

site of the distal already-spoken. Analysis of the other three links in the chain (the proximal already-spoken, the proximal not-yet-spoken, and the distal not-yet-spoken) with the data available would have been purely speculative, and therefore irresponsible. While contrapuntal analysis of one link in the chain provides illuminating data, the lack of analysis of a particular proximal relationship and any analysis of future utterances seems somewhat incomplete.

Finally, this study lacked the amount of participants and diversity of relationships desired to fully examine this discursive struggle. Although qualitative research generally does not emphasize quantity of participants, this study would have benefited from greater participation. The presence of more relationships between the two groups would likely provide a more complex mosaic of the different sites and enactments of discursive struggle between drinkers and non-drinkers. A greater variety of voices were available in the analysis of drinkers than non-drinkers. Additionally, to avoid any trouble with the legal drinking age, all students were over 21, which meant that they were toward the end of their college careers. Hearing voices from newer college students may have impacted the data and provided further dimensions to the study.

Directions For Future Research

The results of this study have indicated a number of directions for future scholarship. First, future researchers will likely find a contrapuntal analysis of dyadic communication between drinkers and non-drinkers in close relationships particularly fruitful. Although focus group interviews, which only produced data at the site of the distal already-spoken, proved profitable, a study potentially examining all four links in the utterance chain is likely to reveal further intricacies of this particular discursive struggle. The choice to abstain or imbibe alcohol has far-reaching cultural and personal implications for college students. Further contrapuntal analysis using the dialectical frame is an excellent method for exploring this struggle.

Second, scholars should work to expand the tools of contrapuntal analysis. As Baxter (2011) draws from the works of others (Deetz, 1992; Martin & White, 2005) to establish her list of discursive moves, researchers should continue to look to other sources from a number of disciplines to expand the number of discursive markers that can be analyzed and identified using this method. This should be particularly helpful for scholars looking to study expansive practices, as there are far fewer expansive moves than contractive, as Baxter identifies them. Just as RDT 1.0 research added to the possible dialectical tensions of the theory, RDT 2.0 research should work to expand how we analyze the language and power within discursive struggle.

Finally, scholars should continue to find new ways to apply the principles of RDT 2.0 to other interpersonal communication phenomena. This study chose to focus on the discourse of drinking and non-drinking in college. However, RDT 2.0 can help to explain and analyze a variety of communicative actions where contradiction and discursive struggle are present. As Baxter (2011) positions dialogism as a new research paradigm that mixes the critical and the interpretive, scholars should search for new ways to use RDT 2.0 to study communication in various contexts. Unlike the previous iteration of RDT, building upon previous research does not merely provide new ways of describing phenomena, it provides new ways to conduct research to critically unpack such phenomena.

It was a nice wedding, and one that my father deserved. After so many years of difficult relationships, everyone seemed to agree that he was as happy as anyone had ever seen him. Even better, the entire event went off without a hitch. As I looked around the reception, I thought about how this day was everything that my dad wanted. He was in his hometown, surrounded by his friends and family, and he had a whole keg of his favorite beer.

A few years ago, being in a room with a keg of beer would have made me extremely uncomfortable. The kind of uncomfortable feeling that makes your skin feel like it doesn't belong on your body. Not only that, but it would have really hurt my opinion of my father. The fact that he kept mentioning that he wanted a keg for the wedding and picked a venue specifically so that he could drink would have made me concerned for his behavior and safety. If this wedding happened when I was 21, I would have left the reception as soon as I saw the keg.

But, that was in the past. As I looked around at all of my new family members, I could see how much fun they were having. My new uncle was in the middle of the dance floor, pulling off moves that would probably put other men of his age in the hospital. My new brother and sisters seemed to open up to me more after they started drinking, which made me feel like a part of this new family for the first time. My father even started to loosen up in ways that I had never seen. Clearly, drinking alcohol had merit, which I would have never considered when I was younger. With all of that in mind, I made my way to the keg and filled a plastic cup with beer. When I turned around, I saw Dad from across the room, making a shocked face and pointing at his own beer. I simply raised my cup to him and took a swig. I now realize that taking that drink doesn't make me an alcoholic. It doesn't mean that I am a terrible person. It means that I can be a part of this family. It means that I can lower my defenses and have a good time. It can mean whatever I want it to mean because I'm the one who makes the choice. I will probably never be drunk, but that doesn't mean that I can't have a little drink and cut loose a bit.

As for the beer itself, it was one of the most disgusting things I have ever tasted in my entire life. But, what do I know? I've never been much of a drinker.

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Appendix A:

Oral Recruitment Script

My name is Caleb Green and I am a graduate student in the Communication Studies Department here at Ball State University. I would like to invite all of you to participate in this study regarding friendships and communication between drinkers and non-drinkers. The purpose of this study is to better understand how drinkers and non-drinkers discuss topics related to alcohol, as well as how they negotiate friendships with one another.

You will be asked to participate in a focus group comprised of either drinkers or non-drinkers. You may additionally be asked to participate in interview pairs with a friend. In order to participate you need to be between 21 and 24 years of age. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary and your responses will remain confidential. Each interview should take no longer than 90 minutes.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without any prejudice or penalty. Please feel free to ask any questions before beginning this study and at any point during this study. Questions can be directed to me, Caleb Green, the Principal Investigator at cjgreen@bsu.edu or to Dr. Laura O'Hara, my Faculty Advisor, at lohara@bsu.edu.

Appendix B:

Recruitment Contact Sheet

This study seeks to find how drinkers and non-drinkers think about each other, communicate with each other, and how they become friends.

Name:_____

Age:_____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Circle one: Drinker   Non-drinker

Appendix C:

Participant Focus Group Interview Consent Form

Title: A Qualitative Analysis of Friendships Between Drinkers and Non-drinkers in a College
    Setting

Study Purpose and Rationale: The current study attempts to understand how drinkers and non-drinkers perceive each other, discuss alcohol-related topics with one another, and how members of these two groups negotiate friendships with one another.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: To participate in the current study, all individuals must be a Ball State student, between 21 and 24 years of age and provide informed consent. Participants must identify as a drinker or non-drinker.

Participant Procedures and Duration: For the current study, you will participate in focus groups where you will be asked various questions about how you communicate with those who are drinkers/non-drinkers. The interview will last one to one and a half hours.

Audio Recording: With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded. This will ensure accuracy. The audio recorded interview will not be used for any reason aside from the current study. The audio recordings will be kept on a password protected computer and destroyed after one year.

Data Confidentiality: You will be participating in a focus group where others are present. Therefore, the information that you provide is not, strictly speaking, confidential. However, those participating in the focus group will be briefed on the importance of treating the contents of the interview with discretion and respect. Additionally, the focus groups will be transcribed by the primary investigator. There will be no identifying information, such as your name, used in the published study.

Data Storage: Data will be stored on a password protected personal laptop computer or locked file cabinet at Ball State University. No one will have access to the data except the Principal Investigator (Caleb Green) and the Faculty Advisor (Laura O'Hara, Ph.D.) The data will be kept for one year after the study, after which it will be destroyed.

Risks or Discomforts: The current study is of minimal risk to you. There is a possibility that this study may require you to recall uncomfortable situations or feelings. Additionally, other members of the focus group will hear your responses. There is also a possibility that disagreement may occur during the course of the focus group.

Benefits: The current study will provide potential benefits to you and/or to society. In terms of potential benefits to individuals, you may find that talking about how you relate to friends regarding the topic of drinking/non-drinking, may enhance your relationships. Also, a discussion of how you perceive individuals in a group to which you do not belong may help to eliminate misconceptions and combat prejudice you may harbor toward that "out group."

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and
you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without any prejudice
or penalty from the researcher. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all recordings of you
and any raw data relating to your responses will be destroyed immediately. Please feel free to ask
any questions before beginning the study and at any point during the study.

If the study causes you any psychological discomfort, you are encouraged to contact the Ball
State University Counseling center:

Counseling Center
2000 West University Avenue
Room 320-Lucina Hall
Muncie, IN 47306
Phone: (765) 285-1736
Fax: (765) 285-2081

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, do not hesitate to contact
Ball State University's Institutional Review Board:

Director, Office of Research Integrity
2000 West University Avenue
Room 409-Teacher's College
Muncie, IN 47306
Phone: (765) 285-5070
****
Consent:

I, _____, agree to participate in this research
project. I have had the study explained to me and my questions have
been answered to my satisfaction. I have heard the description of this study, read the
consent form, and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy
of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

_____

Participant's Signature   Date

Caleb Green   Laura O'Hara
Letterman Building, Room 300   Letterman Building, Room 364
(765) 285-1939   (765) 285-1998
cjgreen@bsu.edu   lohara@bsu.edu

Appendix D:

Drinkers' Focus Group Protocol

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. Describe your typical weekend.
    a. Would you consider drinking part of your routine?
    b. Can you tell me a little about some of the various drinking routines?
    c. How important is this routine to you?
4. What kind of person do you picture when you think of a "non-drinker?"
    a. What does this person look like?
    b. How do they act?
    c. Why did you answer as you did?
5. Could you describe a time when you found out one of your friends did not drink?
    a. How did you react?
    b. Can you explain why?
6. What do you think a non-drinker's reasons for abstaining might be?
7. Could you ever see yourself as a "non-drinker?"
    a. Why or why not?
8. I want you all to think about times when you are with non-drinkers. Think especially about how you talk about your drinking experiences when you are with non-drinkers.
    a. Do you change your communication?
    b. If so, how?
    c. Why or why not?
    d. Who can share a story?
9. Have you ever invited a non-drinker to a party?
    a. Tell me about the experience? What was it like?
    b. How did you expect them to behave at the party?
    c. How did they actually behave at the party?
10. Tell me about a time you encountered a non-drinker at a party.
    a. What happened?
    b. Anything said about drinking?
        i. If so, what?
11. Do you have friends who are "non-drinkers?" Tell me about them.
    a. What kind of activities do you do with these friends?
    b. How close are you with these friends?
    c. Compared with your friends that drink?
    d. Do you feel that you have to act differently around these friends?
    e. In what ways? Stories? Examples?
12. Do you ever challenge these friends about why they do not drink?
    a. Who initiates these conversations?
    b. Can you describe these conversations?
13. How would you describe the strength of the friendship?
14. What, if anything, is different about your relationship with these friends than with friends who drink?

Appendix E:

Non-drinkers' Focus Group Protocol

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. Describe your typical weekend.
4. What do you picture when you think of a "drinker?"
   a. What does this person look like?
   b. How do they act?
   c. Why did you answer as you did?
5. When did you decide to abstain from drinking?
   a. What motivated this decision?
6. What challenges do you face in a university environment in regards to abstaining?
   a. Tell me about a time you dealt with these challenges.
7. How important is not drinking to your identity?
8. Do you feel that there are many people like you in regards to not drinking?
9. How do you think people feel about your decision to not drink?
   a. Do you explain why you do not drink?
   b. How do you communicate that you do not drink?
10. Describe a time you were invited to a party or to go out drinking
    a. How did you deal with that situation
    b. How much did you disclose about the fact that you do not drink?
    c. Did you violate the expectations of those who thought you were going to drink? How so?
11. How do you think drinkers feel about you when they find out that you do not drink?
12. What makes you believe they are having those thoughts about you?
    a. How do they consider your feelings?
    b. Do you feel pressured to consider their feelings?
13. How does being around drinking make you feel?
    a. Have you been around when people have swapped stories from drinking events?
    b. What have you done in those situations?
14. Do you see drinking as a "sensitive topic?"
    a. Why did you answer as you did?
15. Do you have friends who are "drinkers?"
    a. How close are you to these friends?
    b. Do you consider the friendship strong?
    c. Do they treat you differently than other friends who drink?
    d. Do they ever ask you why you do not drink?
    e. How do you respond? Stories? Examples?
    f. Do you ever challenge them about why they drink? Stories? Examples?
16. What kind of activities do you engage in, instead of drinking?
17. What, if anything, is different about your relationship with these friends than with friends who do not drink?

Appendix F:

Discursive Markers and Practices

Discursive Markers (White & Martin, 2005)	
Marker	**Definition**
Negating	Rejecting a discourse
Countering	Supplanting an alternative discourse
Entertaining	Acknowledging the possibility of other discourses
Contractive Discursive Practices (Deetz, 1992)	
Practice	**Definition**
Disqualification	Claiming a lack of expertise
Naturalization	Discourse is reified as a given in nature
Neutralization	Value-laden discourse is treated as objective truth
Topic Avoidance	Alternative position is labeled as "taboo" and avoided in discussion
Subjectification of Experience	Pretending a cultural discourse is one's personal opinion
Pacification	Agreeing to disagree; Ending discussion
Expansive Discursive Practices (Martin & White, 2005)	
Entertaining	Acknowledging the possibility of other discourses
Attributing	Acknowledging the voices of others by crediting their statements